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Lundi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 avril 2023

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who have gathered here and continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Meegwetch.

This morning, we have with us, in the Speaker's gallery, the Rehoboth Christian School choir, from the riding of Flamborough—Glanbrook, performing O Canada and God Save the King.

Please remain standing and join them in the singing of our national and royal anthems.

Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.

Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.

1020

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SIMCOE–GREY ATHLETES

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about the long and proud tradition I have in Simcoe–Grey of creating elite athletes and great teams. We have competed nationally, internationally and provincially, winning titles, and today I'd like to recognize a number of recent additions to that long list.

Going back historically, we have two-time NHL All-Star and Stanley Cup winner Jason Arnott, from the town of Wasaga Beach; Team Canada's women's soccer gold medallist and youngest female Olympic goal scorer in Olympic history Deanne Rose, from Alliston; Canada's men's wheelchair basketball team member and two-time gold medallist at the world championships Chris Stoutenburg, from Collingwood; and, of course, we have Jozo Weider, Canadian Ski Hall of Famer and founder of Ontario's largest ski resort in the town of Blue Mountains.

Today, I'd like to focus on Team Froud, who has won the right to represent our province at the 2023 Canadian Senior Curling Championships. The team is from Wasaga Beach and consists of members Kerry Lackie, Kristin Turcotte, Julie McMullin and is led by skip Susan Froud from the Alliston Curling Club. They're coached by Al Corbeil.

I'd also like to recognize the great accomplishment by a local Alliston hockey player, Tyson Foerster, who, on

March 9, 2023, played his first NHL game for the Philadelphia Flyers. Tyson is a former Barrie Colts player and was drafted by the Flyers in 2020. Tyson had all 11 members of his family watching the game, and his brother Dawson made the 20-hour drive from British Columbia to watch him play.

I want to congratulate all these athletes on their great accomplishments and wish them well in the future.

MEMBER FOR HAMILTON CENTRE

Ms. Sarah Jama: Thank you very much for allowing me to give my very first member's statement in the House. I want to start off by thanking the volunteers who worked really hard on my campaign to send me here. I'm thinking of Robbie, Anika, Daniela Giulietti, Amr and so many other people—Davin—who worked really hard to send me here. I also want to make sure to give a shout-out to my mom, who I would not be here without.

The issues I care a lot about are health care, housing and climate and making sure to tackle the disabling conditions caused by harmful legislation in the House. I'm not here to be preoccupied by the strange rituals or this colonial building. I'm here because Hamilton Centre knows that I am a fighter and I'm going to make sure that people are protected, that we're fighting for health care, housing and the issues that people need to live, because people are dying, Mr. Speaker, because of harm caused in this House.

I'm going to make sure, as the Hamilton Centre MPP, that I'm here to put up a fight. Thank you so much.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to the members of the House. I'm delighted to share with you the success of the Special Olympics Ontario five-pin provincial qualifier event that took place this past weekend at Hopedale Bowl in Oakville, Ontario. The event was truly remarkable and locally driven, with the support and backing of Special Olympics Ontario. It was an excellent turnout from Oakville athletes, providing to be an opportunity for athletes to compete and have fun in an inclusive environment.

I'd like to highlight and give special thanks to James Montague. James has been an active member of Special Olympics Oakville as both an athlete and a fundraiser. He excels in confidence and commitment when it comes to organizing and planning events that benefit young adults with disabilities in the Oakville community. James is also an award-winning entrepreneur, running his own event-planning company called James Montague Event Planner

Group. He has received recognition for being an advocate for individuals with special needs. He's an incredible asset to our community, and we're very proud to have him.

I would like to also extend my sincere gratitude to all those who attended the event and contributed to its success. Special Olympics Oakville has a long history of organizing numerous charity events in the past, and this weekend was yet another testament to the excellent work they do. They continually provide opportunities for athletes to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families and other athletes.

I wish all the athletes the best of luck as they continue on their journey to the 2025 Special Olympics.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I rise to speak on behalf of my constituents in London–Fanshawe affected by the shortage of available beds for long-term care. My office recently received a heart-wrenching story of a family separated by the inadequacies in our long-term-care system. Lorraine has been struggling to make an hour-long drive to see her mother, Bernice, at her long-term-care home in Stratford, Ontario. Bernice has waited more than 1,300 days to transfer to a London home to be closer to her family. This is deplorable. Families deserve and need to be closer to loved ones in their final years.

The Ontario Long Term Care Association reports that nearly 40,000 people are on a waiting list for long-term care in Ontario and predicts that it could increase to about 48,000 by 2029. Keep in mind, this is a projection that takes into account the 30,000 long-term-care beds the government has already promised. The Financial Accountability Office estimates that the current government will only deliver 8,251 long-term-care beds by the end of 2023-24, well short of the promise to add 15,000 long-term-care beds by that time.

Bernice has been waiting more than three and a half years to move into a long-term-care home closer to her family. Now, it's too late. Given her deteriorating health, a transfer to a long-term-care home is unlikely. Her next move is more likely to be in palliative care.

How can this government justify their inaction while families spend their final years separated from one another? We need to make investments in not-for-profit homes, and make sure staff and resources are there for people when they need them in their time of most need.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: This past Friday, MPP Jordan, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, and I announced \$170,466 for the Village of Taunton Mills in Whitby, to help residents with complex medical needs like dementia and bariatric care connect to specialized care and supports in their long-term-care home instead of a hospital.

Speaker, this is part of a \$20-million investment this year in 189 projects province-wide through a new local priorities fund. Under the leadership of the Honourable Paul Calandra, the Minister of Long-Term Care, we're taking action to bolster our province's long-term-care system and put residents' needs first.

This work is built on four pillars: staffing and care; quality and enforcement; building modern, safe and comfortable homes; and providing seniors with faster, more convenient access to the services they need. Speaker, the government is fixing long-term care to ensure Ontario's seniors get the quality of care and quality of life they need and deserve, both now and in the future.

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday, April 2, was world autism day. In recognition, I would like to share a message that I received from my constituent Julie Serrurier about the challenges her family is facing.

"France," she wrote, "we are feeling hopeless; we have gone through both our one-time fundings and all of it was spent on ABA therapy" for my son.

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"My child is progressing and thriving!"

"But now we have no more funds. This puts a lot of" pressure "on our family. We are put in situations where we need to decide, do we keep paying out of pocket as much as we can afford so we can keep our spot with our therapist.

"If the ministry could give us a timeline then we could plan but we have no clue. It's mentally exhausting for both me and my husband.

"Also, I've been having to fight for support at school for my son! They've been removing support. The excuse is there's no staff and nobody wants the job because it doesn't pay."

Speaker, according to a freedom-of-information my office filed, of the 1,564 children enrolled in core clinical services, only 83 are from the northern region. That's 83 kids, from Parry Sound all the way to the Manitoba border. Is ignoring children with autism and their families the legacy that this government really wants?

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: In 2013, Ontario was the first Legislature across Canada to proclaim April as Sikh Heritage Month. This year marks the 10-year anniversary of the historical declaration.

Throughout this month, events will take place to honour and celebrate the rich history, culture and contributions Sikhs have made to Ontario and Canada as a whole. This year, the Sikh Heritage Month initiative has organized many events in my riding of Brampton East and across the city of Brampton, including art exhibitions, concerts and a number of workshops, including an official flag-raising at Brampton City Hall.

Speaker, this month is also significant to the Sikh community as April 14 is Vaisakhi, a spring festival which marks the beginning of the harvest season in Punjab and the day the order of the Khalsa was created. Vaisakhi is celebrated by visiting a gurdwara to pray, seek blessings and by doing “seva,” which is the act of selfless service. It is also celebrated through the organization of parades, like the annual Khalsa Day Parade from Exhibition Place to Toronto city hall. Thousands of community members from diverse backgrounds join and participate in the day’s activities.

Speaker, I would like to take this moment to sincerely wish every Ontarian celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi and a very happy Sikh Heritage Month.

Remarks in Punjabi.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I rise today to talk about the housing crisis and my riding of Don Valley West. The average rent in Toronto for a one-bedroom has reached \$2,500. In the recently tabled budget, the government projects lower housing starts than they projected last year, and at this rate, they will miss their 10-year housing goals by at least 50%. Yet still, the government insists they have a plan. So far, their plan seems to be only about tall and sprawl, neither of which is sustainable.

In my riding of Don Valley West, we are still feeling the impacts of their irresponsible decision to waste taxpayer money and override city council’s Midtown in Focus plan. Now, they are allowing 35-storey-plus towers of mostly one-bedroom condos at a handful of choke points like Bayview and Broadway—not because it’s good for our community; in fact, the city and residents say exactly the opposite.

Our neighbourhood is losing a valued medical building, along with its family doctors, to a 32-storey development, which will leave thousands more without a family doctor. Speaker, we need housing, but we also need a plan for our communities, where families and retired seniors can live too; a plan to ensure schools which are not overcrowded, parks and hospitals, that have made Don Valley West a great place to live.

Speaker, I would respectfully ask the government to let cities be planned by our planners, to allow sustainable mid-rise density in our neighbourhoods, along with a plan for new schools, parks, community centres to keep Don Valley West the great place it is to live.

TOWNSHIP OF NORWICH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUAL AWARDS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The Norwich Chamber of Commerce recently handed out their annual Awards of Excellence. These awards honour outstanding individuals and businesses and recognize their contributions to the community. I congratulate this year’s winners:

—Schuurman Farms and Hoogenboom Family Farm, winners of the farm family award, are from Holland, and

the Schuurmans and Hoogenbooms have created two successful farm businesses;

—Norma’s Coffee Bar, recipient of the small business of the year award, a place where every customer feels like family;

—Gunn’s Hill Artisan Cheese, winner of the large business of the year award—I recommend everyone try their delicious cheese;

—Max Van den Borre, who won the agricultural bursary award for his insightful essay on the Ukraine war’s impact on Canadian agriculture;

—Kendra Hussey, whose essay on fostering youth engagement in employment earned her the essay contest scholarship;

—Jazlyn Armstrong, a dedicated young leader who won the youth citizenship award;

—Randy Nobbs, a long-serving community leader and winner of the citizen of the year award for his contributions to minor hockey and baseball; and

—Karen McSpadden, another wonderful volunteer, received the Judy Cayley memorial award for her service to the people of Oxford and her involvement with the Norwich United Church.

Mr. Speaker, these winners embody Oxford’s values of hard work, innovation, dedication and community service. Congratulations to one and all.

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2023

Mr. Rob Flack: I am absolutely thrilled to congratulate the community of West Lorne on being crowned Kraft Hockeyville 2023. It was so exciting for me to participate in the enthusiasm generated throughout this Canadian community challenge. West Lorne will now have the opportunity to host a pre-game NHL game and will receive \$250,000 for much-needed renovations to their local arena.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere appreciation to Kraft Heinz for their generous support. For 17 years Kraft Hockeyville has proudly awarded a total of \$4.5 million to 93 communities across our great country. Thank you, Kraft Heinz.

Speaker, the municipality of West Elgin lost their beloved mayor just a few weeks ago. I know everyone in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London believes Mayor Duncan McPhail is looking down with pride and admiration for West Lorne’s great achievement.

Again, well done to West Lorne. You have made Ontario proud. Go, Comets, go!

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members’ statements for this morning.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: I would like to introduce to everyone my beautiful and long-suffering wife Joni; her mother, my mother-in-law, Lena Bruining; her husband, Ben; and good friends, one of my heroes, Bill Janssen; his wife, Chris; and her sister, Mary Groeneweg.

I'd like to thank my daughter Ella and her choir mates for singing O Canada and God Save the King under the guidance of their director, Herman den Hollander.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's with great pleasure I introduce Curtis Jordan to the House. Curtis is a trustee with the Upper Canada school board and, if I'm not mistaken, one of the first autistic individuals elected to any office in eastern Ontario. It's great to have you in your House, sir.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited to welcome to the House today Megan Parry, Jason Kuzminski, Ben Kuzminski-Parry and Jude Kuzminski-Parry.

Jason worked at Queen's Park for a number of years under our leader, Tim Hudak. They started as a family here in Toronto. They're back to visit the city and friends, and they're actually enjoying the hospitality of their host, Martin Regg Cohn.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Pour la première fois depuis que je suis élue, on a une page qui vient de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Vanier, Mia Tocchi, et aujourd'hui, sa grand-mère et son père sont avec nous ici à l'Assemblée. Alors, bienvenue à Monika Tocchi et Silvano Tocchi. On se voit plus tard.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my pleasure to rise today to, first, congratulate the page captain for the day, Morgan Burkitt, and then to introduce her family: her mother, Sophia Burkitt; father, Michael Burkitt; and her younger sister, Ashley Burkitt; and welcome them to the House today.

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Mr. Dave Smith: On behalf of my seatmate, who forgot one of his friends here today, I would like to introduce Kelley Vandyk.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House today Peter Smith from the Durham region, a wonderful small businessman and a great community volunteer. Peter Smith, welcome to the House.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce my long-time constituency assistant from the riding of Nipissing, Keri Buttle. When she's not in the office, Speaker, she has the pointiest elbows on the roller derby circuit. As well, she is a musher of her own dogsled team. Welcome, Keri.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My constituent, Morgan Kitching, is making his way through. He will sit beside trustee Curtis Jordan. Welcome to Queen's Park, as soon as you get here.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will ask for the House's attention. I rise to inform the House of a change in the allocations for independent members' participation in House proceedings, as we now have 12 members sitting as independents.

During question period, I will recognize an additional independent member to ask a question during each eight-day rotation. This means that one independent member will be recognized to ask a question each day, and a second independent member will be recognized to ask a question every Tuesday and Wednesday, with each of these ques-

tions followed by a supplementary. With respect to members' statements, I will continue to recognize one independent member per day, and each independent member will be eligible to make a statement once every 12 days.

I thank the House for its attention.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. I would like my colleagues here to imagine themselves as a migrant worker, a refugee who fled persecution or a newcomer who came to Ontario with dreams of a good life. Now imagine you had an urgent health issue for which you needed treatment. On Friday, you'd be able to access care without having to worry about how you would pay for it. But by Saturday, that care became a lot harder to access, because this government cruelly eliminated the Physician and Hospital Services for Uninsured Persons Program.

Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health: Will she restore this program to make sure no one risks going without receiving the care they need?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I want to be very clear that that migrant worker, that international student who is here to be part of our school system are all—and continue to be—covered through their health system, through Ontario's publicly funded health system. There is no change in the way that uninsured persons will receive care in the province of Ontario.

The change that occurred was as a result of a program that we put in place when travellers could not return home. We have removed that change because we have a system in the province of Ontario where individuals are covered for OHIP-funded services, and we have a number of pathways for individuals to get funding through their health care system even without an OHIP card, of course.

I'll share more in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'm really concerned about how out of touch this government is, because what the minister is saying does not square with what people out there are actually experiencing.

I'd like my colleagues to imagine that you are actually working at a community health centre. An uninsured client has come in. Their needs are beyond what you are able to provide. On Friday, you would have been able to connect them to the help they need so they can focus on getting better. But by Saturday, your client has to make a decision between paying their rent that month or getting better.

It's never too late to do the right thing, Speaker. Back to the Minister of Health: Will she reverse her decision so no one is forced to make such an impossible choice?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm actually going to quote a staff individual who works at the Niagara community health

centre: “We offer primary care services to folks with or without a health card.”

There are 75 community health care centres operating in the province of Ontario that have a funding model that allows them to serve and assist individuals without a health care card. We have funding programs in place with midwives that ensures individuals who need assistance through the midwives program are able to do that, with or without an OHIP card.

There is no doubt that we want to protect the most vulnerable, but we also have to ensure that we have parameters in place to make sure unintended consequences don't occur and we end up, in Ontario, being the health care for everyone else who chooses to come here to access this system.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, if this government spent less time in the backrooms and more time on the front lines, they would understand the impact of their choices.

As it happens, I spent time with Niagara community health centre workers last week, and the reality is that these programs the minister keeps mentioning are woefully inadequate. I met with one CHC worker from Niagara on Friday. Her CHC has a budget of a little over \$1,000 to help uninsured clients—just \$1,000. She told me that that doesn't go very far—one year, just two clients. There are 500,000 uninsured people in this province.

Back to the Minister of Health: If she won't restore the program, will she immediately boost investments in CHCs to make sure no one goes without the health care they need?

Interjections.

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

Again, the Minister of Health to respond.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Another program that we have operating in the province of Ontario, all across Ontario, is Health811, where individuals who have questions and concerns can deal and speak directly with a registered nurse.

We are returning to a program where there is no change in uninsured persons receiving care in the province of Ontario.

And in terms of the member's question about expanding, I hope that as we continue to debate and vote on Bill 60, they will look at the expansions that are embedded in that legislation and vote to support expansions that are occurring and will be occurring because of the investments that our government is making in health to ensure that people get access to service in their communities.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: In the eleventh hour, the government extended funding for virtual ERs for just three months—too little, too late. The government's announcement came too late for most hospitals, like Toronto's University Health Network, which is now having to close their virtual ER.

Speaker, to the Minister of Health: Will the government commit to making virtual ER funding permanent?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the member opposite's information is not quite up to date. In fact, I have spoken to University Health Network, and they intend to continue the virtual ER program, because they have seen the value in it. We worked with the OMA to extend that program as we work with the Ontario Medical Association to make sure, where appropriate, virtual care continues in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: That gives them three months, right?

This government likes to talk about health care innovations—well, let's talk about innovation. Virtual ERs were a pandemic-era innovation to reduce pressure on hospitals and keep health care public. They connected Ontarians to the care they needed and helped ease hospital overloading. But this government's last-minute, eleventh-hour decision to extend it by just three months has effectively cancelled the program.

Back to the Minister of Health: Why is this government saying no to these public health care innovations?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, in fact, health care innovation is exactly what we love to see in the province of Ontario, and I will give the member opposite a very specific example. In Renfrew county, they were able to ramp up a VTAC model that has ensured individuals who do not have direct connection and contact with a family physician now have a permanent solution. They did that innovation during COVID. We have now funded it because of the advocacy of the member from Renfrew to ensure that that program can continue. That's the kind of innovation we're encouraging.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it's not just virtual emergency rooms either. Hundreds of people gathered in Chesley in a town hall held by the local health coalition to talk about their fears around Bill 60, as their local ER again continues to have unexpected temporary closures.

Back to the Minister of Health: What do you have to say to the people of Chesley and the 158 other communities experiencing temporary ER closures due to staffing shortages?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The public meeting that the member opposite referenced is actually community coming together to solve problems. They have a new hospital president and CEO who will bring that innovation and those ideas to ensure that, absolutely, the Chesley emergency department does not have the same challenges they had last summer.

It is important for the member opposite to understand that as our government expands the number of pathways for individuals to be able to train and become nurses in the province of Ontario, like the Learn and Stay program, as we work with the College of Nurses of Ontario to ensure that individuals who are waiting to get their licence

assessed get that done quickly—we have made those changes, Speaker, and we will continue to make those changes. Why? Because we want to ensure that people who want to practise medicine and serve the people of Ontario can do it quickly in the province—

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

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Families across Ontario are struggling with the high cost of living. A mom in Niagara contacted my office about the price of baby formula going up 40% in the last three months—a product that is essential for many families with babies. Formula going from \$50 in January to over \$70 today is simply price gouging from companies like Loblaw's.

The Premier promised there would be consequences for retailers who price-gouge on necessary items. Speaker, that mom has a question for the Premier: Why is the Premier letting this happen? Why is he breaking his promise?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from Niagara. I'll tell you what we're doing, and I'll tell you a little bit about economics, because I know the NDP don't have a clue about economics. I wouldn't trust them running my lemonade stand.

Anyway, in saying that, what drives cost up about 30% of inflation is gas prices, and the folks across the aisle, they're for the highest carbon tax in the world. The member from Ottawa was preaching he wants the highest gas prices in the world, the highest carbon taxes. That's what drives up the cost.

Our government reduced the cost of gas by 10 cents a litre. I encourage the NDP, I encourage the Liberals not to fall in step with the federal government, but stand up for the people of Ontario, reduce the gas price, reduce the carbon tax, put money back into people's pockets rather than just sit there and complain.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: Premier, we're asking about feeding a baby. That's what this question is about, sir.

The Conservative budget does nothing to address the affordability crisis. They refuse to stand up to price-gouging corporations like the Westons. Companies are taking advantage of families that are just trying to feed their children. Listen to this, Speaker: Some families are watering down baby formula to stretch it further. What kind of province are we living in where the Premier thinks it's okay for billionaires to make record profits while gouging families struggling to feed their babies? What will it take for the Premier to stand up to these corporate bullies ripping off families in Ontario, so we can feed our families?

Hon. Doug Ford: The member from Niagara voted against every single tax decrease we've ever had in the Legislature. He voted against putting money back into

people's pockets when we scrapped the licence sticker. You voted against putting money back into people's pockets when it came to the 412 and 418. If it was up to the NDP and the Liberals—we saw what happened for 15 years, Mr. Speaker. The prices went out of control. Companies left this province. Some 300,000 people lost their jobs under their 15 years of destruction of this province. The economy is strong. Anyone who wants a job can get a job—anyone who wants a great-paying job in any sector. We're leading North America in economic development and job creation. We're seeing more people come to our province, more jobs being created than anywhere in North America. So thank you for that—

Interjections.

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

Thank you. Restart the clock.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We know that Ontario has a unique and carefully cultivated entrepreneurial spirit. Yet for more than a decade under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's entrepreneurs felt abandoned. The previous government did everything to punish people starting a business, but our government is focused on supporting small businesses like the ones in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park, making sure they have the support they need to strengthen their economic success.

Speaker, will the minister please explain how our government is creating conditions for Ontario's entrepreneurs to succeed?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we can all recall the days under the Liberals when Ontario's entrepreneurs were closing up their shops, frustrated with a government that made businesses too risky and expensive. But our government changed all that. Lower taxes and less red tape brought a revival of Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit. There were 85,000 new businesses opened in Ontario last year alone, Speaker. And with budget 2023, expect even more.

An additional \$2 million is being invested into Futurpreneur Canada. They'll help 18-year-old to 39-year-old young business people with mentorship and loans of up to \$20,000. Speaker, entrepreneurs once again can take that next step and know that their government is here to support them all the way.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It's great to hear that our government continues to support Ontario's entrepreneurs with starting and growing their businesses. My riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park is home to a thriving and innovative economy for entrepreneurs, and starting a business is how entrepreneurs turn their dream into a reality. But, as well, we all know starting a business is hard work and is filled with risk.

Speaker, will the minister please explain what else our government is doing to help entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Liberals made starting a business in Ontario costly and confusing. That is why our government reduced red tape, lowered taxes and fixed their hydro mess. Ontario businesses are now saving \$8 billion annually.

In addition to Futurpreneur, there's a wide range of other supports. Small business enterprise centres offer all the tools they need to start and grow their businesses. In the member's riding, he pushed very hard for \$2 million in funding for Scarborough's small business centre, with a further \$620,000 for their Summer Company and Starter Company Plus that help their area's students and young entrepreneurs start their business in his riding, and we've provided more than \$77,000 in the Digital Transformation Grant to over 30 businesses in Scarborough. Speaker, that is what this member is doing to help his entrepreneurs.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Ontario is facing a mental health crisis. Across the province, people are crying out for help. Mental health organizations are unable to keep up with rising inflation costs, staffing shortages and increased demands for services. All Ontarians should have access to high-quality easily accessible connected supports when and where they need it.

Speaker, why won't the Premier properly address the mental health crisis in Ontario?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Mental health and addictions is a priority for our government, and it has been since day one. That's why we're making crucial investments in mental health and addictions. We're creating a recovery-oriented system, a continuum of care by which everyone will be able to get supports and services as needed, and with respect to that, we're making a \$500-million investment annually over the next 10 years.

1100

In addition to that, recognizing the needs in the province, the Minister of Finance announced last week an additional investment of \$425 million over three years, and an additional \$202 million in supportive housing. Why? Because it is one of the most important social determinants of health that must be addressed.

Those are investments that are being made by the province. They're being recognized by community members. Perhaps in the supplemental, I'll give you some of the quotes from the service providers that are partnering with us to ensure that we deliver these services to the people of the province.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, community agencies are facing a staffing crisis. Wait times for treatments grow longer and longer.

I spoke to a woman who was sexually assaulted and nearly beaten to death. She lived in her car for months afterwards, and she's been waiting for trauma counselling through the public health system for four months and counting. For \$30,000 a month, she could get treatment at a private clinic immediately. Access to mental health supports shouldn't depend on your ability to pay.

Kids wait an average of 67 days for counselling and 92 days for intensive treatment. People are literally dying waiting for help.

Why is this Premier shortchanging public mental health services when lives depend on early and consistent access to care?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, once again, I reiterate: We are building a system of care that looks after individuals where and when they need it.

Camille Quenneville, the CEO of CMHA: "The vital structural base funding commitment announced today is the largest by any government for community mental health and addictions care in a decade. It will significantly help community-based mental health and addictions agencies provide high-quality care, retain dedicated and committed staff, and address rising operating costs. The budget is an overwhelmingly positive sign that the government understands the strain our sector is facing as we support Ontarians living with mental health and addictions challenges. It also demonstrates their desire to help those most vulnerable in society."

With respect to children and youth, a quote forwarded to me from Tatum Wilson, Children's Mental Health Ontario: "We are pleased that today's budget commits significant new funding to mental health and addictions. These investments are critical to begin to stabilize community child and youth mental health" supports.

Mr. Speaker, we're listening to our partners and—

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

Next question.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The previous Liberal government missed many opportunities to build up Ontario. They didn't invest in skilled trades training and didn't support the tradespeople who are the backbone of our economy. As a result of their indifference and neglect, Ontario is not only facing a shortage of skilled trades workers; our government is also left to manage and correct health and safety issues for workers that should have been fixed years ago. As an example, workers on some construction sites continue to face issues accessing clean washroom facilities. This is wrong, disrespectful and totally unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting the health and safety needs of workers on construction sites?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the member for Thornhill for this really important question.

In Ontario today, about 600,000 people work in construction. Each and every one of them are heroes, and it's time they got the dignity and respect they deserve. For far too long, politicians and others have looked down their noses at people in the skilled trades. No more.

Over the last two months, my ministry inspectors have visited more than 1,800 job sites and inspected their washrooms. They found over 240 washroom-related violations: missing doors, missing walls, no place to wash your hands and, worst of all, no toilets on job sites. In what other industry would this be acceptable? These are people who are building our communities, not livestock.

I've spoken to workers who tell me washrooms have been an issue for generations. This ends today. We're working for workers and making sure our washrooms are clean for these heroes.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for that response and his dedicated work.

The workers building a strong Ontario for the next generation shouldn't have difficulty accessing clean and reliable washroom facilities while working. No one, especially those who are doing the necessary work to grow our province's economy, deserves this.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, we need to eliminate any barriers to entry for the skilled trades and we need to protect the health and safety of our workers. Our government must take direct action to clean up job sites, including expanding washroom facilities and holding workplaces accountable for failing to uphold health and safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on what actions our government is taking to ensure health and safety standards are respected?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I find it really interesting that the NDP and Liberals are heckling on this very important matter. It just goes to show you, Mr. Speaker—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—that the NDP don't give a damn about workers in this province.

Under the leadership of our Premier, last month we announced our government is requiring cleaner washrooms for all 600,000 construction workers. We're doubling the number of washrooms on construction sites. We're mandating that they be clean, private and well lit. We're also requiring that they have hand sanitizer when running water isn't possible and that large job sites have women-only washrooms.

Speaker, it's unacceptable that anyone is making a career choice based on washroom quality.

For over 100 years, Ontario's Ministry of Labour had never done a washroom blitz. Under our government, we

launched the first one in history, and the second blitz is starting this week. Only our government, under the leadership of this Premier, is getting it done for our front-line workers and our heroes, those construction workers.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: In an emergency, there's no worse feeling than being unable to contact emergency services or our loved ones. With the recent terrible acts of violence on the TTC, having access to cellular service in the subway tunnels would make people feel safer in a crisis. The infrastructure is there, but big telecom is not willing to use it.

Does this government think that's right? And if not, what are they willing to do about it?

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question. We are all deeply concerned about the increased number of violent incidents on public transit in the last few weeks and all levels of government agree on the importance of ensuring that transit systems across the province are safe. And so, we remain open to continuing discussions with our partners on how we can work to achieve this.

I know that transit riders want to remain connected when they're riding public transit. That's why, in 2020, our government took steps to improve connectivity and implemented free WiFi on all GO buses and trains.

As the member opposite knows, the TTC is operated by the city of Toronto and, as such, the city of Toronto is responsible for finding a resolution with the telecommunication carriers. I encourage the city of Toronto and the future mayor to find a resolution on this matter as quickly as possible.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: We need to promote ridership on the TTC, which includes more service and better service. The TTC has been trying for more than a decade to introduce cell service across the system, but there has been no interest from the big three: Rogers, Bell or Telus.

Cell service on the TTC plays a role in public safety and is a measure that should already be in place but isn't. Does the minister agree that in 2023, cell service on transit is essential? If so, what action is she going to take to fix this?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question. I absolutely agree that cell service on public transit is essential, and that's why our government took the important step in 2020 of ensuring that we have free WiFi on GO trains and buses. The public transit system, under the jurisdiction of the province of Ontario, now has free WiFi because we agree that it's essential.

Mr. Speaker, we've been supporting public transit for years, especially throughout the pandemic. The province has given over \$1.5 billion to the TTC to ensure that its system could remain operational throughout the pan-

demic. We work closely with the TTC and we've continued to urge them to find a resolution to ensure that riders on the TTC can have free WiFi as soon as possible.

POLICE SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It's a bit odd that, on a day we are going to debate a motion to protect police officers, I need to ask about protecting the public from police officers. Police officers hold important responsibilities, and to maintain public trust and confidence in our police services, we must ensure that our police officers are held to the highest of standards when it comes to their conduct. Unfortunately, that has not been the case with a particular officer in Leeds county. Despite being convicted for drug trafficking, forgery and sexual assault, this officer has been on paid leave since 2015, even making it on the sunshine list during this time.

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Mr. Speaker, if receiving three separate convictions for serious offences is not enough for a police officer to lose their job, how can the public trust the officers tasked with their safety? Can the Solicitor General explain why officers who have been convicted of serious offences are not automatically released from service in our police forces?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for her question. Let me be clear: No one convicted of serious and disturbing crimes like these should be receiving a taxpayer-funded salary. Our government brought forward legislation, the Community Safety and Policing Act, that, once enforced, will allow a chief of police to suspend an officer without pay if the officer is charged with a serious offence. This legislation, as members know, replaces a piece of legislation that's over 30 years old. Our expectation, Mr. Speaker, is that those who keep our province safe uphold the highest standards of professional ethics, and we will accept nothing less.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I agree with the minister, actually. The Community Safety and Policing Act the Solicitor General was referring to was passed in this Legislature over four years ago, receiving royal assent on March 26, 2019, yet it has still not come into force. Similarly, the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act received royal assent almost two years ago, on June 3, 2021, and has also not yet come into force.

When the Legislature adopts legislation, it does so because the enacted changes are deemed necessary to resolve important and often pressing issues in our society. Certain clauses in the Community Safety and Policing Act, for example, would have enabled a chief of police to suspend without pay the officer I mentioned earlier, just like the solicitor mentioned. The Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act was meant to help better combat human trafficking, an urgent issue in this province.

Speaker, can the government please explain why it has decided not to bring into force important legislation adopted by this Legislature?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I want to thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I have directed the deputy minister to complete the discussions with our associations and First Nation and Indigenous police services as soon as possible so that we can move forward with the enactment of the new legislation.

I want to repeat again that no one convicted of a serious crime, and disturbing crimes like these, should be receiving a taxpayer-funded salary. We expect all those that keep our province safe to uphold the highest standard of professional ethics. Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat it: We will accept nothing less.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. For the people who live, work or travel through the western part of the GTA, Highway 413 will make a significant difference to their quality of life. I consistently hear from local families and businesses in Brampton West that the potential for an easier commute is important to them. Mr. Speaker, for this reason, the voters of Peel region supported our government's pledge to build Highway 413 and elected PC MPPs in every riding along the planned route.

Highway 413 is essential to alleviating congestion, creating good jobs and preparing our province for the expected population growth over the next 30 years. This project is essential not only for the people of Brampton but is necessary for the overall prosperity of Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how Highway 413 will contribute to supporting our province's economy?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank my colleague for the question. He is absolutely right: The people of Ontario and Peel region spoke loud and clear when they re-elected our government with an even larger majority last June. They want to see Highway 413 built. The NDP and the Liberals are completely out of touch with the challenges Ontarians are facing right now.

Toronto already ranks as the seventh-most congested city in the entire world, and our major highways are at or reaching capacity. The average Toronto driver lost 118 hours, or nearly five days, sitting in traffic this past year alone. The cost to move goods is rising, and building new highways will ensure that our hospitals have the resources that they need and that our grocery store shelves are stocked.

The status quo that the opposition parties want to maintain is hurting Ontario families, and it's hurting our economy. Ontario needs Highway 413, and our government is delivering.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the minister for that response. Ontario needs new infrastructure to help move people and goods forward or Peel region will become quickly overwhelmed. The previous Liberal government ignored the need to build vital transportation networks to keep up with the GTA's growing population and

expanding business needs. The hard-working people in my riding and across Peel region know that Highway 413 will make life easier for them. However, they are frustrated by the continued opposition to this important project.

The people of Brampton expect our government to move forward with building Highway 413, but now the federal Liberals and Minister Guilbeault are trying to stop this project. Can the minister please elaborate on how our government's investment in critical highway infrastructure is vital for Ontarians' future?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The Liberals and the NDP's efforts to disrupt and to delay this project just show how out of touch they really are. Gridlock already costs our economy more than \$11 billion per year, and it adds nearly \$400 million to the costs of our goods. If we don't get Highway 413 built, the goods that we rely on will only get more expensive. Speaker, we know that building Highway 413 is the right thing to do, and we cannot afford any more delay.

In March 2020, the federal government wrote to MTO that Highway 413 did not meet the criteria for a federal impact assessment, yet months before the last election, they moved the goalposts. That's why last week my ministry sent a letter to the federal government expressing that this is unacceptable, especially for a project that is so critical to our province.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that Minister Guilbeault will do anything to stop this project from getting built. I encourage the opposition to support this project, and I encourage the Liberal MPs in Peel region to stand up in their caucus and to stand up to their federal minister. Support—

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

JUSTICE SYSTEM

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The government recently passed Bill 46, which doubled down on a band-aid solution to our court-staffing problems. Instead of expediting efforts to hire more judges, retired judges can now return to work up to 75% of full-time hours, a plan that is expensive, flawed and unsustainable.

My question to the Premier is simple: Why won't his government clear the court backlog with a proper plan which includes actually appointing more new, full-time judges?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: To paraphrase the Leader of the Opposition, if the NDP spent more time on solutions and less time on headlines, they might actually support us in what we're doing.

I would be pleased to say that in Bill 46, which was brought by my honourable friend the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, which indeed did make a positive change—I would love to say that the NDP supported us with that, Mr. Speaker, but in fact, as you would expect, they did not.

Now, in terms of adding more judges, we have added another judge. We've added a judge to Fort Frances recently, and I think that's a fantastic addition. We're constantly doing improvements to make sure we have court capacity. I would ask my friend across the way why, in fact, the NDP didn't support us on Bill 46 as we enabled more capacity of judges to attend in court.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The honourable member did not answer the question, so let me give him a new one.

Last week, the case of a police officer accused of sexual assault was thrown out, not because of the merits of the case, but because it was assigned to a semi-retired judge who took an extended vacation, which then caused an unconstitutional trial delay. These kinds of scheduling issues are entirely predictable, and they will happen more and more as this government increases our reliance on part-time judges.

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Our justice system is now being held together by duct tape. Speaker, is this government so out of touch that they don't recognize the long-term investments needed to ensure that the people of Ontario get access to justice in a timely fashion?

Hon. Doug Downey: Again, Mr. Speaker, if they would spend more time on the front lines and less time on headlines, we would actually be able to work together to improve the system. But we'll do it without them. That's okay.

I'm not going to speak to any particular case, but I cannot believe that the NDP are calling for me to interfere with judicial independence and the scheduling of courts, Mr. Speaker. I just cannot believe it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Constituents in my riding of Richmond Hill and individuals and families across the province continue to rely on our hard-working hospitals when they need access to health care and medical services. Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, critical health care infrastructure was not a priority. The failure to make investments in projects that were important to communities left our health care system crumbling, overcrowded and unprepared, especially when we needed it the most.

While significant work is already under way in many communities to improve and expand our hospitals, there is still more work that is urgently needed. Speaker, can I ask the minister to explain how our government is addressing health care infrastructure needs?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Our government was elected with a stronger mandate to build Ontario, particularly to build a resilient health care system. In our most recent budget, we are allocating \$48 billion to expand hospitals across the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, \$32 billion of that are

grants that will go to increase bed capacity and increase the number of operating rooms, as well as to expand emergency departments in communities.

Last week, we released a request for qualifications—I know my seatmate is very thrilled about this—for the Quinte Health hospital. This will be a brand new hospital in eastern Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that if you are in need of care in the province of Ontario, you will be able to receive it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the minister. Not only have you been working very hard on infrastructure for hospitals, you've worked very hard on transportation and education. I thank you for that.

Investments made by our government into the hospital sector remain vital and are welcome news for the people of my riding in Richmond Hill and all Ontarians. However, the infrastructure needs of our long-term-care homes are equally important and deserve immediate action. Sadly, after 15 years under the leadership of the previous Liberal government, their neglect and indifference resulted in long-term-care homes that were outdated, in disrepair and overcrowded.

Our government must address capacity issues in the long-term-care system now. My constituents in Richmond Hill and the people of our province expect our government to get shovels in the ground to accelerate the development of long-term-care homes. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how our government is addressing the infrastructure needs in our long-term-care sector?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Just like we're building hospitals, we are building long-term-care homes across this province, Mr. Speaker, but not just regular long-term-care homes. We are making sure that they are built with modern standards, that they are safe and that they are comfortable places for their patients.

The Minister of Long-Term Care and my ministry, the Ministry of Infrastructure, are working together to make sure that we address the long wait-lists. We are on our way to building 31,000 new beds and upgrading 28,000 beds across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard me speak about the rapid delivery program, where we built a long-term-care home in 13 months in Ajax. We are almost ready to open two more long-term-care homes in Mississauga, which will activate 600 beds. By building hospitals and long-term-care homes, we are protecting our most vulnerable.

INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. As we all know, the province is facing a very large housing crisis, but imagine facing it for 30 years. Imagine having no access to your own traditional lands to expand and build on. This is the sad reality for the Attawapiskat First Nation and many others. These communities have solutions but are stuck behind government red tape and passed around from one government to another.

Premier, when is this government going to step up and put a plan into action with a long-term solution, as it should, and start helping First Nations like Attawapiskat?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. There is an urgent need for adequate housing to meet the basic needs of many First Nations, especially across Ontario's Far North. For many First Nations in Ontario, this has meant living in houses that lack basic services such as clean drinking water and adequate heating, ventilation and insulation.

While the federal government is responsible for housing on-reserve, Ontario provides support for off-reserve affordable housing, supportive housing, capital repairs and rent supplements for Indigenous people.

We will continue working with Indigenous communities and organizations to ensure the federal government is living up to its responsibility to provide good, safe housing to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people across Ontario.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Speaker, let me remind the government that they are a signatory to Treaty 9.

Years have gone by, yet nothing is moving. Since 2014, there was a task force in place; then, in 2018, a memorandum of understanding; then a renewed relationship commitment, signed by your minister, in 2019. All Attawapiskat got so far are two plastic igloos as temporary housing.

Premier, First Nation chiefs are telling us your government is not acting on any of their issues. I ask again: When will this government put things in motion and actually do the work that is supposed to be done?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Again, thank you for the question. In October 2018, our government announced an additional \$2.1 million to help create 21 transitional housing units for Indigenous people enrolled in educational programs at the Matawa Wellness and Training Centre. In March, our government invested an additional \$6.7 million in the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, bringing the total annual investment to \$30 million.

We recognize how important culturally appropriate housing is for Indigenous communities and how critical these services are to improving the physical, mental and social well-being of Indigenous people across Ontario. Through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, our government is more than doubling Ontario's annual investment in Indigenous supportive housing to ensure those at risk for homelessness have access to the resources they need and deserve.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to first congratulate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville on her new role as the Associate Minister of Housing.

My question to the associate minister: With ongoing global economic uncertainty, our government continues to

make significant investments in programs to help the most vulnerable in our province. For people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, it is essential that they have access to the right housing supports and services they need. However, the reality is that Ontario has both an affordable housing crisis and a homelessness crisis. More resources are needed to build upon the work already under way to bring forward more measures to address the serious issues.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain what additional supports will be provided for those experiencing homelessness or for those who are at risk of homelessness, as a part of our recent budget?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the great member from Brampton East for the incredible work that he's doing in his riding.

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Speaker, I am so proud to say that the 2023 budget has provided an additional \$202 million to the Homelessness Prevention Program. This represents a 40% increase from the previous amount, bringing the total close to \$700 million in annual investments. Also, collaborating with multiple ministries to ensure that the right supports are in the right place at the right time for those most vulnerable is so critical.

The housing supply crisis is impacting Ontarians right across this province, and we know it will take time to fully implement the policies we have put forward. But I'm confident, with this Premier and this government, we are heading in the right direction.

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the associate minister for that response. It's welcome news that the 2023 budget provides greater funding investments that focus on providing vulnerable Ontarians with the support they need to stay in their homes and to get the housing they need. For many Ontarians who need our help, this funding will go a long way to improve their living situation. The nature and scope of homelessness is different in every region, and it's essential that our government continues to work closely with community partners to make the most impact on reducing and preventing homelessness.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain how this additional funding will address the needs for individuals and families in local communities across the province?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you once again to my colleague for the question. The best way to deal with homelessness is to be proactive and prevent it in the first place. We've heard from organizations and key stakeholders across the province who are pleased to see we are increasing funding for the Homelessness Prevention Program and have expressed to us how much this means to them.

For example, the chief administrative officer for the Kenora district, Henry Wall, said:

"The Kenora District Services Board is grateful to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government of Ontario for this historic increase in the Homelessness Prevention Program and service managers' ability to better address the needs of our communities. Addressing Ontario's affordable housing and homelessness crisis will take all levels of government to work together. The flexibility built into the HPP programming will facilitate community-driven solutions to addressing homelessness and increasing supportive housing options for vulnerable people."

Speaker, local service managers and representatives know their communities best. It is our job to ensure they have the tools and resources they need to deliver effective support to those who need it most.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In AMO's response to the recent budget, they stated they are "disappointed not to see a commitment from the government of Ontario" with respect to when and how the government will follow through on its commitment to "make municipalities whole" from the fiscal impacts of Bill 23.

Ontario municipalities are losing \$5 billion in infrastructure revenue. Why is this government breaking their word and cutting funding to municipalities and housing at a time when the need to support our municipal partners has never been greater?

Hon. Steve Clark: I know why the member opposite won't ever be the finance critic for the New Democratic Party.

Speaker, as I said in response to the Leader of the Opposition last week, the number one and number two requests from our municipal partners for the budget were more dollars for supportive housing and more wraparound services for mental health and addictions. We delivered on that budget, something that, at second reading, the NDP voted against.

Speaker, you know who last week really let municipalities down? Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau. There were no new infrastructure dollars in last week's budget for municipalities. There was no support for the city of Toronto. I had a great meeting on Friday with Deputy Mayor McKelvie, thanking us for our commitment on supportive housing and on our contributions that we promised. There was no clarity on any of the provincial or territorial requests on housing as part of the National Housing Strategy.

We continue to be shortchanged \$480 million, something that Jagmeet and Justin need to fix.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question. The member for University-Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is back to the Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing. Peel region has a housing master plan to build 2,400 new affordable homes on public land by 2028. The member for Brampton South even went to the announcement to celebrate the plan's

launch. The problem is this: Peel's housing plan is now in jeopardy of failing because the region is losing \$200 million in revenue because of your government's Bill 23.

Minister, how much money exactly is the government going to give to Peel so their affordable housing plan can be revived?

Hon. Steve Clark: The bottom line is that municipal support from the province of Ontario is at an all-time high. If the NDP want to talk about taxing affordable housing in the middle of a housing supply crisis, well, I've got a message back to the NDP: The housing minister says, "No way."

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is to the hard-working Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Lake Simcoe watershed contains key natural, urban and agricultural systems that are vital to Ontario and to the people in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. As our government continues to build Ontario and grow our economy, evolving pressures like population growth present ongoing challenges to our ecosystems and waterways. Some of my constituents have expressed concerns about the sustainability of land and water uses across Lake Simcoe. Our government must continue to respond to emerging issues and adapt to solutions that protect critical aspects of our environment.

Can the minister please explain what action our government is taking to protect Lake Simcoe now and for future generations?

Hon. David Piccini: I thank the fantastic member for his important question. It's on the minds of many whom I've had the opportunity to visit in the Lake Simcoe region, and that's why my ministry and the incredible team at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is working hard to implement the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan by working with partners, including Indigenous communities and municipalities. We recognize the need to manage and expand and lay the critical infrastructure required for growth while also protecting the environment. That's why I'm proud to say that working with communities there, we've ensured that this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has made the largest single investment into phosphorus reduction in that lake's history. That's building the critical infrastructure we need to support tomorrow's growth while also protecting Lake Simcoe for generations to come, and I'm very proud of the leadership of this Premier and government.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for his response. I am pleased to hear that our government is implementing measures to guarantee that the future of this vital resource is protected. Under the leadership of our government, we have seen improvements such as a decrease in the amount of algae in Lake Simcoe, which greatly enhances water quality over the long term.

It is evident our government remains committed to improving the ecosystem of Lake Simcoe. Can the minister

please elaborate on how our Lake Simcoe Phosphorus Reduction Strategy will support the neighbouring communities?

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We understand that more needs to be done to preserve and protect this valuable lake. That's why I'm again proud to say that this Premier made the largest investment in phosphorus reduction in that watershed's history, and we're working with municipalities right now and the region to implement that project.

You know, the first time I ever heard members opposite ask about this important phosphorus reduction initiative was when the member from Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas wrote to me asking why it hasn't happened sooner. It's not lost on me or anyone in the Lake Simcoe watershed that when that party had the opportunity to prop the previous Liberal government up, they voted to send sewage into Lake Simcoe, this shallow receptor body, and it was just shocking—shocking to Chief Big Canoe, shocking to neighbouring municipalities. We're going to work with them to implement a solution.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

MPP Jamie West: Conservative Bill 124 is an unconstitutional attack on the working people of Ontario. Justice Markus Koehnen of the Superior Court of Justice said that Bill 124 infringes on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

"The government was using its legislative power to avoid real collective bargaining and to tilt the balance of power in favour of the government..."

"It is difficult to see how there can be an effective collective bargaining system when the employer has been given the trump card of compensation increases lower than the rate of inflation and lower than freely bargained agreements."

All Ontarians have paid the price for the Premier's wage-capping Bill 124—just look at the staffing crises that have hit our hospitals and our schools as workers quit, feeling disrespected, overworked and underpaid.

My question, Speaker, is will the Premier finally show Bill 124 the door, or will he continue to attack workers by appealing the ruling from the Superior Court of Justice?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government has made historic and unprecedented investments into health care. The fact is the members opposite, the leader of the opposition and the opposition party, have voted against every single one of those measures.

When we launched the largest recruitment of health human resources in this province, which attracted almost 14,000 nurses to register, all of those measures that we put in place to make that happen, the members opposite voted against every single one of those measures. When we increased health care funding last year by over \$5.2 billion, the largest increase in history of this province, the members opposite voted against every single dollar of that increase.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to make historic and unprecedented investments into health care and we hope the members opposite support us in those investments.

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

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, he didn't even come close to answering the question.

Do you know what we voted against? Bill 28, when you attacked the education workers. What we voted against was Bill 124 when you attacked public sector workers, and we'll do it again.

New Democrats believe that investing in nurses is the best way to improve access to timely, safe and quality health care. But, unfortunately, Conservative Bill 124 treats health care heroes as health care zeros. As a result, many nurses have left the profession. We all know this. Those who remain continue to face increasing levels of violence, exhaustion, burnout and PTSD.

Because bad Bill 124 is unconstitutional, the Ontario Nurses' Association went to arbitration, and the arbitrator's decision increased benefits, wages, premiums and vacations for ONA's non-profit nursing-home health care professionals. Speaker, 60,000 of ONA's front-line health care professionals will be negotiating a new contract with the Ontario Hospital Association.

My question is will the Premier kill Bill 124, or will the Conservatives continue to fight Ontario's workers with this unconstitutional wage cap?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. In terms of nursing environments, our government has invested \$73 million over three years to train and provide clinical placements for over 16,000 PSWs and nursing students; in addition, \$35 million to increase nursing enrolment to add 2,000 nurses to the health care system, \$34 million over four years to increase enrolment at six Indigenous institutes and \$100 million to add 2,000 nurses to the long-term-care sector by 2024-25. Eligible PSWs will receive up to \$6,000 a year.

We also have a nursing program transformation, partnering with MCU and LTC, that will increase access to nursing programs at publicly assisted colleges.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing in PSWs, nurses, colleges and universities, and international students, international nurses and recruitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Dr. Fuad Muradov, chairman of the state committee on work with diaspora, of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Joining him is Tony Ruprecht, a former member of provincial Parliament representing the riding of Parkdale from the 32nd to the 36th Parliaments

and the riding of Davenport from the 37th to the 39th Parliaments.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

Hon. Parm Gill: I have a few individuals to recognize, so please bear with me, if you don't mind.

First and foremost, I'd like to welcome and recognize the deputy minister, Maud Murray; the assistant deputy minister, Rakhi Lad; and executive adviser Cameron Yu, from our official side.

I also have members of my team, for the political side, from my office I'd like to recognize: of course, my chief of staff, Robert; Evan; Harjot; Corey; Kosta; Brittany; Jonathan; Kamel; Quinn; and Jared.

All of these individuals work really, really hard to make me look good in here, so I want to thank them for all of their tremendous work.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to welcome the delegation from Survivors of Law Enforcement who are with us today.

I'm delighted to welcome, from my office, Justin Mihaly; Stan Federman; Mark Tenaglia—my son Aaron Kerzner; my wife's cousins Bruce and Shelly Gram; and especially my wife, Rochelle Kerzner.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultations, 2023, from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, today I'm pleased to table the committee's report entitled Pre-Budget Consultations 2023.

The committee conducted its pre-budget consultations in January and February of 2023. Public hearings were held in Kenora, Windsor, Essex, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Ottawa, Kingston, Barrie, and Toronto. The committee heard from a total of 140 witnesses and received over 200 submissions from associations, organizations, community groups, municipalities, and individuals. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank each and every one of them for taking the time to share their views with us.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee: Catherine Fife, Vice-Chair; Deepak Anand; Doly Begum; Stephanie Bowman; Bobbi Ann Brady; Rick Byers; Stephen Crawford; Rudy Cuzzetto; Andrew Dowie; David Smith, Scarborough Centre; and Effie Triantafilopoulos. Terence

Kernaghan and Aris Babikian also regularly served as substitute members of the committee.

The committee also extends its thanks to the Clerk of the Committee, legislative research, broadcast and recording services, Hansard and interpretation for their assistance and hard work during the hearings and report-writing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hardeman has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Mr. Gill moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 91, Loi visant à édicter deux lois, à modifier diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the minister to briefly explain his bill.

Hon. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act—part of our broader spring 2023 red tape reduction package—contains proposals from 10 partner ministries, includes 37 schedules, and introduces two new acts. The initiatives in this legislation, if passed, will pave the way for better services, help Ontario businesses grow, save Ontarians time, and continue to solidify Ontario's position as a key player in the North American and global economic landscape, now and for generations to come.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH CARE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE FINANCEMENT TRANSPARENT ET RESPONSABLE DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario / Projet de loi 92, Loi visant à promouvoir le

financement transparent et responsable des services de santé en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd love to, Speaker.

The bill enacts the Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act.

Under the act, major health sector organizations—that is, anyone who receives more than \$1 million from the Ministry of Health—will be required to comply with the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act—so if anybody makes more than \$100,000, their name would go on the list—and with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. These organizations are also deemed to be governmental organizations for the purposes of the Ombudsman Act, so people can put in complaints. The Auditor General of Ontario is authorized to audit any aspect of their operation.

The same requirements apply with respect to publicly funded suppliers. A publicly funded supplier is an entity that receives more than \$1 million in public funds in a year from major health sector organizations or ministries.

I fully support this bill, and I hope it goes through.

JOSHUA'S LAW (LIFEJACKETS FOR LIFE), 2023

LOI JOSHUA DE 2023 SUR LE PORT OBLIGATOIRE DU GILET DE SAUVETAGE PAR LES ENFANTS

Ms. Ghamari moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to enact Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), 2023 / Projet de loi 93, Loi édictant la Loi Joshua de 2023 sur le port obligatoire du gilet de sauvetage par les enfants.

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

First reading agreed to.

1310

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: The bill enacts Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), 2023, which requires parents and guardians to ensure that their children who are 12 years of age or younger wear a personal flotation device or life jacket while on a pleasure boat that is under way or while being towed behind a pleasure boat using recreational water equipment. If the child is not under the supervision of the parent or guardian but is under the supervision of a person who is 18 years of age or older at the relevant time, the requirement applies instead to that person. The requirement does not apply if the child is in an enclosed cabin. Definitions of "pleasure boat" and "recreational water equipment" are provided.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Cara McNulty for her work in advocating for this legislation and my former

colleague MPP Norm Miller for introducing this back in February 2022.

PETITIONS

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: J'ai l'honneur de me lever pour présenter une pétition qui s'intitule « Soutenez le système d'éducation francophone en Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

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

« Alors 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;

« Alors 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;

« Alors 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;

« Par conséquent, nous, soussignés, demandons 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 totalement cette pétition. Je vais ajouter mon nom et l'envoyer à la table des greffiers avec Morgan.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petition on behalf of the good people of London North Centre. It is entitled "Stop Ford's Health Care Privatization Plan." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to

further privatize Ontario's health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Paul to the Clerks.

ORGAN DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Pierre LeClerc from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

"Saving Organs to Save Lives...."

"Whereas Ontario has one of the best organ transplant programs in the world;

"Whereas there are currently" over 1,300 "people waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in Ontario;

"Whereas every three days someone in Ontario dies because they can't get a transplant in time;

"Whereas donating organs and tissues can save up to eight lives and improve the lives of up to 75 people;

"Whereas 90% of Ontarians support organ donation, but only 36% are registered;

"Whereas Nova Scotia has seen increases in organs and tissue for transplant after implementing a presumed consent legislation in January 2020;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: "Change the legislation to allow a donor system based on presumed consent as set out in MPP Gélinas's ... Peter Kormos Memorial Act (Saving Organs to Save Lives)."

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Jonas to bring it to the Clerk.

FERRY SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to share this.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wolfe Island ferry and Glenora ferry have had serious service disruptions due to a staffing crisis created by the Ontario government; and

"Whereas residents and visitors to Wolfe Island have been trapped on the island for up to 12 hours with no way to leave, even for emergencies or work; and

"Whereas Glenora ferry has had a reduced schedule during this year's busy tourism season, creating hours of lineups and delays for passengers; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) ferry workers are drastically underpaid in comparison to the rest

of the marine industry, causing recruitment and retention issues; and

“Whereas instead of paying competitive wages and hiring more permanent staff, MTO has contracted out the work to Reliance Offshore, an out-of-province, private temporary staffing agency, which charges up to twice as much hourly as ministry staff earn; and

“Whereas contracting out the work is a waste of our public funds on a stopgap solution that doesn’t provide long-term stability to our ferry system;

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

“(1) Fix our ferries—stop the service disruptions and reductions caused by ministry understaffing.

“(2) Repeal Bill 124, which has imposed a three-year wage cut on already underpaid ferry workers during high inflation, and pay them fair, competitive wages.

“(3) End the outrageously expensive contracts with private temporary staffing agencies and hire permanent Ministry of Transportation ferry workers to work and live in our communities instead.”

Of course, I support this petition. I will affix my signature and I will send it to the table with page Evelyn.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I will affix my signature to it here and I will be passing it to page Felicity to bring to the table shortly.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’m proud to present this petition on behalf of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto.

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

1320

“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 will proudly affix my signature to this petition and send it to the centre table with page Savannah.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to present this petition. It has been signed by Sara Labelle of Oshawa.

“Stop Ford’s Health Care Privatization Plan.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas” the Premier and health minister “say they’re planning to privatize parts of health care;

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

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of course, I support this. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jonas.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition.

“To Raise Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the recent budget increase of 5% for ODSP, with nothing for OW, could be experienced as an insult to recipients, who have been living since 2018 with frozen social assistance rates and a Canadian inflation rate that reached 12%;

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

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

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is from the Island school in my riding.

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

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

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

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Office reported a \$2.1-billion surplus in 2021-22, and surpluses growing to \$8.5 billion in 2027-28, demonstrating there is more than enough money to fund a robust public education system;

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

“—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

“—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and pass it to page Mia to take to the table.

SENIORS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, to address the budget for seniors, the Ontario government has proposed to make changes to expand the eligibility of the Guaranteed Annual Income System, GAINS, starting in July 2024, which would see about 100,000 more low-income seniors receive payments for a 50% increase in recipients, and proposing to lower the rate at which the benefit is reduced from 50% to 25%, which means a senior can keep more of their benefit as their private income increases, and proposing to adjust the benefit annually to inflation to continually put more money in the pockets of eligible seniors; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario is investing more than \$174 million over two years, starting in 2024-25 to continue the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program, which leverages the skills of paramedicine to provide additional care for seniors in the comfort of their own homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is continuing to make progress on its plan to build modern, safe and comfortable long-term-care homes for seniors and residents, and through planned investments that total a historic \$6.4 billion since 2019, Ontario is on track to build more than 31,000 new and over 28,000 upgraded beds across the province by 2028, and that the government is helping to increase long-term-care capacity in communities across the province by providing development loans and loan guarantees to select non-municipal not-for-profit homes;

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

I will affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BAIL REFORM

RÉFORME DE LA MISE EN LIBERTÉ SOUS CAUTION

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I move that an address be presented to the Speakers of the federal Parliament in the following words:

“This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.”

And that the said address be engrossed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The Solicitor General has moved government notice of motion number 13.

Back to you.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and the Attorney General.

Madam Speaker, we are here today to debate an important motion: that the House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.

It’s an honour for me to rise here in this House, as Solicitor General, to support this important motion.

1330

Madame la Présidente, c’est un grand honneur pour moi de prendre la parole à la Chambre, en tant que solliciteur général, pour appuyer cette motion importante.

I always knew that sometime in my life I would be part of a story much larger than myself, in a province that gave me more opportunities than I had any right to deserve, and serve here as the 1,947th person to be elected to this House since Confederation on a journey in a community that helped me understand who I am, how I stand and where I stand, with my feet on the ground—just a man, here, in the people’s House of democracy.

Madam Speaker, as MPPs, one of our most fundamental responsibilities is to preserve law and order in our society. It’s obvious, as I’ve said many times all over this province, that when we have a safe community, we have absolutely everything. We have a place to work, and we have a place to play. We have a place to raise our families. We have a place to shop, and we have a place to pray. We

have it all. Without safe communities, we have nothing. Safety is the springboard for all we have.

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, about an event that took place this past Thursday. For me, it was very personal. You see, I had the honour of witnessing something amazing. Over 470 cadets graduated at the Ontario Police College—diverse and different, and on their way with eagerness to serve their communities all across our province. In my remarks to the graduating class, I asked a simple question: Why are we here? What is the essence of the meaning of keeping our communities safe? Some say we should try to do everything, to be everywhere, and to help everyone. But the goal is just too large, and it’s not realistic at times. I told the cadets on their day, “Do one thing for one person each day, and that way you can make a difference in a person’s life.”

Madame la Présidente, notre raison d’être ici est de faire la différence dans la vie des gens.

Madam Speaker, I dedicate my remarks to all of the police officers who we’ve lost in the line of duty and to the people in our communities who have been victims of violent crime.

For me, my own moment in time, the time I knew I came of age, was on September 12, 2022, on hearing the news of the tragic events pertaining to the passing of Constable Andrew Hong of Toronto Police Service. I came of age standing shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of police officers from Toronto as Andrew’s remains were brought with dignity to the coroner’s office later that evening. The lights of the motorcycles and the police cars are etched into my mind. I knew in that moment, when I came home, my life was changed forever.

In the subsequent weeks, again our hearts were filled with unbearable sadness on the loss of Constables Morgan Russell and Devon Northrup of the South Simcoe Police Service and, this past December, Grzegorz Pierzchala of the Ontario Provincial Police in Cayuga.

We also remember those whose lives were cut short, also sadly: Constable Yang of the RCMP, Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan of the Edmonton Police Service and, most recently—so recently—Sergeant Maureen Breau of the Sûreté du Québec. We remember Jeff Northrup and many others whose lives were lost in the years just preceding this.

These brave souls were lost in such tragic circumstances, but they will always be heroes in life.

Madam Speaker, violent crime has changed the lives of so many families in our province. I think of a remarkable organization who’s with us today in the gallery, Survivors of Law Enforcement, whom I’ve had the honour of running with during this past year’s Run to Remember. It was a run for me to remember the rest of my life. For us here today, it is doubtful that we can know how they feel when they lose someone like they have. Many, if not all of us, do not know what they know: that deep, black hole that opens up in their chest, where they feel sucked into it. Many, if not all of us, do not know what they know as to how mean and cruel and unfair life can be. In a personal way, I feel honoured by these families, that they have let

me into their lives to listen and to learn about their loved ones, and I have learned some special things. First, they taught me that your loved one may have left this earth, but they never leave your heart; they will always be with you. And second, they taught me that the best way through pain and loss and grief is to find purpose.

I think of the names I saw etched into the National Police and Peace Officers' Memorial on Parliament Hill this past fall, and the names that will be added in the weeks ahead at the memorial here at Queen's Park. Each name etched represents a scar on a family's heart.

Madam Speaker, we know to be human is to be a storyteller. All the narratives we construct—the true ones and the ones we tell ourselves are true but may not be—are acts of self-construction, prisms of understanding by which we build our own identity. We tell all sorts of tales to clean up wrinkles in our own lives. We put the spotlight on certain moments.

But here's the thing: The uncomfortable truth that we need to confront now is the reason why I'm speaking here today. This story is about the events that shaped my life, as tragic as they were—are undeniably true.

The common thread of the tragedies of our fallen officers is that they sacrificed absolutely everything to keep us safe.

Ourselves are defined by other selves, those who are physically here and those who are present in our hearts, and I know this because I know they are all here with us.

Our purpose, especially now, is to fix what is broken, and we need to go where the clues take us—what is so obvious. I learned, perhaps unexpectedly, about the bond that is universal but perhaps not well-known or advertised, and this is a bond about a brotherhood and sisterhood. And we are honoured that many representatives of the associations of this brotherhood and sisterhood are with us today, and we are grateful to them. You see, the brotherhood and sisterhood look like Ontario, and we're proud of that. Notre diversité est notre plus grande réussite. Our diversity is our strength. This brotherhood believes in our province and in our future, and they stand shoulder to shoulder in good times and in sad. The work the brotherhood and sisterhood do to keep us safe is righteous. Madam Speaker, one can say there is an absolute righteousness when we run to find the truth. And now, the truth finds us in this moment of a call to action.

Today, we can decide to act. By supporting this motion, we can show our constituents and show the federal government how fundamental it is to implement bail reform now, so we have safer communities.

Our time since September 12 changed everything. And, sadly, we continue to see more officers in Ontario and across Canada be killed in the line of duty.

For me, the Premier and our government, today's motion is personal. We are proud to support our police officers and everyone who keeps Ontario safe. Our support for them is heartfelt and enduring.

Madame la Présidente, pour le premier ministre et pour moi, c'est personnel. Nous sommes fiers de soutenir nos

policiers et tous ceux qui assurent la sécurité de l'Ontario tous les jours.

1340

Madam Speaker, today's motion is an important step. It's a critical opportunity for Ontario to speak with one voice to the federal government. But it's by no means our first step.

I am proud to serve in this government. And, as I've said many times, there has never been a government in the history of this province and in my generation or in this country that cared as much about our safety as our government. And it starts at the top. It starts with our Premier for making public safety a priority. We can all be proud that our Premier has led the way in this country when it comes to public safety. It was our Premier who joined together with all his provincial and territorial counterparts to demand bail reform from the federal government. And it was our Premier who supported both myself and our Attorney General in working with the federal government to improve public safety and implement bail reform. These were key topics at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings, both last fall and just a short month ago. It is our Premier who knows that a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario.

The fact is, we need the federal government to step up, and that's what today's motion calls for.

Our government went to Ottawa, as I said, just last month to advocate for urgent bail reform. The Ontario delegation sat down with Canada's Attorney General and Canada's Minister of Public Safety, along with our provincial and territorial ministers. When we were there, we insisted on change. I remember the advocacy that I made, as well, with our Attorney General when we were at a LEIT meeting this past fall in Nova Scotia—I might add, at the moment we learned of the passing of Constables Northrup and Russell from south Simcoe. We underlined the need, then, for the Liberal government in Ottawa to fix the gaps in the Criminal Code. Some of these gaps exist because of the Liberals' Bill C-75, while other gaps are longer-standing issues which must also be addressed.

The current bail rules in Canada not only allow repeat and violent offenders to recommit serious offences with little or no consequences, but they truly incentivize this criminal behaviour because there's little deterrent.

Madam Speaker, as Ontario's Solicitor General, I hear again and again from our police associations and chiefs about how broken our country's bail system is. These women and men put on their uniform with pride each day, but the current bail rules put them and our communities at risk of injury and death. These are incredible people who keep our communities safe. They deserve to come home safely each and every night.

Madame la Présidente, ce sont des gens formidables qui nous protègent au quotidien. Ils méritent d'aller travailler et de rentrer chez eux en toute sécurité.

We've been asking the federal government in Ottawa to strengthen our borders to stop the flow of illegal handguns coming in from entering the country. I've been to the borders, with my great friend and colleague the member

from Sarnia–Lambton—I’ve been to Niagara; I’ve been to Sault Ste. Marie; and I was just recently a few miles away from the border in Thunder Bay. The narrative of the illegal guns coming into Canada is absolutely true. As I’ve said previously in this House, legal gun owners are not the problem, and the illegal users of firearms will not be surrendering their guns. I’ve said this in the House—and I’ve urged Minister Mendicino to meet me at the border and see for himself. I encourage the members of the opposition, especially those from Niagara, from Thunder Bay and from Windsor, to join our government in making these calls.

We have also insisted on a commitment by the federal government to long-term, permanent and sustainable funding of the federal Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund. Ottawa has an opportunity to fix it, and they should fix it now.

Madam Speaker, the evidence is clear: The status quo is not working when it comes to bail rules.

I can say that it is absolutely tragic—and I’ll talk about it again in a few minutes—that we were in the House just a week ago to hear the tragic news of young Gabriel being stabbed to death at Keele station in Toronto by somebody out on bail.

We need federal minister David Lametti to make good on his promise on bail reform, because it is time.

In the meantime, sadly, innocent lives continue to be lost.

Imagine that you are dropping off your son or your daughter at a transit station to go to school or to go to work. You would never imagine that they would never come home.

Today we remember Gabriel and Vanessa, who lost her life when she was just 31, the same age as RCMP Constable Yang. The wounds in our hearts are immeasurably fresh as we remember Gabriel, who was killed, as I mentioned, at the TTC station. No parent should have to bury their son or daughter. No parent should have to go through what the parents of Gabriel are currently going through.

It is absolutely tragic that Canada’s bail system is broken. But the government of Ontario is stepping up. The city of Toronto is stepping up. We need the federal government to step up as well. We must do everything we can so families don’t have this pain.

Ontario is taking action in the absence of the federal government. Our continued advocacy to the federal government is something that is absolutely important. I again highlight and showcase the fact that the Premier, in a matter of hours, got all 13 provinces and territories to send a letter to the federal government on January 13. It stated: “A reverse onus on bail must be created for the offence of possession of a loaded or restricted firearm in section 95 of the Criminal Code.

“A person accused of a section 95 offence should not have to demonstrate why their detention is not justified when they were alleged to have committed an offence where there was imminent risk to the public.

“A review of other firearms related offences is also warranted to determine whether they should also attract a reverse onus on bail.”

Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the important work being done by my colleagues in this House. Just last month, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, with the participation of my parliamentary assistants, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the member from Sarnia–Lambton, issued a comprehensive report that further outlined immediate action that should be taken on bail reform. Five experts were asked a question: Will bail reform save lives? Time and time again, the answer is yes. One of the committee’s recommendations suggested an amendment to the Criminal Code, endorsed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. The amendment would define a “chronic offender” and put the onus on them to show why they should be granted bail. These are important, constructive, concrete proposals in the report. By supporting today’s motion, we can demonstrate our endorsement of the justice committee’s work and support the recommendations on bail reform.

There are a lot of things that we need to do, and we need to do it now. There is an urgency to do it now so more lives are not lost. Unfortunately, the bail system is broken, and it is churning out violent offenders time after time. This is unacceptable. Lives are at stake, and for me and the Premier and this government, this is personal. Disturbingly, we continue seeing instances of organized crime, gun and gang activity, and illegal weapons on our streets. We must be unanimous in our call to keep our communities safe.

As I travelled all across the province, stopping in regularly at police stations, from the Niagara Parks service—perhaps one of the smallest, although I’ve been to the Aylmer Police Service as well—to Waterloo, York region, and south Simcoe, I have met the heroes of today and tomorrow for myself.

1350

It’s important, Madam Speaker, for us to stand today and to support this.

I thought about Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala of the OPP, a newly minted officer who had just been signed off to patrol on his own. I think it was his first day—it’s hard to believe—and by all accounts, he would have been an unbelievable officer. He was ambushed by a criminal who was coddled by the judiciary and was released on bail. It was absolutely callous. That’s what the federal government thinks of justice. We have to make a change. Grzegorz Pierzchala was only 28 years old.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I call on the federal government to act, I call on the opposition to fulfill their duty to keep Ontario safe, and I encourage all members to join me in supporting this motion. This motion represents the will of the people of Ontario. It’s not some empty gesture here in this Ontario Legislature. The federal government must take note and pay attention now.

Madame la Présidente, rien pour moi en tant que solliciteur général n’est plus important que la sécurité de notre province. As Solicitor General, there’s nothing more

important to me than the safety of our province. We all have an equal right to feel safe.

Getting back to the beginnings of my remarks: No loss could be so central to our system of values, so core to who we are today than the loss of our own, those who gave their lives in the line of duty. And no amount of comment or reflection could capture the impact of those individuals. Their love for their families and our province was big, and their impact was broad. A part of our lives that we've taken for granted as being permanent is no longer here. Their memories must be for a blessing. It is time to do the right thing, and we know it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):
Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I rise in full support of the motion now tabled by my honourable colleague the Solicitor General of Ontario. I rise in support of this motion because, well, I'm a human being; because I'm a member of my community; because I have relatives, loved ones, neighbours and friends who are fearful of what this city is becoming; but also because I try my hardest to represent the views of the people who elected me—the young and the old, the well-to-do and the dispossessed, the connected and the voiceless. I seek to represent everyone in my constituency. Don't we all? But above all, I am a citizen, and I am a believer in the concept of civility versus chaos, of right and wrong. And today—in the spirit of this motion—I see a lot of wrong stalking my city. I see it across Ontario and across Canada. Be honest, my honourable colleagues: You see it too. In large part, it takes the form of a system of justice that favours the perpetrator over the victim. It's a system that seeks root causes, when those root causes too often lie at the tip of a knife or the muzzle of a gun, or a can of flammable liquid and a match, or the raw, bare hands of a strangler. It is a system that assumes the best of the worst among us. And it has got to stop.

Canada needs meaningful bail reform. Serious violent offenders, offenders convicted of intimate partner violence, repeat violent criminals, offenders caught with illegal guns are all being released back onto our streets. As a result, many Ontarians are now afraid to walk down the street or take public transit for the first time in decades.

The people of Ontario are right to be frustrated by the failures of Canada's justice system. Yet despite repeated demands from every single Premier across this country, led on this critical issue by Premier Ford, Ottawa has continued to resist making the necessary changes to keep our communities safe.

I fully recognize that there have been two distinct manifestations of random violence on our streets, subways, buses and streetcars in the recent months: those who are homeless and often have psychological challenges or challenges with addictions, who may have sought shelter from the weather in our transit system—they deserve our compassion, the right treatment, and comfort from the cold. But there's a second category—and this is the point of my remarks in the House today, and indeed to this motion: those who are inherently violent and calculating;

those who have committed offences in the past, often many times, and often violent offences at that, who are turned back onto our streets time and time again.

It's all because of—let's call it what it is—a perverted part of our federal justice system that essentially says, "Let's give them one more chance, and then another, and then another, and then another." And as we all know now, it has happened in our city again.

Speaker, this matter is very personal to me, as the member of provincial Parliament for Etobicoke–Lake-shore. We've seen the violence on our TTC creep into our neighbourhoods.

Tragically, just last week, as the minister mentioned, Gabriel, a teenager of just 16 years of age, was murdered on the TTC by a repeat violent offender out on bail. This hits too close to home. As the CBC reported on March 28, a young felon, charged with the unprovoked stabbing death of a 16-year-old boy at Keele subway station three days previously, had a rap sheet as long as your arm. He had been in and out of prison, both here and in Newfoundland and Labrador, over several years. He was wanted on an outstanding warrant for breaching probation conditions. Charges against him included low-level fraud, theft, mischief, arson, uttering threats, and failing to comply with court orders. He had been ordered not to possess any kind of weapon. He had previously been charged with one count each of assault, obstructing a police officer and failing to attend court. Yet despite it all, an innocent 16-year-old boy has been robbed of his future and snatched from his family forever.

But as all members of this House well know, this grisly roll call doesn't end there. Here is just a sampling of the carnage in Ontario alone, with thanks to a January 17 National Post article:

On January 11, a 19-year-old Mississauga man was stabbed from behind by a suspect out on bail for a series of alleged violent crimes.

Last December 14, Peel police charged a man with two counts of attempted murder after he allegedly fired a gun into a group of men during an argument. He, too, was out on bail and was already wanted by the Toronto police for second-degree murder and attempted murder.

Last December 27, a man already out on bail for a string of firearms charges and assault on a peace officer was charged with murder in the death of a rookie OPP constable.

And on January 16, one of four accused in a violent London, Ontario, gold dealer robbery, during which the owner was shot dead, was granted bail, even having been found to be previously on bail after leading police on a car chase. That charge was laid while the suspect was already out on bail for gun charges.

So what do we do to end this litany of horrors thanks to what has come to be called Ottawa's "catch-and-release" policy regarding violent offenders?

You could ask the federal justice minister, David Lametti. On March 7, he told the National Post, "I believe our bail system is strong and sound, but we are always

open to suggestions for improvements.” I’ll just leave that one hanging out there for a second.

Or you could ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition, right here in the chamber. On March 28, in Brian Lilley’s column in the *Toronto Sun*, the member was referred to as follows in her response to calls for more police to tackle this epidemic:

“Stiles said calls for more police were fruitless and just Ford playing politics.

“The solution is to address the root cause. We have a homelessness crisis. We have a mental health and addiction crisis,” Stiles said.”

At least the latter part is true. But as noted earlier, we also have a crime crisis—a crisis of hardened criminals repeatedly let loose on our streets to reoffend, re-assault and often re-murder again and again and again.

1400

On the matter of improvements: In our most meaningful attempt to remedy these lax federal bail rules to date, this House convened special legislative justice committee hearings over January 30 and January 31, inviting expert testimony on how reform to these laws could hopefully save lives. As parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, I took a lead role in these hearings, with my colleague the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Here, in my mind, is the key quote from sworn testimony—this one is from a question put forth to OPP commissioner Thomas Carrique: “Yes, I do believe that bail reform will save lives. The experience of police officers in our communities will testify to that. The data where we see ... violent offenders while out on bail committing further violent acts will corroborate that.”

Throughout these hearings, we heard a constant and concerning theme: Serious violent offenders, those previously convicted for intimate partner violence, repeat violent criminal offenders, and thugs caught with illegal guns are being routinely released back onto our streets thanks to the dysfunction of the Canadian bail system.

Our committee’s report, unanimously supported by all three parties, was tabled in the Legislature on March 20, 2023.

The time for stalling and excuses from Ottawa is over. The time for action is now. Until that happens, our government is doing everything we can to confront violent crime within the scope of our own jurisdiction.

In addition to demanding criminal justice reform from the federal government concerning bail rules, led by Premier Ford, with the support of all Premiers, we have hired more correctional services and parole officers for Toronto detention centres. We have deployed new technologies to deter carjacking, and we have committed \$75 million to fight cross-border guns and drugs by disrupting gang activities and their revenue streams. This investment also created a guns-and-gangs mobile prosecution unit, to name just a few initiatives, all designed to keep our community safe.

Speaker, in my role as MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, every time I head out for constituency events I hear about the sense of outrage expressed by the people in my

riding—I spoke to a man just on Friday, and I told him to watch, so, hopefully, he is watching—that follows the daily headlines of acts of violence committed by offenders out on bail. “Can’t you do something?” they ask. As parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, I always feel as though I’m making excuses when I try to explain that the Criminal Code and its bail and parole provisions are Ottawa’s responsibility.

But now, the ball is firmly in Minister Lametti’s court, thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford in marshalling the support of every single province and territory and pushing for an end to catch-and-release.

As the *National Post* so ably put it a short while ago, “It’s hard to get all 10 Canadian provinces to agree on much, but last week they agreed that the state of the country’s bail system is a disaster.” It all so simply is a disaster.

In fact, it is so commonsensical that I remain astonished that more people in positions of authority just don’t get it still today—and it goes like this: “Commit the crime? You do the time.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):
Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a pleasure to be here today in support of my colleague and my boss, the Solicitor General, and, of course, my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who I was on that committee with, and who does such a great job in speaking up on intimate partner violence. I told her, “Make sure you touch on that”—because in my remarks I don’t, and I think it should come from her. She did an able job there.

We’re here today to stand in support of safe communities, as the Solicitor General said. We’re also here today to stand up for Ontarians. We’re here today to demand justice for those whose lives have been lost to violent crime, including our police officers. Because when we have safe communities, we have everything.

Unfortunately, the federal government continues to be soft on repeat offenders of violent crime. Let me remind you, Speaker, that when a motion to strengthen bail reform was presented before the House of Commons in February of this year, it was shot down immediately by a federal government set on their view that there’s nothing wrong with the current Canadian bail system. I think the general public would differ with that.

That’s why we’re here today. That’s why I’m standing here today in support of the Solicitor General’s motion. The motion, once again, calls on the federal government to repeal measures which force judges to be lenient towards repeat offenders and dangerous career criminals. There’s no room for leniency and wishful thinking when we’re talking about repeat criminals who have demonstrated a pattern of endangering our communities through reoffending time and time again. The federal government must respond to the call to action from the provinces and the territories—I actually represented the minister in Ottawa at that conference, and there was unanimity amongst the whole room, from all across the country and territories. They need to ensure that repeat violent

offenders, especially those accused of serious firearms charges, do not find themselves back in our communities because of a negligent bail system. The safety of law-abiding citizens of Ontario and Canada must take precedence. The very concerns that this motion aims to address have been echoed not only across this province but nationwide.

Speaker, I was honoured to join our government in March at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Ottawa on bail reform. There, we said, in no uncertain terms, to federal minister David Lametti that the time is now for meaningful national bail reform. Safety can't wait. Our Premier and our Solicitor General led the way in establishing consensus among the Premiers of all 10 provinces and three territories and in calling for bail reform, along with the Solicitors General and Attorneys General of those other provinces. It's clear to me that we're all on the same page in wanting safer communities for Canadians. Why, then, is the federal government continuing to reduce the penalties for violent criminals, placing reoffenders back in our communities to wander the streets without any accountability? This is unacceptable.

Violent crime under this federal government has gone up over 30%, and gang-related crime is up over 100%. Given this grim reality, our provincial government will continue to fight for real federal bail reform.

That's exactly what the Standing Committee on Justice Policy has worked on and presented in its report, as my colleague mentioned earlier, on March 20. As a member of that committee, it was important to me that we had a chance to listen to the OPP commissioner, in addition to the police chiefs and association leadership from across the province.

The people of Ontario and the people who keep us safe have a clear message: Bail reform will save lives. If you're a repeat weapons offender, you should not get out on bail if you fail to demonstrate that you can be a safe member of this community. As of right now, the catch-and-release bail system is not the right solution.

I want to reassure every member here that I, along with the Premier and the Solicitor General, believe in the principle of "innocent until proven guilty." But it is not right to shift the burden on police services by leaving them to deal with repeat offenders being allowed back in the community.

With the introduction of federal Bill C-75 three years ago, the system that was built to ensure public safety has become preoccupied with clearing backlogs. This has undoubtedly led to more dangerous criminals being released on bail when taking these individuals into custody was the appropriate action—not only this; we have seen that our current system has been failing to ensure that repeat offenders released on bail show up and attend court. This is also unacceptable.

As I've already mentioned, these very same concerns have been echoed across the province.

I'd like to share the words of someone from my own community, Sarnia police chief Derek Davis, who explained the issue very clearly: If there is a warrant for

someone's arrest for missing their court date, "we arrest you and immediately release you, and if you don't attend that court date, rinse (and) repeat."

This harmful catch-and-release has left the local police force in my riding—and I'm sure across this province—among others, to urge the government to take another look at the rules as written.

I encourage all members of this House to speak with your own local police chiefs and police association members. Learn about the challenges on the ground. It will become evident to you how necessary today's motion is and how much we need meaningful bail reform. The purpose of this motion today is to answer those calls for change.

As of December 30, 2022—to go back to my community—in the community of Sarnia, the local police had been in contact with 230 individuals 20 or more times in the previous calendar year. That's 4,600 times that police had to respond to these same individuals.

Considering such frightening statistics, how can anyone argue that the current status of the bail reform system is adequate enough to keep the people of Ontario and our nation safe?

1410

Let me elaborate further on one specific case in my community. A serial offender facing probation, assault, mischief, and break and enter charges had contact with the police 116 times in a one-year period—that certainly is "rinse and repeat." Included in that number were well-being checks, warrants, arrests, conversations, and being the subject of complaints. I can't think of a worse case of resources being wasted on one individual—where there are many other calls that get put on the back burner because of one individual. Imagine how many times this is happening across this province every day. Placing the burden on police officers to deal with such repeat offenders time and time again consumes a vast number of resources and prevents them from being able to respond to emergency situations, where they're needed most. This is just one example. Unfortunately, this is not unique to my community.

The current bail system certainly needs serious changes.

How many chances must a repeat offender of violent crime be given before it is time to prioritize the rights of law-abiding people who deserve to feel safe on the streets of their communities?

It's my hope that through this motion, we no longer will have to ask these questions, and that the federal government will finally listen to the calls from our province.

The immense and proven threat to public safety will continue to grow out of control without drastic and immediate reform to the Criminal Code of Canada. For the safety of the people of Ontario and right across this great country, this matter cannot wait. The time for action is now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm really pleased to rise and address this very, very important issue and get some further context to where we are and how we got here. It's something that we hear about in our ridings. It's something that we hear about from family and friends. And certainly it's something that we hear about from those who are the victims of crime. We actually even hear about it from some of the offenders—and some of their perspectives on how this works and how this works for them sometimes.

I'm going to refrain from talking about any cases in particular, of course, because that's the right thing to do, and I expect we will all do the same thing. But I want to talk about how policy is made and how these kinds of things happen and come to change.

As we all know—but not everybody knows—there are two lists of powers in this country: There's the provincial list and the federal list. It's in the Constitution. It's fairly clear who does what in many of these pieces. Where the province is charged with running the administration of justice and appointing the Ontario judges, the federal government is charged with running the Criminal Code and where we turn the dial on that, and appointing Superior Court judges and Court of Appeal judges. So we have this partnership where the federal government appoints certain judges but the province is entrusted to run the system itself, and then we have overlaid on that the Criminal Code. A large percentage of the Ontario judges who are appointed by our government—and previous governments—deal with Criminal Code matters. So, again, we have another overlap, and it becomes very complicated to have a conversation when you're dealing with one system but many fingers in the system. So, as in other ministries, we have what are called federal-provincial-territorial meetings, which are meetings of the ministers of the relevant ministry—in this case, the Attorney General's office or the Solicitor General's office. And we meet with our counterparts from across the country on occasion to talk about issues that are important to all Canadians. We will often meet as the provincial and territorial members, and then we will, as a group, meet with our federal counterparts. This happens as need be and on a fairly regular basis—once or twice a year.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we've been dealing with some of these issues since I've become the Attorney General. There are conversations we've had with our colleagues in Alberta and Manitoba and New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, of course, and the territories—all members from across the country—and the alignment that we have on some issues just shows that although we have great diversity in Canada, we share some common values. But I have never seen before—and I've been watching politics for a very long time—what our Premier did, what Premier Ford did. He penned a letter, and every provincial and territorial leader signed on to that letter and said to the federal government, "We need to do something different. We need to do something better." I've never seen that before on any issue. Even on health care, there are different voices. Education, transfer funds, all sorts of things—it's rare, if it has ever been done before, that

everybody came together to say, "Here is our collective position. We need you to do something."

The act of that letter, on January 13 of this year, set in motion something that we at the provincial level, at our provincial-territorial table, have been talking about since I've become the AG. The letter calls for very clear change. It calls for change in the Criminal Code itself, which, as I mentioned, is a federal responsibility. It's something that affects all of us, but the federal government holds the pen on it. We've been talking about firearms and rural crime and community-led public safety and all sorts of things back from 2019, and before. We more recently had raised the issue of bail and how it operates or doesn't operate and the importance to our communities of keeping them safe and having people be protected. But it wasn't until that letter that the Premier wrote, which all other provincial Premiers and territorial leaders signed on to, every one of them—that set things in motion, but it wasn't the letter alone; it was our front-line services, the people who see it day to day. It's the police officers who are on the front lines, who are dealing with a whole myriad of issues, whether it be mental health or social supports or crime as we know it. This was an issue they cared about a lot.

I saw that Mark Baxter with the Police Association of Ontario was here moments ago. His leadership and the leadership of the associations has been critical in the dialogue. I can tell you, it's not just our police; the RCMP are engaged in this, and their association.

It caused a meeting to happen with the chiefs of police of Canada. And that meeting with the federal government, with our federal counterparts—Minister Kerzner and his federal counterpart, Minister Mendicino, and my counterpart, Minister Lametti, had a meeting with the chiefs of police. I just happened to be at the graduating ceremony for the 500th graduating class of the OPP. I was there with Minister Kerzner, and the meeting was happening at that moment. When I left that afternoon, a phone call was had and they said, "Would you be willing to meet? We've heard from the chiefs of police, and we don't think they're asking for too much. We think that we might be able to get there." Of course, Mr. Kerzner and I said, "You name the time and place, and we'll be there."

So that meeting came to be on March 10 of this year. All of our colleagues from across the country got together—some virtually, as need be. PEI was in a position where they were into an election—they were into a writ period. They couldn't participate in signing on to the final communiqué, but they were in a position to be there to listen and to give some guidance.

I can tell you, during those meetings—and parliamentary assistant Bob Bailey and I went due to double-booking, because we weren't going to move this date. If they wanted us there, we weren't going to ask for a movement. So it was just, "Who can go? We're going to go and make our points."

I can tell you, the collegiality, the co-operativeness—again, I've been going to these meetings. I've been all over the country doing these federal-provincial-territorial meetings. At the previous one, before the March 10 one,

we didn't actually get a communiqué out. That's sort of what happens with these—at the end, you put out a joint statement. Well, we just couldn't agree as provinces, collectively, and territories on some of the issues that were on the table. But at this one, on March 10, a communiqué did go out. A communiqué went out talking about the importance of bail, bail reform, and how it works and how it doesn't work. I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, it was really—I don't want to say that it was a shock, but the level of co-operativeness with the federal government on this issue was heartening. So I look forward to holding their feet to the fire to take action. I really look forward to them following through on some of the things that they said they would be willing to do.

1420

I've talked to my federal counterpart, Minister Lametti. We did a tour of the new Toronto courthouse recently and had a chance to connect again. Of course, I raise it at every turn—how important an issue it is for us and our communities, to keep them safe. So I'm glad that we're talking about it today. We have to talk about it. We have to let people know it's important to us. We have to let the federal government know it's important to Ontario. They're hearing it from the other provinces, as well, and they need to take this step—not just words, not just a study, not “Let's think about it. Let's create some options.” We need some concrete action. We need to move the dial, because anything that deals with guns and blades—and Manitoba raises bear spray as a significant issue in their jurisdiction; bear spray is being used for crimes on buses and around. Anything like that needs to be taken more seriously, and the bail system needs to deal with that.

There is a concept in bail called the ladder principle. Effectively, it says that you have to do the least restrictive thing for somebody, and that makes some sense. It sometimes puts the justice of the peace or the judge in a position to have to make a tough decision on what the least restrictive thing is. The federal government did pass a bill, C-75, that codified what were previous Supreme Court decisions like *Antic*, and there was another follow-up case that codified the ladder principle. What we're talking about when we talk about bail reform is changing who's responsible for making the argument—the argument being, “Should the person be let back into the community, or should the person not?” The way that it works, really, is that the crown has to demonstrate why the person shouldn't be back in the community. As you move up the ladder, the onus is on the crown prosecutor to make that case. And my friend Jess Dixon, the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, did this for a living, so she knows the mechanics of this better than I do, to be honest with you—she was front-line, having to make these decisions, having to put forward our best foot. I'll tell you, it's not an easy job. But the onus, in some situations, shouldn't be on the Jess Dixons of the world. The onus should be on the accused who is using a gun, or using a blade, or using bear spray or doing certain things. It should be a reverse onus. They should have to show why they're back out in the community.

That's what we're asking the federal government to do—to make some changes, to pass the onus from the crown to the accused. This is done in some instances—this is not a unique or novel thing—but with the increased violent crime that we're seeing, it's critical that the alleged perpetrators and those who are then subsequently found guilty have gone through a system that respects the rights of the community and the individuals, our neighbours and friends and family. There is no excuse, when somebody has used a gun in the commission of a crime, why they should not have to explain why they should be let out into the community.

I am getting concerned about the increased amount of crime happening we're seeing, not just in numbers, but in severity. That's a real challenge for our communities. It's a challenge for our front-line officers, for our mental health workers. It's a challenge for our neighbours, our friends. It's a challenge for us, running a system to tackle the most serious and sometimes heinous crimes that are happening. And it starts with bail. We need to be keeping some of these people off the streets—the repeat offenders, the violent offenders, the people who are using guns, knives and, again, bear spray, which isn't something that I'm familiar with, but Manitoba is very, very vehement about this. They want to make sure that their communities are safe, with things that are otherwise fairly easy to get.

Madam Speaker, again, in the bail process, we have this ladder system, as I mentioned, with levels of severity.

I want to talk about sureties, for a moment. With bail, sometimes somebody is a surety—somebody promises that they will help protect the community from the alleged accused, and it goes in connection with bail. So yes, you may be freed into the community—not held in a correctional facility—with a surety who posts money and makes a promise to the court, to the system, that they'll be partially responsible for what's happening. I can tell you, we're talking about bail today, but the surety piece of that is something that should be drawing our attention. I'm not saying that the federal government has to do everything, because we need to do our part. But I think the surety is an important piece of the puzzle. I think that's something that we'll give further input into, as well.

Here's what we do: We don't just stand by and say that it's somebody else's fault, somebody else's problem. We've been investing a lot of resources into what I call the SWAT teams of lawyers. So if it's a gun or gang issue in Peel or in other parts of the province and somebody's up for bail, we send in the SWAT team of lawyers to put the best evidence forward, to gather the best evidence to make sure that the accused is faced with the facts of what they have allegedly done, and the judge or the justice of the peace has to take that into account. So we're sending in our best and brightest on these very focused pieces. We're doing our part. We're making sure that happens.

The other thing that we have to do and we have an obligation to do is to make sure that the individuals hearing the matter—the justice of the peace and the Ontario court judges—are at the top of their game. That's why there's a very rigorous process for appointments.

Madam Speaker, there are 299 Ontario court judges in this province at the moment, and I've appointed approximately 70 of them; maybe a few more than that. I've appointed approximately 100 of the justices of the peace. I've seen a lot of applications—I've seen a lot of backgrounds; I've seen a lot of community involvement; I've seen a lot of people who care about the community they live in, and they want to make the best decisions for their communities, for their loved ones and for the people who are victims of some of these crimes. I see that they want the tools—but if the federal government doesn't do what it needs to do in terms of bail reform, we're not going to give them the tools they need to get the job done. Again, we're sending in our best and brightest for these bail hearings, so we're doing our part for the hearings. It's really important that the federal government come to the table with bail reform so that we have not only the best rules and the best people and the best evidence for the very qualified and the best hearers, the JPs and judges—to make the decision, to protect our community, to make sure that we're doing the right thing.

Madam Speaker, I can't stress enough how important it is that the federal government act soon, and that we get some resolve to this so that we can start talking about other parts of the system that need to be improved. I've had a great working relationship with my federal counterpart. I don't want to make it sound like we're at odds on everything. We've had some very productive discussions; it has been very collaborative. But I'm standing here, really, just to say that it has to happen soon and our communities are waiting for it. People are talking about it. They're concerned. Some are apprehensive. We've seen the stories in the newspapers. We just have to do more, we have to do it soon, and we have to do it better.

I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about some of these things that are very important to me—something that I talk a lot about in meetings and that I hear from our excellent partners in the policing world and our judges and JPs and all those who help manage people in crisis, and the victim services that are out there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'll give a gentle reminder to use ministerial portfolios or riding names when referring to other members of this House.

Further debate?

1430

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre. In today's debate, we're going to be speaking on a very symbolic motion regarding bail reform in Canada. I'd like to begin my remarks by explaining the context of why we're having this debate.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause. Bail has evolved along with our justice system, and the people working in the justice system have been calling for sensible reforms to many dimensions of the justice system for decades. It predates this government.

Unfortunately, it took the tragic shooting death of OPP Constable Greg Pierzchala on December 27 to bring bail reform back on the political table. I'm glad we're having this conversation. It's absolutely important. This young, dynamic officer, who was at the beginning of his bright policing career, was taken far too soon. He is missed by his family and his friends, both in the general community and within the policing community. I have no doubts about that.

We have seen people fall at the hands of violent crimes, and we must do more to protect our communities, including our front-line officers. The police have a very difficult job. Sometimes we task them with jobs that are far too big. We ask them to be social workers and mental health support workers. We ask them to do everything—and we resource them not with all of those services and supports.

The neighbourhood community officers in my community are exceptional. I have the privilege and honour of working with 51 division of the Toronto police. They are the busiest division in all of Canada. They tell me oftentimes that they can't do it all.

We know that first responders oftentimes run into a building when others are running out. They are the ones who deserve our gratitude and support.

I want to take a moment to thank the hard-working police officers, the paramedics and the firefighters who keep Toronto and Ontario safe every single day.

The accused who was charged with the murder of Constable Pierzchala was on bail at that time, and he failed to appear for his court date in August, just months before the shooting. This spurred the provinces to write a letter—including the Premier, and thank you for his leadership on this—to demand more of the Prime Minister, asking the Prime Minister to improve and make stricter bail provisions.

The federal government has yet to table their bail reforms. We know that is coming. Minister Lametti has mentioned that on several occasions. I have read about his remarks in the media. They have specifically said that they will work with the provinces to target those bail reforms. All of that is under way. And we have this motion before us.

On January 31 as well as on February 1 of this year, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy met to investigate how we could improve the bail reform system. As the opposition critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General, I participated in both of those full days of hearings. I was a committee member. We heard from many dedicated and brilliant Ontarians who work in law enforcement and the legal system. We had police chiefs, lawyers, executive directors, and corrections officers all take the time to actually come and speak to our committee and offer free advice. We did not hear from everyone, unfortunately, because the hearing process was so truncated and expedited. There were only two days to register for the hearings. We did not get a chance to hear from, for example, judges, justices of the peace, or crown attorneys—the very people who are absolutely critical in the administration of justice in Ontario. Their voices were

entirely silent in that process. What we did hear were some really strong suggestions that were real and evidence-based. The speakers who did appear before the committee asked us to consider many other things as a part of the continuum of community safety and bail reform. I'm going to speak to some of that today, because I think it's important for us to make full this conversation of what is before us.

I came to Queen's Park largely to effect change; I know each and every single parliamentarian wants to do the same thing. You want to serve your community as best you can. You want to drive home real solutions to real-life problems and not just tinker at the edges, not just make symbolic gestures or—perhaps, sometimes in the political theatre—be performative. You want solutions, and so do I; most importantly, so do our communities. They expect that from us.

What I am grappling with is that we have a symbolic motion before us which is supportable—but it could be improved, and I'll speak to that in a bit. We have a motion before us that is asking the federal government to do something that they've already said they're willing to do. We have a motion that points the finger at the federal government—in particular, Justin Trudeau—about how those real changes can be brought into effect but doesn't speak to what it is.

What we heard from the speakers at those two full-day committee hearings was that there is real change in real time that can actually happen in Ontario, if the government of the day decides to take real action.

What we know is that not all risk can be avoided simply in the administration of bail. Nothing is that simple. We need smart solutions to make sure we get to the smart outcomes that we anticipate.

New Democrats, on this side of the House, really believe that it is possible to reduce crime by ensuring that the most dangerous offenders are not falling through the cracks of that revolving-door system that was spoken about. That revolving-door system is largely in existence because the justice system is under-resourced. We have to ensure that people do not fall through the cracks. We have to ensure that mental health supports and health care as well as housing are in place for people who need them so that they don't have to be in our system anymore.

Jails are not housing, detention centres are not housing—just like we know that hospitals are not a form of housing.

Speaker, there was an undertone at the committee—and I want to share this, because I think it was really important, and I'm going to name it explicitly today. The undertone was that the responsibility is all at the federal government and that the federal Liberals in particular can do much more to keep Toronto, Ontario and every other jurisdiction safe. I don't think I've heard from the Prime Minister that he's not going to be there at the table, but we keep having the government point the finger back to the Prime Minister, saying, "Do more, do more," when he has already said, "Yes, we are going to do more."

It seems as though there are some in this House who would like people to believe that the responsibility for reforming bail lies exclusively with the federal government, in order to distract from the fact that more can be done provincially to address this issue. This government has been in power since 2018. Five years later, what has been accomplished? How can communities be made safer, and what are the significant reforms that can come forward?

The Ontario NDP will continue to push for real, full bail reform. That's something we are truly committed to, because getting tough on crime is not enough when you aren't getting smart on crime.

The Ontario NDP has been and will be wanting to take immediate action by securing additional resources for criminal prosecutors—something that the government can do right now to ensure that everyone receives a bail hearing in a timely fashion.

We also are asking for more increased funding to legal aid—something that will actually ensure the fair and efficient administration of the justice system.

We need to ensure that police resources are allocated to specifically address the most dangerous offenders, and that it does not result in the criminalization of those who are experiencing poverty, mental health issues, homelessness, or who are struggling with addiction.

We need to ensure that everyone has access to housing and mental health supports.

We will continue to push for a full study on bail reform.

It's absolutely critical that we recognize this motion is part of a campaign by this government to frame the bail system as overly lenient. Frankly, that barely scratches the surface of what experts have been telling us. They're the same experts who appeared at the committee. This is where we need to be able to lean into it.

So let's answer this question: Is the criminal justice system too lenient? Based on real data, the pretrial remand imprisonment rate in Canada and Ontario is higher than that of almost every other comparable Western European nation as well as our most obvious comparators: England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Scotland. Countries such as Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands have a bail system that will focus on rehabilitation over incarceration, and they all have intentional homicide rates that are less than what we have in Canada's intentional homicide rate.

1440

So why is Ontario failing? When it comes to bail and remand, Canada only—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Toronto Centre may continue.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sure that all members of this House would extend our well wishes to our friend who just took a little tumble. Hopefully, she's going to be okay. It looked like a spill.

When it comes to bail and remand, Canada only appears moderate when we're compared to New Zealand, Australia, and the prison capital of the world, the United

States. I cannot stress enough, when making that point, that countries that imprison more citizens per capita than any other OECD country—the United States is a far more dangerous country to live in than Canada.

To be frank, I think it's important for us to recognize that sometimes when language about being tough on crime is said, it oftentimes is a dog whistle for "tough on crime on specific people." When the rates of incarceration are much higher for Black, Indigenous and people of colour; the most vulnerable, including the homeless, those living in poverty, those living with mental health and addictions, we know that "tough on crime" means "tough on them."

Statistics will show that the number of people held on remand in Ontario jails is evidence of how bail systems have become more, and not less, strict. In the 1980s to the 1990s, pretrial detainees represented 23% to 30% of the prison population. Today, remand prisoners account for more than 70% of all inmates held in Ontario's correctional system. Ontario simply has one of the highest proportions of such inmates.

So it's incredibly important for us to task the solution to the right problem, and in this case, I think that we will probably benefit by listening to the experts who specifically work in the systems we are talking about. I want to be really clear in my remarks and to say that those who work in our correctional services are exceptionally hard-working, dedicated individuals. They have very difficult jobs, but they're also not being resourced for success, and they have been really clear that we're not going to create safer societies simply by under-resourcing those systems. You can use a lot of words, but unless you actually look to innovate and put forward resource solutions, it's not going to produce any results.

As noted by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, the Office of the Chief Coroner recently released a report on the conditions in Ontario jails which identified overcrowding, mistreatment, the lack of supports and programming. According to the Elizabeth Fry Societies, these findings make it difficult to argue that holding more people in pretrial custody—they have not been sentenced—would enhance public safety. Rather, it would cause significantly more harm to the individuals and public.

In her written submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Dr. Jennifer Foster stated that being held in detention forces inmates to harden in order to cope, and that is happening without them even being convicted. Hardening continues after they are released, requiring further support and treatment to recover from detention. You put them in detention, and they don't have pathways to rehabilitation or services. The longer you keep them in detention before they're convicted—if they're sentenced—they come out more dangerous.

Witnesses to the committee stressed to members of this House that our criminal justice system cannot be expected to eliminate all risks.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association pointed out that a pattern of breaching court orders does not necessarily mean dangerousness, yet we continue to release

people on bail conditions such as curfews, prohibitions from returning to home, and perhaps bans on possessing drugs and alcohol. According to the CCLA, people who fail to comply with those court orders oftentimes do so not because they disrespect the court, but simply because they're struggling to survive; they physically, mentally can't do it. They need supports and programs to ensure that they can comply.

Finally, the committee was urged to consider that for young people in particular, rehabilitation and reintegration are the key to long-term protection in communities. We need to invest in young people so that they can have a speedier resolution to those youth-oriented cases, so that they can access community services and they can come back and be with their families. That pathway to wellness requires investments and interventions.

Speaker, these objectives demand that we need to better resource the court and corrections system—changes that this motion does not address.

What kind of changes did the committee ask us to consider? Let's start with the biggest gap in our bail system—the one that I would love to spend more time investigating, should this government hold a full study on bail reform.

One particular speaker at the committee really left me with a lot to consider. I was quite struck by how much knowledge and deep understanding he had about the corrections system. Mr. Scott McIntyre, a 30-plus-year probation and parole officer with the Ministry of the Solicitor General, outlined for the committee a proposal to create a new unit responsible for all aspects of community supervision in the criminal justice system, including bail, parole and probation. As explained by Mr. McIntyre, probation and parole supervision and bail supervision have a number of things in common. In addition to the fact that both involve community supervision, they both also have a "common defect." Under this government, which has now been in power for five years, the system currently lacks certain things. The system needs to ensure compliance monitoring of those conditions, such as house arrest and curfews. The system needs to seek the whereabouts actively of individuals who have breached their bail and probation, conditional sentence or parole conditions. The system needs to have arms and legs to go out and get individuals who have breached. We have a system that issues warrants—but no one going to investigate afterwards.

Mr. McIntyre proposed the creation of a community corrections compliance unit consisting of a separate classification of peace officers under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Solicitor General—and that those responsibilities could be split evenly between the Attorney General as well as the Solicitor General. These new peace officers would then have a mandate to do some of the following: conduct community compliance checks of persons subject to community supervision orders for bail, probation, parole sentencing; and we would attach certain conditions to them, such as house arrest, curfews, geography, employment, and non-association. It could also

seek the whereabouts of individuals wanted for breach of release conditions and execute outstanding warrants for their apprehension. It could also transport individuals back to the court of jurisdiction, and this could help address situations where the police come in contact with jurisdictions out of the area. Oftentimes, that's hundreds of kilometres away, because people are not bound to one neighbourhood; definitely, they're not bound to one city and certainly not one province. The police officers and the associations and the forces and services do not have the time nor are they resourced to actually transport people back and forth between the jurisdictions, and that's where, oftentimes, people fall through the cracks.

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Mr. McIntyre also suggested that bail and show-cause hearings for accused people with a supervision history with probation and parole services—those officers could use supervision records to provide the courts with information regarding a person's risk, including the record of compliance with prior terms of community supervision, and make recommendations to the courts on the suitability for release. This was actually quite interesting. Why is this not being done?

The fact that Mr. McIntyre came forward with these very tangible solutions—and he informs me that he has actually brought this before several governments, so the responsibility doesn't lie squarely at the feet of this current government; in the previous Liberal governments, the same recommendations were brought forward, and actions were not taken.

I think we need to be able to clearly recognize that the subject matter experts who came to our committee brought forward a number of excellent recommendations, but they're not in this motion, and they certainly weren't acted upon during the budget release, which is, of course, one of the most powerful tools—the most powerful tool, the apex of all policy tools—that could have actually effected real community safety and change.

Mr. McIntyre also noted that the bail supervision transfer payment agencies such as the John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society and Salvation Army are not able to perform the feet-on-the-ground supervision around compliance and monitoring that's needed. So you have organizations that the government has asked to work with those who are out on release, but you haven't provided them with any of the resources to do that on-the-ground work.

There are over 4,500 warrants for offenders who breached their release conditions, whose whereabouts are unknown. This is a very serious matter, where there's a gaping hole in the bail monitoring and supervision system that the government has the powers to take action on today—this government—but has not.

It's evidently clear that if such a unit was created, as suggested by Mr. McIntyre—obviously, we need to have further study and consultation, but it could also yield extraordinary results and close a massive gap that's before us right now, which is why Mr. McIntyre's recommendations to me were so illuminating, because they were practical, they were very specific; they weren't just

symbolic. They were bang on, based on what we have now heard about the so-called catch-and-release system.

I believe that Ontario needs to place bail supervision under the Solicitor General's correctional services' control, like the vast majority of Canadian provinces. Therefore, Ontario is not a leader; we're the laggard. Ontario, right now, is one of the few provinces where bail is not under a community corrections compliance unit—where there's a separate classification of peace officers employed under the Solicitor General's correctional services.

These are just a few examples of the recommendations that were brought forward. There are so many more, and although I have some time to speak about the recommendations, I don't have enough time to bring forward the recommendations of two full days of hearings that I really think members of this House would actually benefit from listening to.

I want to be able to also speak a little bit about the officers of the community corrections compliance unit, and specifically about how it's so critically important to have them in place because they're going to be on the ground and providing supports. Probation services have great records on offenders' needs, risks and responsibilities, but unfortunately, that information is not shared with the bail court. So you've got people who are appearing before judges and the judges are deliberating without a full context and history in front of them. The judiciary would actually be making a more informed decision as to the risk of releasing an accused on bail if they had that prior information.

We know there are 4,500 warrants that are out and this government doesn't know the whereabouts. Mind you, Speaker, this information came from a 2017 freedom-of-information request, but I'm pretty sure that those exact numbers can be, perhaps, even higher today, based on what we now know were the trends.

We know that officers are doing a fantastic job of writing up breach warrants and then putting them into the system, but then we also know that there's nobody chasing after them. This is a significant barrier and a gap in the system, Speaker.

The province of Ontario currently has a repeat offender parole enforcement unit. It's called ROPE; that's their acronym. Their website indicates that the ROPE unit “is a multi-agency, provincial team that locates and apprehends parolees unlawfully at large in the province of Ontario, as well as anyone who:

“—escapes from secure custody;

“—escapes from or walks away from non-secure custody;” and

—who has become “unlawfully at large by violating bail, parole, or intermittent sentence terms.”

“The ROPE squad also assists other police services with locating and apprehending high-risk dangerous” individuals.

Officer Pierzchala was killed by someone who was out on bail and who failed to appear in court. Why was he at large? Was there no one looking for him if he was so

dangerous? We heard about the rap sheet as long as an arm.

Carolyn Jarvis, a reporter, found out this information about the ROPE squad: They pull in 800 offenders per year and an estimated 90% of them are federal parolees. The problem there is that there is nothing like this for provincial offenders. This is a provincially run unit looking after federal parolees. It's not chasing after provincial parolees. The provincially run ROPE unit does not perform compliance monitoring. It appears only to write warrants. It executes warrants, but it doesn't follow up.

Mr. McIntyre asked this government, as well as the previous government, to do the following: Bring bail supervision under the corrections umbrella, like the majority of Canadian provinces, cancelling expensive transfer payments to agency bail supervision contracts and creating that Ontario community corrections compliance unit with the aforesaid mandate. It is only then you will have a viable solution within corrections that will be able to respond to the challenges of the day. It will do a lot, I think, in restoring public confidence. It will do a lot in ensuring that the threat to public safety is reduced, and it is entirely within the power of this government.

Speaker, it wasn't just Mr. McIntyre who had a lot to share with us. There were other individuals, as I noted. It was important that the honourable member from across the way who represents Etobicoke had repeatedly asked in her questions to every speaker who appeared at the committee, "Does bail reform save lives?" The answer, largely—with two exceptions, as I recall—was, "Yes, but," and then they would go into a list of other things that would be extended from bail reform that could also improve life quality and save lives.

But that hasn't been the focus of the government. The government hasn't spoken to the "but here are the other solutions" in the body of this symbolic motion.

The committee members were asked on a number of occasions, "Would it be helpful to have a province-wide, centralized body to oversee bail monitoring, compliance and supervision?" The answer was, "Yes, of course. Do it. Why is it already not being done?"

1500

Toronto Police Chief Demkiw responded that he absolutely supports the idea of having that province-wide, centralized body to oversee bail monitoring and compliance. He then shared with us that the Toronto police already have taken steps on their own to actually move toward a development of a bail-compliance dashboard, something that he was really—and I would say rightfully—proud of. He shared that he was already working with Durham Regional Police to make sure that the information on that dashboard could be shared with the two jurisdictions that are sitting side by side.

Chief Demkiw noted that the Ontario Provincial Police and the government have already expressed some, albeit limited, interest to expand that dashboard concept. This government has the power to bring it province-wide. Yet we know it has hasn't been done.

Speaker, I honestly believe that this government's time would be better spent not debating a symbolic motion, but in pursuing the idea that Chief Demkiw brought forward to help us that day, to create that province-wide compliance unit.

But Chief Demkiw was not the only witness who brought forward tangible solutions that could be operationalized. The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards also said that Ontarians would benefit if there was a province-wide bail monitoring system. They also further added this—and I want to share the spokesperson from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police's remarks today. I want to read this into the record. He said, "Our message to you today as police leaders is this: We want to look at ways to improve how the bail system addresses repeat violent offenders, firearms offences and intimate partner violence. This is an issue that cannot be addressed in isolation and requires a coordinated, multi-faceted approach ... including federal legislative reform to the bail provisions in the Criminal Code." Here's the other piece: "provincial amendments to the Ministry of the Attorney General's policies, guidelines and directives on bail; and sufficient resources and funding from all levels of government to ensure adequate staffing and expertise in bail courts, improved training, and sufficient police resources to enforce bail compliance"—not in the motion.

The spokesperson from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police continues with this: "In relation to the Ministry of the Attorney General, the OACP also urges the government of Ontario to invest in additional crown and judicial resources. Resource shortages in Ontario have resulted in overburdened bail courts and systemic delays. Funding for additional crowns, with a focus on specialized bail/firearm crowns, is required to ensure the bail system works efficiently and in a way that promotes public safety and respect for the charter."

Speaker, I now wish to focus on the kinds of reform that we need in social services so that it can interact with the administration of justice and bail. I don't want us to cover this motion that's before us today and not consider some of those substantial limitations, because the other experts that came to the committee shared this with us. This includes a submission from the Canadian Mental Health Association: "CMHA Ontario makes the following recommendations:

"Further investment in bail support programming to ensure that vulnerable individuals, including those living with mental health and substance use issues are connected to community mental health, addictions, and other social supports.

"Mental health and substance use supports must be more readily available and accessible within the community:

"—Community mental health and addictions agencies are experts in supporting vulnerable populations.

"—CMHA branches provide mental health and addictions treatment and counselling, mobile crisis services, court diversion and supportive housing.

“Mental health and substance use/addictions screening of all individuals on admission to a correctional facility is necessary to ensure individuals with mental health and substance use issues receive the medical support they require.”

This is part of the solution, Speaker—another very important set of recommendations that were brought forward by the Canadian Mental Health Association. It’s not just words; they’re already on the ground, embedded in our community to deliver those supports. What they need is more money. And interestingly enough, the government voted against it just a few weeks ago.

So all of those solutions—and we only heard from two days of speakers. I already shared with you the limitations of not hearing from the justices of the peace, the crown attorneys and the judges. They haven’t even added their voices to this debate yet. And guess what? They administer the system. All of those opportunities and all of those recommendations should be informing this debate, but instead, we’re debating how it is that the federal government should do more to improve the bail system, when almost—actually, I do think every single expert that came before us said everybody has a piece of ownership on this problem.

Mental health, substance use and addictions screening for all individuals being admitted to correctional facilities is a very simple baseline. Who is going into those facilities? What is required to keep them safe, but also to keep others safe? Because they’re not going to be locked up forever, Speaker. They will come back out, and if they haven’t received the supports that they need in order for them to be rehabilitated and to reintegrate back into a general population, then you’re going to be, at some point, releasing them hardened and making the general population less safe.

And we cannot ignore the fact that the Ontario courts and correctional systems are overrepresented with people living with mental health and addictions, which is actually a health problem. There has been no consistency in the mental health and substance use screening upon the admission of going into a correctional facility. You don’t know who is going in. You don’t know what their needs are. You don’t know how they’re going to come out. Many individuals who do need support will never get the support while they’re being held in remand. In detention centres, they don’t get those supports, but they’re also staying in the detention centres far too long, which is why their sentences, when they do get sentenced, are so short, and they have not received the proper supports that they need so that they can be rehabilitated.

The Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario recommends that all individuals be screened for mental health and substance use within 24 to 48 hours of entering a correctional facility. I’m sure that’s a standard that’s never met, but it’s a standard that they would like to see in order for us to really be smart about addressing the issues of public safety.

Mental health supports within correctional facilities should be implemented with the co-operation of mental

health and community-oriented facilities and services. Something that I learned during the COVID pandemic was that people were being released from the detention centres in great numbers—just congregate settings, two-metre separation distance; got to let them go. Well, you never did an assessment when they were in there, but you also released them without a housing plan. That’s something that I know that the Toronto police flagged repeatedly, over and over again, and I suspect that other police associations did the same thing. If you’re releasing people in the communities, then you better be sure that they are safe to go back into the general population. That was never done. I understand that it was the pandemic, but you never had the information beforehand. You had no data to work with. And what did we see? An explosion of some of the violence that we are seeing right now in public spaces and on the TTC because of the effects of those actions.

This is getting worse largely because nothing is being done to address the systemic problems. It just so happens that the social determinants of health are also the same social determinants of safety. They’re exactly the same. So if you want a safer Ontario, you invest in the social determinants of health, and that includes proper housing and employment opportunities. It ensures that the people have access to health care and mental health care when they need them, that they live a life free of discrimination and violence, and so forth. It’s well documented.

1510

Speaker, the point about housing is absolutely critical, which is why I want to drill down on this: because the Standing Committee on Justice Policy heard from many witnesses and there were many written submissions about how inaccessible and unaffordable housing makes compliance. Therefore, the bail terms people are given are most likely impossible for them to honour, so we’re setting them up for failure.

The worst part is that it’s very expensive. Every time you have somebody cycle through the system without a proper resolution to safe, adequate housing, so that they can start on a path of recovery and rehabilitation, guess who’s paying? The Ontario taxpayer. So not only are we less safe, but we’re paying for a system that doesn’t work, and we’re debating this symbolic motion.

Neighbourhood Legal Services provided another submission, and I want to share this: The major issue that they encounter is bail conditions in which people don’t have a home to return to. You pick them up, you put them in a detention centre, they’re charged with one thing or another, they aren’t receiving services, and at some point in time they’ve been in there for too long and you’ve got to let them go. They come back out hardened, as we have now learned, and it’s not their fault anymore, because now they’ve touched the system. Once again, now it’s our fault, our collective responsibility, where we failed.

So many of the social challenges that we have today are complex, and certainly we do need to recognize that we cannot police our way out of homelessness. The police officers will be the first ones to tell you, “I don’t want to go there.” They used to tell me all the time, “Oh, please

don't send us there." I mean, I'm not sending them anywhere, but they have to respond to a public disorder, responding to another matter. They know that if that person had access to housing, mental health supports, addiction recovery, there would be a lot less police calls. That would make police officers safer. That would make our communities safer.

The results of decisions where clients don't have housing have been catastrophic for Neighbourhood Legal Services. It includes a long list of conditions that are just not being met. It's very important, Speaker, for us to recognize that people who don't have housing are not going to be safe to themselves, and are not going to be safe, unfortunately, to others. I want to be very mindful that we should not be directing attention specifically on this population, because certainly not everyone is violent—I know that—but we do need to recognize that these systemic failures need systemic solutions.

And so it's important for us to be smart on crime. It's important for us to really focus on how we're going to address bail reform in a way that makes everyone safer. That includes making the system work better, because those expert subject-matter witnesses who came before our committee brought smart solutions; they really did. But will the government be smart enough to implement them? That has yet to be seen.

Neighbourhood Legal Services made a number of recommendations, and I want to be able to share them with you and read them into the record. What they said is, "(1) There must be adequate legal resources provided to ensure that accused persons are able to meaningfully bring forward arguments about their housing in bail hearings, and that they can get legal assistance to seek variations of conditions which prohibit them from attending their homes.

"(2) There should be a presumption that accused persons will not be put under conditions not to attend their home or building.

"(3) Bail courts should be required to consider housing impacts on an accused. They should be given explicit guidance on factors to take into account, including the availability and viability of alternate accommodation, the costs of alternate accommodation, and the ability of the accused to afford alternate accommodation. Bail conditions should be subject to review if an alternate housing option becomes unviable."

If they can't go back to their home because it's not safe, or if they don't have a home to go back to, then where are you sending them? Into the TTC? Into the subway tunnels? Where are we sending them? Into vacant homes? Into the stairwells and in front of door stoops of businesses? Where are you sending them, if they're not being sent home or if their home is unsafe? If they are trying to get away from the criminality that they are embedded in, they really probably shouldn't go back there.

Bail courts should be given guidance on constructing the narrowest possible conditions so the conditions can actually be met. If they are so general, they may not work, such as:

- not to attend the same floor as a complainant, witness or co-accused;

- not to communicate with a complainant, witness or co-accused;

- to maintain a certain distance from a complainant, witness or co-accused;

- not to attend locations in the building when it becomes known that the complainant, witness or co-accused is present in those locations.

All that being said, if people are under-housed and the conflict that brought them into direct contact with the criminal justice system or the correctional system—you can't send them back there. They're going to be back out on the street in no time. How are we going to be safer? We are not. It makes absolutely no sense.

I think it's important for us also to be able to smartly talk about the history of colonialism and systemic racism. I want to note that, even though the Black and Indigenous populations are overrepresented in the courts and the criminal justice system, they certainly were not overrepresented in the hearings. We didn't hear from them. It just was a shame that there was no opportunity to hear from them.

I know that I was scrambling as I was trying to understand that we're going to have a conversation about bail reform and not we're talking about the people who are actually directly impacted, which is why I want to share with you the written submission that we received from the Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services. This organization was created in the 1990s to address the shortcomings in the administration of justice within Nishnawbe Aski Nation and to improve access to justice for members of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

According to this organization, Indigenous people are vastly overrepresented in Canada's jails and prisons. Moreover, the numbers continue to rise, despite the release of a Supreme Court of Canada decision, *R. v. Gladue*, more than 20 years ago. That decision required the courts to consider all available sanctions, other than imprisonment, that are reasonable in the circumstances, with particular attention to the circumstances of Indigenous offenders. Subsequent court rulings have held that the *Gladue* principles were not limited to sentencing. They also apply to all circumstances where an Indigenous person's freedom is at risk, including bail hearings.

This organization has argued that the most important and critical moment in a criminal matter is bail. What happens is so predictable. If the accused is not granted bail, the chance of them entering a guilty plea goes up significantly. This reflects the reality that no one wants to wait in jail for a trial when they are being offered the option of being released for time served. The Supreme Court has noted that Indigenous people are more likely to be refused bail and that this reality contributes to the over-incarceration of Indigenous people.

You want to talk about truth and reconciliation, Speaker? Here is an opportunity for us to deal with what has happened within the Indian residential school system. These are real-life situations that aren't just necessarily

about talking points about being tough on crime. “Tough on crime” without getting to actual solutions doesn’t get us to safer communities. I am confident that every parliamentarian here is committed to building safer communities for all of us.

I know I am. My son is almost four years old. He is about to be in school. We live in downtown Toronto. I’ve got to get him across Yonge Street so that at some point in time he is going to be able to walk to school by himself. I am so committed to building safe communities, but we cannot go about it just by talking points. This is so real for me. It’s so real. And it’s real for other community members, including those from the rural and northern communities and Indigenous stakeholders who were not present in the committee hearings.

I think it’s important for us to recognize that for some of the First Nations people in northern Ontario, 23 of the 34 communities are fly-in communities. Where are the courts? Where are the judges? I’ve now heard that you can’t even get a hearing. You can’t even get access to justice because those facilities aren’t there.

1520

There’s just so much more that we can talk about. I want to share with you, Speaker, something that was shared by Roland Morrison, who is the chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service. He described a number of aspects that are unique to the bail system in his jurisdiction. In fly-in communities, bail hearings are conducted either by audio or video, technology and weather permitting—

Interruption.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: That’s okay. I hope your fingers are intact.

The justices of the peace are not always available. For most offences, the accused is then released back into the community, which then makes victim protection even harder. As we all know, in those tight-knit communities, it’s all about communities helping each other. When you have one person who has stepped offside or one person who’s violent or created an incident and made other people unsafe, where are they going to be released to? They’ve got nowhere to go, and they become more hardened and more difficult to rehabilitate afterward.

Chief Morrison said that in recent years, there has been an influx of offenders from southern Ontario who are already “on conditions.” He actually noted that people are bringing drugs and weapons to places like Thunder Bay and Timmins and then “aligning themselves” with Indigenous people they meet who live in northern communities.

Chief Morrison asked for more resources to address the current system’s deficiencies. If you want to help those northern communities and Indigenous communities, then fund the services that they’re asking for. This police chief was really clear about the things that he needed to keep his community members safe.

I couldn’t help but notice there was a note of desperation in his voice. There was a note in his voice that said to me he didn’t really believe what we were asking him

and that the question in the debate at the committee wasn’t going to result in any more resources for him. I regret that, because I know that I couldn’t have offered him much more at that time. But I sure would like every member of this House to actually take his submission and actually review it and then think about how we can do better by Indigenous and northern and remote communities. This is so critically important.

Chief Morrison called on more resources to address the current system’s deficiencies. Longer-term, however, he believes that there needs to be a recognition that “the European system” is not working for Indigenous people. This was actually a very powerful moment for me to hear him say that. This is a man who actually works in policing, no different than other police officers who put on the uniform day in and day out to do the best that they can to keep their communities safe. We know that policing is a calling. Speaker, I certainly know that. My father was a naval officer. I know what it meant to him for him to put on the uniform, to serve in the navy. Everybody who serves in those types of uniforms—it is a calling.

For Chief Morrison, it was a calling, but he also said he recognized that the system that he was working in was limited and it wasn’t going to help his community, not in the way that it needed to. He said that government ministries must “bring back their system”—and I’m going to say an Indigenous system—“a system that they followed for thousands of years.” I’m certainly no expert on what that system is, but I think that we need to lean in and listen to Chief Morrison and ask the question, “How can we help? What does that look like for you in your community?”

I want to be able to recognize that this motion is a symbolic motion. There’s nothing wrong with that. It’s okay for us to have that conversation. But I also want to be able to do more than just have a symbolic motion that we will support, because I want to be able to address the problem. I really believe that parliamentarians are here because they want to fix the problem. The problem is we don’t have the solution before us.

Yes, absolutely, let’s go ask Justin Trudeau one more time, “Hey, you want to help us with bail reform?” He has already said yes, but let’s ask Minister Lametti: “We’ve asked you before. You’ve already said yes, but we’ll ask you again. Let’s fix that bail reform system.” He said yes already. They’re working on it. You’re at the table. We’ve heard from the honourable minister the Attorney General that they’re working collaboratively, yet we’re having a debate on this same motion about asking the federal government to work with us to reform bail. All right, that’s fine.

Speaker, I’d like to offer you the following, because I don’t want to just criticize. Because that’s not really nice. I want to offer a solution. My solution, Speaker, is that I’d like to amend this motion, to just give it more focus. Let’s be more purposeful in our intention of what it is that we’re asking of the federal government. It’s a symbolic motion, but let’s put ourselves into the driver’s seat and take some control, because I think it’s important. We don’t want to be always asking the federal government, “Can you do

this? Can you do that?" Let's be grown-ups about this. Let's take some control. Let's fix the problem that's made in Ontario. We could do that.

I move that government notice of motion 13 be amended as follows: Delete everything after the word "implement" and replace it with the following: "meaningful bail reform to more appropriately evaluate and mitigate risk, ensuring that court resources are focused on protecting vulnerable groups from violent repeat offenders."

Therefore, the motion will then read: "This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to more appropriately evaluate and mitigate risk, ensuring that court resources are focused on protecting vulnerable groups from violent repeat offenders."

I'm going to pass the motion to page Mia, who is going to bring that to the House. I understand the table will be able to distribute that for all the members to consider.

I want to be able to just take a moment to explain—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): I ask the member to please take a seat.

MPP Wong-Tam has moved the following amendment: Delete everything after the word "implement" and replace it with the following: "meaningful bail reform to more appropriately evaluate and mitigate risk, ensuring that court resources are focused on protecting vulnerable groups from violent repeat offenders."

I now return to the member for Toronto Centre to debate the amendment.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that. That's my first amendment to a motion moved on the floor since my time at Queen's Park, so thank you very much for your indulgence.

So what does this motion mean? I thought we could be a little bit more specific in our purpose of intent. The vulnerable groups that we're trying to protect—let's start to name them. Oftentimes those who have been released on bail conditions, and oftentimes who are in breach of bail conditions, are oftentimes perpetrators of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, domestic violence. And the vulnerable groups that I'd like to protect, that we should all be protecting, are those specific individuals that those who are being released on bail go back out to.

We know that women—especially women—are very scared when their abuser, their perpetrator of violence, has been apprehended and then released. And we have now heard that there isn't really any effective bail supervision and monitoring system. So if you want to keep people safe, let's keep them safe, because the majority of those who are repeat offenders have a long history. The ones who own firearms, the ones who have been in and out of the revolving-door system are oftentimes the ones with a long history of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

They also sometimes evolve into mass shooters. We've seen that. You cannot uncouple what we've now seen with respect to mass murderous shootings from histories of misogyny and violence against women; they are integrally connected. Whether it's the Renfrew triple femicide, the

mass shooting of Nova Scotia or December 6, all of that is interconnected, and there is such a remarkable body of research to back all of that up.

If we're going to be protecting vulnerable communities from those who are most violent, the repeat offenders, then let's do that. Let's make this motion really perform for our communities. Let's make sure that we protect them to the greatest possibility that we can, and let's make sure that their voices are heard. Let's try to demonstrate, just in a small way, that we heard those expert witnesses who came to our committee to offer us their professional recommendations on how to fix it.

1530

We're not going to get to everything in this motion—for sure we're not. Even my amendment is not going to get to everything. But will it put it into sharper focus? Will it give it more intention and purpose? Will it make it less vague and symbolic? You bet. And that's what this motion will do and can do.

I just wanted to finish on one point as not to take anything away. I want to be able to just highlight that the Renfrew inquest that we've spoken so much about in this House, that we have all spoken to, that has moved us significantly, has specifically spoken about bail protection and support for survivors of intimate partner violence. I want to dedicate this amendment to them, to every single woman who's been affected by intimate partner violence, sexual violence, domestic violence. I want to dedicate it to the inquiry and all those who participated. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Doug Ford: Every day, for Ontario families, violence and crime in their communities is becoming all too common. Hard-working men and women and their families are feeling less and less safe. At the same time, we're seeing more and more police officers being targeted and killed—and not just targeted but ambushed. Our justice system is meant to protect the public, to keep anyone who threatens their safety off our streets. Instead, critical parts of the system are failing to defend good and innocent people while continuing to let dangerous criminals go free.

For years, police officers have been sounding the alarm, including families and friends who have lost loved ones to these terrible crimes, like the women I spent time with today. My colleague mentioned, "Let their voices be heard." There's a voice of many people that have lost loved ones in the line of duty. I had the opportunity to sit down with Margaret and Samantha Northrup, Jenny Hong, Brenda Orr and Nancy MacDonald. Who's been listening to their voices? I can tell you one thing: We're listening, collectively. I truly believe we're all listening, no matter what political stripe you come from.

As the Police Association of Ontario has said many times over the last several months, the justice system is no longer just a revolving door for repeat violent offenders; the door is now wide open. Enough is enough, Madam Speaker.

I'm not alone in my concern. In fact, every single one of Canada's 13 Premiers, of every single political stripe, signed a letter earlier this year calling on the federal government to fix the problem, to shut the door. Since I've been Premier, it's challenging to get 13 Premiers to agree on anything quickly. We all agree—but quickly. And within a few days, all 13 Premiers signed that letter. I have never, ever seen quick action like that since I became Premier, and I want to thank my colleagues for signing that letter to send it out to the federal government.

We cannot have a justice system that fails to protect innocent people. We cannot have a justice system where violent criminals who should be behind bars are instead wreaking havoc on our streets. It is not an exaggeration to say that people are now dying because of the failures of our justice system.

One of the widows said in the meeting, "Police officers are held accountable. Politicians are held accountable. Why aren't judges held accountable when they let these repeat offenders back on the streets to go kill innocent people, kill innocent police officers?" That's the question she was posing, and we need an answer.

Repeat offenders, people accused of committing dangerous crimes over and over again, should not be arrested one day and let back out on the street the next just to see them recommit crimes, because when they go in front of the courts, it's a little slap on the wrist and "See you later. You go out and commit another crime." It's absolutely disgusting. These people are dangerous. They need to be behind bars and they need to stay behind bars.

Madam Speaker, back in February, the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington led a study on bail reform at a standing committee. He's in the Legislature today, and I want to thank you for all the great work. The committee heard from top experts and policing leaders who all had the same message: The vast majority of violent crime being committed here in Ontario is being committed by the same small group of violent people.

Now, if they were in jail, we wouldn't be worrying about this. But they aren't in jail. I've heard stories about JPs, justices of the peace, wanting to keep them in jail and the judge overrules them—unheard of. And they get them back on the street just to commit another crime. These same few people are being released time and time again, and every time they're released, our communities and the men and women who keep them safe are put at risk.

Simply put, this is happening because of Canada's broken bail system. Members from all political parties were part of this committee, and they all came together and unanimously agreed on specific actions the federal government should take to fix the system. All parties in Ontario agree we need to see action. All Premiers across Canada agree we need to see action.

Madam Speaker, it's clear this is not about ideology or partisanship, but a matter of public safety. Safety doesn't know—and criminals don't look at borders. They don't go from a riding in Etobicoke, a riding out in Scarborough or a riding downtown and say, "Oh, I'm in a different riding." They don't care. They don't care about the people. They

don't care about the communities. They don't care about keeping the subway safe. They just want to go out there and cause havoc in our communities.

Instead, the federal government has continued to resist common-sense changes to keep people safe. You have the whole country screaming, "We need to make changes," and they're dilly-dallying along like there's no urgency. There's no urgency because none of their families have ever been affected. They haven't seen the safety—they're protected behind the big golden gates of Parliament. That's unacceptable.

The people of Ontario are frustrated by the failures of Canada's justice system. And even without bail reform, these judges have an opportunity to keep them in jail a lot longer than what they have been. Yes, we need bail reform, but you don't need bail reform if you're a judge and you want to keep them in a little longer. But they're buckling and they're opening the door and letting them back out onto the streets and crossing their fingers that maybe, maybe little Johnny, after committing a heinous crime, will be a good little Johnny. No, that doesn't cut it. They need to go to jail.

The police have told us that Canada's broken bail system is to be blamed. They have told us that bail reform will save innocent lives. They have told us that without drastic and immediate action, the danger facing the public will only continue to grow out of control. The federal government cannot continue to delay bail reform. For the safety of the people of Ontario and all Canadians, we need action, and we need it now.

I want to thank everyone in the Legislature today for the same common cause of keeping our streets safe. And may God bless the women and men who serve our communities across the province, to keep them safe, who put their lives on the line day in and day out. I have a message: We will always have your back. We will be relentless with the federal government until they come up with proper bail reform.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):
Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House—and today to talk about the motion put forward by the government and amended by the official opposition. It's regarding bail reform.

I'm going to say at the outset that it's an honour to follow the Premier. We don't agree on a lot of things, but on bail reform, I think we have some things where we do agree—not all, but some.

I was also a member of that committee that studied bail reform. I don't pretend to be an expert on bail reform or an expert in policing.

I am one of the millions of Ontarians who has ultimate respect for the job that the police do. They're not perfect. No one is perfect. They're human. But we expect them and ask them to put themselves in harm's way, to make themselves one of the vulnerable groups that we put forward in that motion.

On behalf of the official opposition, we'd like to pay our respects to the families of the officers who have fallen. We would also like to pay our respects to all the other people who are in the vulnerable groups, who have also lost family members, who have also paid the ultimate price for the failures of our system.

There are failures in our system. Our system isn't perfect, and the bail system certainly isn't. Sitting in that committee, the one thing that I sensed was frustration—frustration on behalf of the police who presented; frustration on behalf of some of the other presenters, who would not always agree with the police. The frustration was there from all sides. I would have to say that that committee showed us that this issue is much deeper than can be discussed in two days.

Do we agree with the spirit of this motion? I say yes. I think we, deep down, agree that this isn't a one-shot one and done. We all know this.

We talk about what happened at that committee. I would like to quote some of the presentations from that committee which, quite frankly, I wasn't surprised at but that I learned so much from.

Some of these quotes are from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. "Our message to you today as police leaders is this: We want to look at ways to improve how the bail system addresses repeat violent offenders, firearms offences and intimate partner violence. This is an issue that cannot be addressed in isolation and requires a coordinated, multi-faceted approach involving all levels of government and criminal justice system actors, including federal legislative reform to the bail provisions in the Criminal Code; provincial amendments to the Ministry of the Attorney General's policies, guidelines and directives on bail; and sufficient resources and funding from all levels of government to ensure adequate staffing and expertise in bail courts, improved training, and sufficient police resources to enforce bail compliance."

That seems a lot more complicated than just one-shot "strengthen the bill"—it's a lot more nuanced. We're not saying that we shouldn't ask the federal government to modernize the bail system, but we can't look at it in isolation. There is a lot in there that the province needs to do, as well.

I will continue: "In relation to the Ministry of the Attorney General, the OACP also urges the government of Ontario to invest in additional crown and judicial resources. Resource shortages in Ontario have resulted in overburdened bail courts and systemic delays. Funding for additional crowns, with a focus on specialized bail/firearm crowns, is required to ensure the bail system works efficiently and in a way that promotes public safety and respect for the charter."

So I hope that, as the province is pushing the federal government, they are also looking seriously at the issues that the Ontario chiefs of police have put forward—things that the province can do right now to also protect the vulnerable, because one step won't protect; it's a multi-faceted approach.

The Attorney General spoke about reverse onus, and he did a good job of explaining—so I'm not going to repeat it.

The Ontario chiefs of police said, "While a reverse onus is not appropriate for all cases, it is appropriate for cases where there are significant public safety concerns. We're seeking expansion of reverse-onus provisions to include firearm-possession offences, repeat violent offenders and intimate-partner-violence offences where there are prior convictions against an intimate partner, including criminal harassment and distribution of intimate images, regardless of whether overt violence was used or threatened."

This is one of the reasons why we put forward the amendment—because it needs to look at violence as a whole.

Further, from the Toronto Police Association—again, someone we respect, front-line people: "The reality is, there's no time or resources for proactive initiatives. There's no time or resources to seek out individuals on bail. There's no time or resources to seek out those who fail to appear.... I bring this up because while we may revisit our bail system, and while we may make amendments to shift priorities, the reality is that reasonable bail is a constitutional right, and many people will return to their communities until such time as they have their day in court.... When accused parties are on bail, they sometimes fail to appear in court. While I've already suggested that courts and prosecutors treat those failures to appear strongly, we as the police also need resources to track these individuals down proactively. Again, these initiatives require resources, and they require investments in people."

My colleague was speaking—I believe the last time we could find stats, there were 4,500 people in the wind. I believe it would be partly a provincial responsibility to find those people—not enough resources. At that committee, there were suggestions made on how to do that. I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about how, but there's obviously an issue when you've got 4,500 people out in the wind that haven't shown up for their warrant. That's a big problem.

1550

From the Toronto Police Association: "Police have a responsibility—in fact, it is their most important responsibility—to maintain public safety. However, it is not their responsibility to shoulder this alone. As an example, years ago, here in Toronto, across every division, we had bail compliance units: a team of officers whose sole purpose was to monitor and conduct compliance checks at local divisional levels within their communities. While we still have some capacity to do that, we have removed that from the local divisional level. We've removed the community notion of it. The initiatives require resources."

Again, I'm not saying this; this is the Toronto Police Association saying there are not enough resources to monitor people. That's a problem that the government is aware of. The government members also heard this, and I'm sure that the ministers responsible knew this well

beforehand, because I'm sure the police have told them before. This is a long-standing issue—it predates this government; it predates others—but if the government is serious that this is coming to a head, and I have no doubt that they are, this also has to be addressed, because if you just address one issue, it won't work.

I take the government at its word, but this motion seems to point the finger at another level of government, trying to divert from their own responsibility. We all have responsibility—we all need to take it, because we're all talking about vulnerable people.

I continue, from the Toronto Police Association: “In discussing this, I would be remiss in failing to mention our other justice partners and stakeholders and the resourcing that they require. It is not lost on me, nor our members, that our assistant crown attorneys are also overworked, overburdened and require more resources. Also, our colleagues in probation and parole are overworked and require more resources. These are all important investments in public safety.”

There's a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it takes a community and it takes wraparound services to keep that child safe—and what we heard at that committee is that there's more than just the problem with the federal bail system. I think everyone acknowledges that. Let's all move forward and talk about that. Let's ask the federal government, as this motion is doing, to do their part. We're in favour of that, but let's also do our part.

I have a quote from some of the other witnesses at that committee, from the Law Society of Ontario, and it's about clearing the judicial backlog: “Clearing the backlog should be a priority. The ministries that would be responsible would be the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of the Solicitor General. These ministries need the resources in order to deal with the causes of the backlog. They need the resources to deal with getting disclosure out in criminal prosecutions and the resources to be able to identify the most serious cases that pose a risk to community safety and be able to prioritize them.”

Again, those are issues completely in, I would say, the province's domain—could be addressed in this House; should be addressed in this House; hopefully will be, but don't seem to have been, because they came up at this committee. This committee was to discuss changes to bail, but these were the issues brought forward by expert witnesses.

Another one came in a written submission—but it stuck to me—from the Canadian Mental Health Association. I think this one, as someone in northern Ontario—I don't think it's a secret, and it's not on purpose, but our resources are farther apart, wider spread. We don't have the same access. There's more access to resources in the city, simply because there's more people; they're closer together. From the Canadian Mental Health Association: “The justice system is often the first point of access for individuals to receive any type of mental health and addictions services. This leads to the overrepresentation of people with serious mental health issues in Ontario courts and correctional and remand facilities.” That is one of the

saddest statements, if you think about this—and specifically, where I come from, I know this. For police, as well—because police play an incredibly vital role. I couldn't be a policeman; I know it. They also need to have the support of other experts, so that when they encounter someone—the only way for that person is the justice system. That's just not right in a society like ours. We disagree about lots of things, philosophically, but I don't think any of us disagree about that—that the first point of access for mental health is the justice system. That's just not right—that that person, whose main issue is mental health, might become a repeat offender, simply because there is no other service available. We have to be very careful with that.

As MPPs—this is an incredible job, and one of the things that I find most incredible is that we all come from different walks of life. In what other walk of life would a farmer get to talk to a mining executive and former crown attorney, all on a one-to-one basis? I think it's incredible—and we get to tour places that we wouldn't be able to do.

One of the most chilling things I've ever done is tour the Haileybury Jail, the North Bay Jail and the Monteith correctional centre. That's when I realized that most of the people in the Monteith correctional centre have never been convicted of a crime; they're waiting to see a judge, and a lot of them aren't violent, repeat offenders.

There are a lot of things to fix in our system. We should concentrate on that, so that the people—and there are violent, repeat, dangerous people who need to be incarcerated, but there are lots of people in those facilities who don't fit that description. So we have to be really careful that we're not throwing away the key on people who have never really done anything to warrant that, and there is a danger of that now. It's actually happening now.

With that, we are in favour of the spirit of this motion. We hope that the government accepts our amendment.

I thank you very much for giving me the time to speak.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'll indicate at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Beaches—East York and the member for Don Valley East—if he gets here on time.

I think everyone here can agree that those who have committed violent crimes, and especially those with a history of repeated violent offences, should be kept behind bars where they do not pose a threat to public safety. To that effect, I do support this motion calling on the federal government to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to keep violent and repeat offenders off our streets. However, we also cannot ignore the many testimonies made at committee regarding the negative impact that stricter bail conditions could have.

Madam Speaker, we do not need more jails in this province. We do not need to incarcerate more people. What we need to do is shift our focus to rehabilitation and reintegration. We have to recognize that the reasons people commit crimes are often complex and take root in

difficult life experience. Whether it is poverty, poor mental health, addictions, a lack of community or of a support network, abuse or previous violent trauma, the reasons that people commit crimes are not simple. They're never simple. It is these underlying issues that we need to work to address so that we can prevent people from ending up in the situations and circumstances that make criminal acts seem like a viable option.

It is worth asking ourselves whether the crimes of these violent and repeat offenders that we're talking about today were always inevitable, or if there was a point in each of these people's story where someone could have intervened, where the system could have treated them differently and helped them turn their lives around before they committed a criminal act. Maybe, maybe not. But there is no doubt in my mind that there are many offenders out there for whom this is the case and for whom the experience of being detained can contribute to bring them down even lower.

Dr. Jennifer Foster stated in her submission to the committee that detaining people has an effect of hardening them, regardless of if they are convicted or not. The experience of being detained is a tough experience and has a significant negative impact on the detainee. Unfortunately, I speak from experience. My brother spent most of his adult life in and out of prison, and I can attest that, whenever he was released, he was nowhere near being better upon that release. Actually, he ended up dying of an overdose at age 38, alone in a shelter. That was back in 2006, and we haven't made significant strides enough to help those people.

These negative impacts are only augmented when we consider the extremely poor conditions that inmates are subjected to in Ontario jails. Recently, Ontario's Chief Coroner had nine experts review the deaths in Ontario's correctional facilities from 2014 to 2021. In January of this year, those experts released a scathing report highlighting the lack of space, of programming and of services for inmates, all factors that help maintain the well-being of those being detained.

The report also underlined the lack of adequately trained staff, of decent management, of effective anti-drug measures, of transparency and of accountability within correctional facilities in Ontario. These failings have led to extremely poor conditions for inmates and to preventable deaths.

Of the deaths in correctional facilities during the time period studied, approximately 40% were a result of drug use and 24% were from suicide. That's two-thirds of the deaths that could have been avoided through better addictions and mental health supports for inmates, not to mention the many other factors that could have been addressed. Given such conditions, it is not hard to understand the negative impact being detained would have on someone and the psychological trauma that they would have to deal with as they try to move forward.

Currently, Ontario's jails do more harm than good in most cases, and this needs to change. If we want to better protect the public from violent crime, yes, we need bail

reform. But more importantly, we desperately need to improve the conditions in our jails so that inmates are treated with respect and dignity and put on a path towards rehabilitation and re-integration instead of a downward spiral that only leads to more crime.

We also need to focus on addressing the complex underlying factors that lead to criminal activity. It is only by taking a whole-of-government approach, as the government side likes to say, and addressing the issue in a holistic manner that we will truly be able to reduce the number of incarcerations, effectively reintegrate offenders into society and protect the public.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll turn it over to the member from Beaches–East York.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I would like to commend my colleague from Ottawa–Vanier on her heartfelt words and lived experience.

I would like to first start out commending the Solicitor General for bringing this bill forward. It is a step in the right direction towards addressing the challenges posed by repeat violent offenders. That starts with a commitment from government to move forward quickly on targeted reforms to the Criminal Code of Canada on bail.

Violent crimes are on the rise in Ontario and across Canada. The trend is only increasing as time goes on, with no end in sight. It is beyond tragic to see innocent people becoming victims of horrendous offences. Public safety must be paramount, and we as leaders need to work collaboratively to ensure that happens and that we do so immediately.

There are a growing number of calls for changes to prevent accused people who are out on bail from committing further criminal acts. Good-faith initiatives from every level of government and every police force are a necessary step. We must confront these issues together. We need to review the judicial and public safety frameworks, commit to further work to fully understand the best remedies, identify what isn't working and call for change to ensure that this does not continue. Everything should be on the table, and we need to ensure that these challenges are a shared responsibility.

Equally important, any changes should require judges to consider the circumstances of people who are Indigenous or from vulnerable populations. We want to ensure that any changes do not disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and minority communities.

Recently, Toronto has seen its increased share of horrible events right across the city and especially on the TTC. To that point, we all know people who are now fearful to ride transit. As we attempt to increase ridership during the pandemic recovery and in consideration of the climate crisis that is upon us, our transit system should be attracting ridership, not the opposite.

We cannot allow citizens to feel unsafe anywhere. We need to do our best to protect everyone and make every effort to ensure there is a higher level of scrutiny for offenders of serious crimes. Bill 13 is attempting to

accomplish just that, if passed. Ontarians are looking to us to help keep them safe and secure.

Now I'll send it to my colleague.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: And now I thank you, Madam Speaker.

As elected officials, we have an obligation to protect Ontario's communities, and that is what this motion seeks to do. That is why I support it.

The federal government needs to hear from us, this Legislature, that the people of Ontario want to feel safe in public. They want to feel safe on their streets, on public transit and in their communities. But there are trade-offs, and there are always trade-offs, so let's talk about them.

We all remember just a few months ago when Constable Greg Pierzchala was shot and killed by a repeat offender out on bail. In that situation, there was a trade-off: Someone known to be a repeat violent offender was let go. We can't allow this to happen again. We must take seriously the thought that the Criminal Code should be amended for those most likely to reoffend.

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When it comes to this issue, the public has skin in the game. Their safety is on the other side and on the line. That is why we have to make it harder for these kinds of offenders to get out on bail. Reversing the onus, requiring the most serious and violent criminals—those who are most likely to reoffend—to prove why their detention isn't justified is a fail-safe. It creates a legal framework in which the justice system can keep the most dangerous people in custody until their trial.

But this alone is not enough. This is just one piece of the puzzle. For example, why doesn't the provincial government require bail hearings for the most serious offences to be heard by the provincial court rather than a justice of the peace? Why doesn't this government spend some of that contingency fund on the justice system, which desperately needs additional resources to complete its bail hearings on time? And why haven't we responded to the recent wave of TTC violence with increased mental health and addictions funding?

These are all questions we need to consider in concert with this motion. Bail reform cannot make our communities safe on its own. It can make them safer, but not nearly safe enough.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this motion today. And of course, thank you to the Solicitor General for bringing it forward. I also want to obviously thank the Premier and the work that he has done across the Council of the Federation to highlight this and to make sure that across this country, we are all focused on the same thing, and that is ensuring that repeat violent offenders are put in jail and are left in jail.

I had actually thought, frankly, that this would be an easy motion that we would have before the House, that

there would be complete agreement on the wording of the motion and that there wouldn't be a bone of contention or disagreement between members on either side of the House. That's what I had thought. Of course, the motion that was presented by the official opposition completely destroys that thought. And I'll get to why I believe that, because we are hearing in this debate the ongoing problem that we have not only here in Ontario, but across this country.

It could not have been an easier motion. The motion is very simple: "This House calls on the federal government to implement reform to the Criminal Code to address dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities." And that the said address be engrossed." That was it. That was the motion. Now, why such a simple and easy motion? Because one would assume that we can all agree that violent and repeat offenders should not be released back into our communities. So to avoid discussions and long, intertwined debates, we made a simple, easy motion that we thought all people on both sides of the House could support. But of course, that's not where we're at. It then turns into a debate on all kinds of other things.

Now, Madam Speaker, there was a committee report. The standing committee on justice did have a report. This report highlighted many of the things that many of the opposition are talking about, right? It highlighted a number of reforms that needed to take place. It heard from a number of witnesses that talked about mental health reforms. And we can debate that as much as we want. We can debate mental health; we can debate housing, and we do that every single day. We do that every single day. We can debate the amount of police on the street; how our justice system is working. But surely to goodness, this House can agree on a very simple and easy motion that repeat violent offenders be not allowed out on bail.

Now, the report that was issued by the standing committee was a unanimous report. A unanimous report by this Legislature did not contain the motion that was brought forward by the member from Toronto Centre.

Let's talk quickly about the motion. So I've read for you, Madam Speaker, the original motion. The amendment says the following: "Delete everything after 'implement'"—so if we had agreed with this motion, we would be deleting "meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities." The NDP, the official opposition, want us to delete that. Then they go one step further in also wanting us to delete any message to the federal government through the House and the Senate. They want us to delete that and then replace it with the following: "meaningful bail reform to more appropriately evaluate"—"evaluate."

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Exactly: "evaluate." I don't think we need to evaluate any more. Who needs to have an evaluation on whether a violent, repeat offender should be denied bail and left in jail? I don't know what you would evaluate on that, Madam Speaker.

We heard from the commissioner of the OPP—and we heard it not only just at committee. Let's be clear: When the commissioner of the OPP went before the microphone shortly after the death of Constable Greg, he could not have been more forceful, more passionate in calling on the federal government to make reforms. At committee, he described the murder as preventable and said that he was outraged at the fact that someone with the suspect's history had been able to make bail. The commissioner said that something had to change. That was what the commissioner said.

We have seen, not only just with Constable Greg—that one, frankly; honestly, this is a repeat, violent offender, who then was let out and then ambushed a police officer, an OPP officer, and killed the officer, because he was out on bail. We can, again, have a discussion to our heart's content—we can have that discussion on homelessness, on housing, on what our jails should look like. Does it appropriately represent marginalized communities? We can have that debate any time we like. Motions can be brought forward.

In fact, the report from the committee, unanimously adopted, could have said those very same things. There could have been a debate on those things when this report was deposited in this House and we adjourned debate. There could have been an additional debate on those things, but there wasn't. There could have been an additional minority report on those things, but there wasn't.

When called on the floor to support something that just seems common sense, you then get the weasel words. You then get the obfuscation and the moving around, anything to avoid doing what a majority of the people of the province of Ontario—what common-sense Ontarians and common-sense Canadians from across this country want. We have seen this time and time and time again.

They talk about things like more consultation and more consultation and more consultation. Well, we see what that has meant to our communities, right? When I was a federal member of Parliament, we brought in legislation that saw the crime rates in this country dip. We saw the end of the summer of the gun—it didn't exist; it went down. We saw people jailed for things that they had done. We saw crime rates steadily decrease which had been increasing constantly across this country. When those meaningful, difficult sentences were removed, what did we start to see? Crime rates started to increase, over and over and over again.

It's not just based on the fact that we have had a very difficult and challenging time across this country with respect to—it's not just Constable Greg. We have seen in communities across Ontario, across Canada, police officers come under threat. It's not just about police officers, though. It's not just about police officers. It's about families. It's about students. It's about new Canadians. It's about all kinds of people. If you live in this country, you want to live in a safe community.

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One of the things about Canadians is that we are a compassionate people, so we do agree that people should

be given the benefit of the doubt. That's why we have a justice system that will reflect on that. That's why we have all kinds of rules in place, and judges have the ability to make decisions, to look at the case before them, look at the record of the accused or the gentleman or woman or person found guilty of a crime and to determine whether that person—if it's a first offence, the degree of the harm and make those decisions.

However, most Canadians I think would agree, Madam Speaker, that—and I'm going to say it a million times, because I want the opposition to be uncomfortable. They should be uncomfortable by their amendment. And I see them shaking their heads, right? They're all shaking their heads, because they don't want to directly vote on this. They think by making an amendment that takes away the meat of what it is that Canadians want to do, what it is that Premiers across this country want to do—whether it's a Conservative, Liberal, or NDP, Premiers have asked for the federal government to do something. Now we heard from the member for Toronto Centre, "Well, they said they're going to do it." Great, then do it. Then do something.

The reason we're having this debate here is to give them assistance in bringing the reforms forward. The reason why we've engrossed that to the Parliament, both the House of Commons and the Senate, is because we wanted them to hear a unified voice from the people of the province of Ontario. It was the Premier who started the leadership on this, but we wanted them to hear a unified voice from the people of the province of Ontario that we have simply had enough, that we expect them to make change. We don't need any more consultation. We have heard from the experts what has to happen when it comes to repeat and violent offenders.

We've also, granted, heard about other reforms that have to happen here in the province of Ontario, as is highlighted in the report—this report—that the committee tabled in this House, that was accepted unanimously.

By removing and changing it to "evaluate," we're in the exact same spot that we have been over the last number of years. We have to evaluate everything. What is there to evaluate?

And it goes one step further by then removing the wording that we would then send a message to the federal Parliament. "Why would we want to do that," you'd say. "Why would we want to send a message to the federal government?" Because the federal government is in a minority. It is a minority federal Parliament, and they should hear a unified voice of the Parliament of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Let's not forget that the balance of power, yet again, in Ottawa is held by the NDP. It is held by the NDP. So the member for Toronto Centre says, "Well, he says he's going to do it." Well, if he says he's going to do it in Ottawa, and this is what we're getting in the province of Ontario from the NDP, which is to eliminate anything that would put violent offenders back in jail or remove their bail, then what type of reforms are we going to get from a

minority Parliament where the balance of power is held by the NDP?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Nothing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Exactly, nothing.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that is one of the reasons why the motion was amended to remove anything that is meaningful, anything that would be addressed to the federal Parliament, anything that will come from us as a Legislative Assembly which would go to the members of the House in Ottawa and the Senate which identifies what we, as a Legislative Assembly, want to see done. It removes it from that.

We're debating here amongst ourselves. That's what the NDP want to do. They don't want to tell their cousins in Ottawa that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has had enough and we want changes, because we know what type of changes they will be.

So I'm going to move an amendment of my own, Madam Speaker, and I move the following amendment. I move that the amendment be amended by deleting the following: "more appropriately evaluate and mitigate risk, ensuring that court resources are focused on protecting vulnerable groups" and replacing it with "protect all Canadians" and by adding "and that the said address be engrossed" at the end.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The government House leader has moved the following amendment to the amendment: That the amendment be amended by deleting "more appropriately evaluate and mitigate risk, ensuring that court resources are focused on protecting vulnerable groups" and replacing it with "protect all Canadians" and by adding "and that the said address be engrossed" at the end.

I return to the government House leader to debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I want to make it very, very clear to the opposition, and not just the official opposition, but also the independents: We believe on this side of the House that the time to evaluate is done. We believe that the people of the province of Ontario agree with us that the time for the federal government to take action is now. We believe that a minority Parliament in Ottawa should not be held up by an NDP opposition in Ottawa—supported by an official opposition here in the province of Ontario—that would rather evaluate, discuss and debate than take action on something.

In a very real way, we're saying to Mr. Lametti in Ottawa: We are here. If, as the member from Toronto Centre has suggested, he's going to make the changes, we are telling him, do not rely on the NDP in Ottawa to help you make those changes, because we can't even come to an agreement here in the Legislative Assembly that repeat violent offenders should be refused bail. So obviously, Madam Speaker, that is why we are making this amendment, and this is why every single member on this side of the House and on that side of the House—every single Conservative member—will vote against the amendment from the member for Toronto Centre, because it is not in the best interest of the people of the province of Ontario. It is not in the best interest of those people who put

themselves on the line each and every day to ensure that we are safe. It is not in their best interest.

Right next to me is a colleague who was a crown attorney and probably has dealt with more bail applications than any of us combined, and I'm looking forward to her speech—and some of the other lawyers in our caucus who have dealt with this, Madam Speaker. I haven't read their speeches, but I imagine they're not going to tell us that we need to spend more time evaluating where we need to go. I imagine if you went on the streets of the city of Toronto or anywhere in the province of Ontario, they're not going to tell you that we need to evaluate a little bit more what we should do on bail reform. I think if you ask somebody, "Should a repeat violent offender be let out on bail?" they're probably going to tell you pretty quickly, "No, they should not be let out on bail."

So I ask the members very, very specifically across the way if they would simply just do the right thing and withdraw the amendment. Let us have a unified voice here. And again, I say this very seriously: This is the report that was just tabled in this House not long ago, a unanimous report, made up of members on the government side, made up of members of the official opposition and independent members—a unanimous report, Madam Speaker.

The motion that we brought forward here is in response to what Premiers across this country have asked the federal government to do. It is in response to what the federal Minister of Justice said he wants to do. But we wanted to ensure that they understood how important this was for the people of the province of Ontario, and we have no desire to amend it, to water it down, to evaluate, to discuss. The report made it very, very clear what needs to happen in Ottawa. We can debate on our end what needs to happen in the province of Ontario—no problem with that. But what we're doing here today is sending a message to Ottawa that we support making changes, that we want those changes to be the types of changes that the people of the province of Ontario have asked for, that we want those changes to reflect what Commissioner Carrique and chiefs of police across this province have said both in committees and in press conferences and have been saying for a long time.

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So to be very clear, we will not, under any circumstances, support the motion that would diminish what the people of this province are asking for. And I would certainly hope that the next speaker of the NDP would do the right thing, help us send a message to Ottawa, send a message to their cousins in Ottawa, withdraw this motion, and let's get back on track to doing what we have to do in keeping our communities safe by putting repeat, violent offenders and keeping them in jail once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the motion before us today—actually, now on the subamendment to the amendment to the motion that is before us today on bail reform. This might surprise the government House leader, but certainly the

subamendment that he has put forward is something that is supportable. We made very clear from the outset our intention to support the motion. Our amendment was intended to focus the direction that we are giving to the federal government to deal with the real issues that were brought before the committee and to honour and respect the input that MPPs who participated in those standing committee hearings on bail reform heard. So we are here today.

The standing committee hearings were undertaken in the wake of the tragic murder of OPP Police Constable Pierzchala back in December.

I want to begin by offering my deepest condolences to Constable Pierzchala's family and his co-workers—to police officers across this province who put their lives on the line in the service of our communities and die to protect us. We know that we have to do whatever is necessary to keep police officers safe, but we also need to ensure that we are keeping our communities safe from violent repeat offenders, which is what this motion, as amended by the government House leader, calls for.

I want to quote from some of the input that was provided at the committee, and in particular the input from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They said very clearly: "Our message to you today as police leaders is this: We want to look at ways to improve how the bail system addresses repeat violent offenders, firearms offences and intimate partner violence. This is an issue that cannot be addressed in isolation and requires a coordinated, multi-faceted approach involving all levels of government and criminal justice system actors, including federal legislative reform to the bail provisions in the Criminal Code; provincial amendments to the Ministry of the Attorney General's policies, guidelines and directives on bail; and sufficient resources and funding from all levels of government to ensure adequate staffing and expertise in bail courts, improved training, and sufficient police resources to enforce bail compliance."

In light of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police highlighting the gaps in our bail system in terms of repeat violent offenders, those who are convicted of firearms offences and intimate partner violence, I want to highlight some of the recommendations of the Renfrew coroner's inquest. My colleague the member for Toronto Centre spoke to this when she brought her amendment to the floor. There were a number of recommendations that came through that coroner's inquest process that deal specifically with bail reform. We've been waiting since June, since that coroner's report came out, to see a meaningful response from this government to all of the 86 recommendations of this report—well, 78 of the recommendations were specific to the government of Ontario, and then there were some additional recommendations for the federal government. Many of the 78 recommendations that deal with the Ontario government address some of the concerns about our bail system in this province.

The number one recommendation that should be very easy for this government to move forward with, that people at the gender-based-violence agencies have been

calling for in the wake of those horrific murders in Renfrew, those horrific femicides—the first recommendation was to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. Making that declaration would allow the kind of cross-ministerial consultation that would be necessary to look at all aspects of what's contributing to intimate partner violence as an epidemic, including some of the flaws in our bail reform system.

The coroner recommended that there be a review and amendments where appropriate of the language that is used for bail and probation conditions in intimate partner violence cases. That was one of the recommendations that was made by the coroner, and that would go a long way to protecting people who are at risk of intimate partner violence.

The coroner also called for a universal records management system that would be accessible by all police services—federal, provincial, municipal, military, First Nations—with appropriate access to all intimate partner violence stakeholders, including probation, the chief firearms officer, crown's offices, Ontario Court of Justice, Superior Court of Justice, correctional institutions, and parole boards.

Another one of the coroner's recommendations is to ensure that survivor-informed risk assessments are incorporated into the decisions and positions taken by crowns relating to bail, pleas, sentencing, and eligibility for early presentation programs.

Another one is to establish policies making it clear that, absent exceptional circumstances, those assessed at high risk or where the allegations involve strangulation should not qualify for early intervention. Crowns should also consider a history of intimate partner violence whether or not convictions resulted when determining whether early intervention is appropriate.

And then finally—I talked about the recommendation regarding standard language templates for bail and probation conditions, but the coroner's report detailed all of the factors that should be considered in those standard language templates and those decisions on bail and probation.

Looking at enforceability; a plan for removal or surrender of firearms and the possession and acquisition licence; residence distance from victims; keeping probation aware; safety of current and previous victims; possibility of a "firearm-free home" condition; past disregard for conditions as a risk factor—these are all actions that this government could have taken months ago, in the wake of the coroner's report, and could be taking today.

Instead, we have this motion before us—which, as I said, we will support—calling on the federal government to take action on meaningful bail reform. We are, as we have said, in agreement with this motion, but we are going to use this opportunity to highlight some of the actions that the government could be taking to keep all Canadians and Ontarians safe from violent repeat offenders.

1640

Going back to the Renfrew inquest, I want to share some of the comments that were made by Nathalie Warmerdam's son Malcolm Warmerdam. Nathalie was

one of the victims in the Renfrew femicide. He has been very clear in calling for a system that isn't just for catching monsters. He spoke to the Renfrew inquest and he told them that he wanted jurors to know "how complicated this situation was—that Basil," the perpetrator, "had the capacity to show us both the good and bad in him. I knew if the jury made recommendations based on somebody they couldn't see any good in, we would build a system that wouldn't stop the people perpetuating these harms. We have to build a system that isn't just for catching monsters, because most folks won't see them as monsters until after tragedy strikes. That doesn't do anybody any good. What we want out of this inquest, I told the jury, are recommendations that make everyone safer—even perpetrators."

We heard some of that same incredible compassion and insight that was shared by Andrea Magalhaes, the mother of 16-year-old Gabriel, who was tragically killed in a TTC station. I don't know if others saw the column in the Toronto Star on Friday by Edward Keenan. The headline is, "Andrea Magalhaes, Devastated with Grief for Her Murdered Son Gabriel, Had the Clarity to Demand Supports for People in Crisis. We Should Heed Her Words." He wrote: "Summoning a clarity of thought and expression I cannot fathom at what is certainly the most painful moment of her life, she has demanded more mental health support for people in crisis, more investment in physical and mental health, more housing. 'More needs to be done to help people in crisis, more needs to be done so people don't get to the point where they are in crisis,' she told CBC radio this week."

We have a system—not just a bail system, but a correctional system, a mental health and addictions system—that does not provide those supports that are needed in our province.

One of the things that was shared with the committee as they were doing the hearings on bail reform was the reality of our correctional institutions in Ontario, the reality of the number of people who are in remand at our correctional institutions: 70% of inmates at Ontario provincial correctional institutions have not been charged with a crime. They are awaiting bail or they've been denied bail, but they are waiting for trial. They are waiting for justice. Those inmates are experiencing deplorable conditions that harden them to being rehabilitated when they leave those institutions.

Today I talked to Kevin Egan, a class action lawyer at McKenzie Lake, a law firm in London. He is leading a class action proceeding against the government of Ontario on behalf of inmates at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. He repeated some of the input that was shared with the committee about the reality of our corrections systems. He said that some inmates incarcerated in EMDC who have not been found guilty—who are not guilty—will plead guilty even if they are innocent just to get out with time served, because the conditions there are so deplorable, because of the huge length of time that people are waiting to get a bail hearing or to get a trial. He had some great suggestions that would be fully within the purview of this

government. He said, "Why aren't we talking about using technology, using ankle bracelets for non-violent offenders to get them out of our correctional facilities and try to relieve some of that incredible overcrowding in our correctional institutions?" The Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre is two and a half times over the capacity that it was designed for, and as a result, inmates at EMDC are living in inhumane conditions, with overcrowding and no access to rehabilitation. He said this just fosters disrespect for the law when these inmates eventually leave the detention centre.

So there are many things that this province could do immediately that would help relieve that backlog of all of these people who are waiting to receive a bail hearing or waiting for trial.

I want to share a couple more of the deputations, the written submissions that were provided to the Queen's Park committee that was looking at bail reform.

The Toronto Police Association said, "While we may revisit our bail system, and while we may make amendments to shift priorities, the reality is that reasonable bail is a constitutional right, and many people will return to their communities until such time as they have their day in court...."

"We as the police also need resources to track these individuals down proactively" when they are out on bail and fail to appear in court.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples noted, "There are problems with our bail system. They are excessive, punitive conditions, and people continue to wait for a long time before their day in court."

So we do have to look at how to ensure that people have access to bail hearings, and also to ensure that violent repeat offenders are—that there are measures in place to protect the public, and women in particular. I mentioned at the outset the three women who were killed in Renfrew—but to protect vulnerable populations from the highest-risk, most dangerous offenders.

We heard from criminal defence lawyers who highlighted some of the problems with legal aid. They said that one of the main sources of delays in accessing bail hearings is the number of defendants appearing in court without legal representation or duty counsel to help them navigate the bail system. When unrepresented people arrive at bail court and their case is not heard, they are returned to detention, a time-consuming exercise that can occur multiple times. "The system cannot work more efficiently without adequate staffing and resources for legal aid."

The Law Society of Ontario said, "Clearing the backlog should be a priority. The ministries that would be responsible would be the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of the Solicitor General. These ministries need the resources in order to deal with the causes of the backlog. They need the resources to deal with getting disclosure out in criminal prosecutions and the resources to be able to identify the most serious cases that pose a risk to community safety and be able to prioritize them."

1650

Speaker, these are all issues that can be dealt with immediately by this government, that could have been dealt with in the budget that was released a week and a half ago, that was debated all last week. These are the actions that Ontarians are calling on this government to take.

I want to close just with giving a shout-out to London Police Service in my community and the advocacy that London Police Service has been doing in partnership with CMHA, St. Joseph's Health Care, the paramedic services. They have all been collaborating on the COAST program, which diverts police response to people who are in mental health crisis. London is waiting for stable, permanent funding for that program. A lot of comparable-sized cities already have that program in place.

These are the kinds of programs that would really make a difference, that would respond to the plea that was made by Gabriel's mother and by others in Ontario for a compassionate response to violence in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be sharing my time with the members from Orléans and Don Valley West. I just want to say I'll be supporting this motion, because I believe that our responsibility as legislators—and any government official, anybody who's in government—is primarily public safety. There's an issue of public safety here that we have to address.

But I do want to say a couple of things that we need to be thinking about in this Legislature beyond encouraging the federal government to take this on.

In my riding of Ottawa South—and my friend from Ottawa Centre would remember this—Anne-Marie Ready and her daughter Jasmine were murdered on June 27 last year by a young man who was their neighbour, who was let out by a justice of the peace. Their father and husband, Raf, has been trying to sort out what happened there.

One of the challenges that we have in our justice system—it's not just now; it has been through previous governments—is communication and making sure that people who make decisions have the information they need when they make that decision.

The second thing is to apply the principles that they're given to make decisions each time. I hope that the government will help the Ready family, very much so.

The other thing I want to mention is we're sending this message to the federal government, but we have the Community Safety and Policing Act that received royal assent four years ago. What that act does is it provides some protections for public safety around policing. We have an individual who's charged with very serious crimes, including sexual assault, who has been allowed to collect a publicly funded salary for seven years. So the government dropped the ball with this act. It should have been enacted. It received royal assent four years ago.

The second thing is there's the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act. This is something to protect people from human trafficking. It has been on the books for two years—still hasn't been enacted.

I'd ask the government to pick up that ball and run with it, because these are two important issues of public safety. If we're going to preach about public safety, then perhaps we better do our own homework.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: There's no doubt that the increase in violent crime the past number of years is disturbing: families torn apart by vicious acts of violence, women killed at the hands of their partners, innocent bystanders catching a stray bullet, police officers ambushed, children randomly killed trying to get home on the subway.

There's no doubt that the residents of Orléans and across Ontario are growing more and more concerned with the types and the volumes of crimes and violence we once thought were limited to our neighbours down south.

I had the privilege of participating in the committee hearings on bail reform earlier this year, Madam Speaker. At committee, police testified that the number of shell casings at shootings is up dramatically and that this indicates a level of violence and a ferocity of violence that they've never seen before. We heard loud and clear from both police authorities and from criminal defence advocates that changes to the system were needed.

As part of their testimony, the Toronto Police Service presented staggering numbers on just how many violent offenders are released on bail and then commit further crimes, many committing violent crimes again while awaiting trial for their first offence. In 2021, 772 people were released on bail for firearms-related charges. This is in Toronto. Of those, 165 people were rearrested while on bail for firearms offences; 60% of those people were rearrested for further firearms-related charges. Of those, half received bail a second time. That's shocking and tells an important story as to why bail reform is so important.

So I fully support asking the federal government to make the necessary legislative changes to make it harder for violent offenders to receive automatic bail, but it's important to point out that there are important recommendations from the committee that are fully within the purview of this provincial government—a recommendation proposed and endorsed by both the Toronto police and other police agencies, and a recommendation that was generally endorsed by the criminal defence community as well: specifically that bail hearings for those accused of firearm offences—and, I would suggest, all violent offences—should be heard by a Superior Court or provincial court judge, not by Justices of the Peace. Many, if not most, JPs do not have the same legal training and years of experience within the criminal justice system that judges will have.

As stated by Chief Demkiw, “Judges are uniquely positioned to understand all the issues at play and the collective impact of gun violence and bring these perspectives to decisions about bail for firearms offences.”

I'd also like to quote the 2019 Auditor General's report: “In late 2016, courthouses in two locations started using judges to sit in bail courts instead of justices of the peace, who are not required to be trained in the law. The pilot

project ended in August 2019; starting in September 2019, justices of the peace resumed sitting in the bail courts. The Ontario court's evaluation of the pilot's effectiveness to identify options for judicial case management of matters beginning in bail court is scheduled to be completed by February 2020."

Throughout the committee process, none of the experts who testified had yet seen this report from the ministry. Legislative research could not find this report. We heard anecdotally during committee from both sides, as I said, that this pilot project was successful, or they thought that it was successful. To date, nearly four years after the pilot project ended, the government has yet to publish the report on its effectiveness.

As this government continues to hammer about asking the federal government to take action—action that I hope the federal government does take; I support asking the federal government to take this action—I join the public recommendations of the committee of justice policy and urge the government to release the results of this pilot project. Moreover, if the project was successful, as those who testified believe that it was, I'm urging the government to implement that recommendation right away. It's within their purview to have these bail hearings heard by Superior Court judges or Ontario judges. There's no need to wait for the federal government to take action; the government has the power to act today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to thank my colleagues for their eloquent words about this motion and their support of it.

I rise also to speak in support of the government's motion. I want to start, though, by giving my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Constable Pierzchala, who was tragically shot by an offender out on bail.

I've met with officers from the Toronto Police Service who work in my community, and I know they care about it, the people in it and work hard to keep us safe, at great personal risk.

Ontarians want to feel safe and to live without fear of harm, especially when they're using city and government services.

1700

We've all heard the tragic story of 16-year-old Gabriel Magalhaes, who was fatally stabbed and killed on the TTC system last week. We've heard from Gabriel's mother, Andrea Magalhaes, who—amidst her unbearable pain—found the strength to speak about her son and to speak out. Of her son Gabriel, she said, "He was a beautiful, sweet, sweet boy.... He was so loving.... I just cannot believe that his life was cut short."

She went on to say, "I am hoping that people will raise their voices so we can be heard. More needs to be done to help people in crisis. More needs to be done so that people don't get to the point where they are in crisis...."

"We need more social services. We need more investment into physical and mental health. We need more

supports for housing. I feel like, as things go the way they are going right now, so many people are going to be suffering the horrible pain that I am going through right now."

Why did she say all this, Speaker? Because she doesn't want us to focus only on crime and the criminals, but also what drives some people to that life of crime.

We've heard that the 20-year-old man arrested for this awful crime has a lengthy criminal record, including two convictions for assault with a weapon. According to a Global News article, he was arrested in Mississauga on September 5, 2021, and charged with assault with a weapon—a pair of scissors. He was arrested a second time in Brampton on April 10, 2022, and weeks after that arrest, arrested again in Richmond Hill. Less than three months later, he was arrested in Mississauga in connection with an assault involving a box cutter.

With stronger laws to deal with repeat and chronic offenders, such as bail reform, and increased mental health and housing support, people across Ontario can be better-protected from horrific crimes like this. The federal government should take steps to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to strengthen bail requirements for these offenders, including a definition of "chronic offender" and an onus on these offenders to demonstrate why they should be granted bail. The provincial government should require bail hearings for the most serious offences to be heard by the provincial court rather than simply a justice of the peace, and they should immediately increase funding for legal aid in order to reduce delays and help address the large backlog of bail cases in our courts. The provincial government must implement reforms in our justice system to improve living conditions and programming in correctional facilities to ensure a focus on rehab and reintegration of inmates, so that those convicted of a crime do not descend on a path of repeated criminal activity.

And to be strong on crime prevention, we need to address the root causes of crime and to remember Gabriel's mother's calls. We need to remember that bail reform is a serious issue and that we have a disproportionate number of Indigenous and Black people being held in jail. We need to address systemic racism and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action on justice; for example, working with Indigenous communities to provide culturally sensitive services for issues faced by Indigenous people.

Speaker, the offender who killed Gabriel was (1) a repeat offender, (2) with no known address, and (3) with alleged mental health issues. I want to stress that addressing all three of these areas is critical to ensuring public safety.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate this opportunity. I'm splitting my time with the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, and I want to take a moment to thank him, thank the member from Kitchener South-Hespeler, thank the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the Premier of Ontario for standing up for the rights of law-

abiding citizens and for victims of crime in this province and country.

Madam Speaker, the charter guarantees the right of life, liberty and the security of person. When data points confirm, as we see in our streets—in rural communities and urban communities in every region of this country, most especially here in Ontario, where there's been a 92% increase in gang-related homicides since 2015, since the federal government took office; a 32% increase in violent crimes that have risen, inflicting great havoc on families, citizens, seniors, and increasingly, young people in our society—it is fair to say that governments are not upholding their obligation to the security of person, to the right to live in our communities absent the real risk of violent, indiscriminate crime. That's why we're here: to affirm, in the clearest way to the federal government, that the status quo, that the policies that have been watered down and undermined have created a reality where we must now choose to normalize violence on subways and schools, in playgrounds and malls. That is not the Canada my family came to. It's not the Canada we all work hard to build every single day. Thus, we are urging the federal government and all members of this Parliament to speak with one voice, as the House leader said: a united voice to urge the federal Attorney General to do his job, uphold the rule of law and protect law-abiding people from violence in their communities.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the civil tone of this debate. It's a solemn issue—it's a sobering issue, rather. But I must comment and reflect upon the statements made by the member from Toronto Centre that almost rhetorically suggested, "Why are we here if the federal Attorney General already confirmed that action is under way?" Madam Speaker, it was the justice minister of Canada, Justice Minister Lametti, who said literally just weeks ago that Canada's bail system "is strong and sound." It is a matter of collective security and safety that we ensure that the federal government and the Attorney General of this country hear clearly the largest province in the nation, that our government and our Parliament stands united in the defence of safety and security, and that we end the revolving door of justice that allows repeat, recidivist violent offenders to get back onto our streets, only to inflict more harm and more violence in society.

Madam Speaker, we have heard, in this House, of Constable Hong, murdered in cold blood, in broad daylight. We heard about OPP Constable Greg Pierzchala, murdered by violent offenders who were released on bail months prior. We hear, Madam Speaker, about the recent and rather tragic death—unimaginable; I can't imagine a parent getting a call that their child, literally sitting on a bench minding their own business, was targeted with this brazen attack; a 16-year-old student in TDSB murdered in a space that otherwise was a transit corridor they used mindlessly each and every day.

This is not the country we should accept. This is not the society we should be comfortable normalizing. Therefore, we have an opportunity to speak united against this crime and to insist upon better for the people we represent: for

Gabriel, that 16-year-old boy, and for everyone else who has seen the impact of crime.

We've seen it in different manifestations in my own riding. Around Christmas, we saw a horrific attack at a condo, the Bellaria towers in my riding, where individuals were killed. These realities, I think, remind us of the necessity for action; that the current policy formulation by the federal government that has allowed repeat offenders back on our streets is not in the national interest, does not guarantee the right of security of the person. In fact, it is enabled by the watering-down of tough laws against those who wage harm on society. We've removed the disincentives. We've removed the deterrents when it comes to crime in this community.

We know that there are crimes that are preventable and predictable. In the story of Darian Henderson-Bellman, who lived in Georgetown, she was shot by her boyfriend, a man who was charged and released on bail four times. On the fifth time he was released, most regrettably, Darian perished.

Courts have ruled against the consecutive sentencing for multiple murders. This is an issue that should seize us all as parliamentarians. That's an unacceptable reality: multiple individuals murdered, and yet the courts will count that as one murder. They're sentenced for only one of those murders. That is a problem, a problem we should agree needs reform.

Bill 75 of the federal government actually codified catch-and-release in the first place, watering down or restricting the capability of judges to ensure these individuals, who often have a history of violence, stay behind bars. The federal Liberals repealed mandatory minimum sentences. We're talking about, through Bill C-5, no longer mandating prison time for robberies with firearms or weapons trafficking, a significant issue in Toronto and other communities where we see illegal guns—not the guns of hunters and anglers in rural Ontario, but illegally smuggled guns from the border and other parts of the province that are being moved around across society. That was removed, where we no longer set a mandatory minimum sentence for serious crime. That's a problem, Madam Speaker, that I think requires all of us to say something about it.

1710

Legislation now allows serious criminals to serve house arrest instead of jail, including for sexual assault and trafficking. So, yes, there's a problem. There's a problem when any government—in this case, the federal government—has weakened laws, has created a reality where we have a data point of literally over 92% of gang-related homicides increasing in our land. And so this motion is not just symbolic. I reject that premise. It is substantive in what it seeks to fix, which is a system that is failing everyday families, law-abiding Canadians. The reasonable assumption is government will be on their side, not on the side of those who commit crime.

Increasingly I hear from people in my community in King-Vaughan, that has seen a spike in crime, among many other communities in this province and country,

where they feel that the system is more on the side of those who break the law instead of on the side of law-abiding citizens or victims of crime. And that offends us, and it should offend every one of us that there are people who will never be able to see their loved ones again and potentially knowing that deterrents and some strength in our public policy and some toughness on the most heinous of criminals in society may have—may have, Madam Speaker—prevented that crime, that loss of life.

And so I am very pleased that the province of Ontario, under the leadership of the Premier, enacted a national campaign to wake up the federal government to a problem they never were committed to solving, unless there was a broader national consensus. From the New Democrats of BC under Premier Eby to the Liberal government of Newfoundland and Labrador under Premier Furey to the New Democratic Premier of Yukon, Premier Pillai—all of them agree that the status quo is unacceptable. I will add, even the mayor of Vaughan, the former leader of the Liberal Party, Steven Del Duca—an individual who I've built a good working relationship since the election—wrote a letter to the federal government saying this is unacceptable.

The former Attorney General to Premier McGuinty, Michael Bryant, said, “the typical federal Liberal approach to crime, in a word, is a boomer approach that is stuck in the summer of love ... we need to reconsider some of our traditional Liberal policies on crime. We need to take a close look at strong statutory measures, including reverse-onus clauses and mandatory minimums. We need to consider investigative techniques that Liberals have traditionally dismissed, especially the use of closed-circuit cameras and civil seizures.”

Madam Speaker, there is a growing national consensus for action and I am proud, as a Progressive Conservative and, fundamentally, as a Canadian, to stand up in our democracy to expect better—to ensure law-abiding, hard-working, tax-paying citizens, young people, seniors are able to live a life in this country of freedom and security. And it's for that reason I'm voting for this motion, and I encourage every member to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutika Karpoche): The member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's an honour to rise today to speak to this matter. I want to thank my colleagues for taking the time to speak to this critical matter, and the members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy for their thoughtful dialogue, debate and contributions that produced a strong, clear and comprehensive document entitled *A Report on the Modernization of the Bail System: Strengthening Public Safety*. This cumulative effort will save lives, and it's far more than symbolic. It's important to note that the findings and recommendations contained in this report were only made possible by the contributions of highly credible, caring leaders who invested their time to share their experience, insights and research, with the goal of improving safety in our communities and the safety of those sworn to protect us. Of those credible, caring leaders, Premier Ford took early, decisive action to lead his fellow Premiers and territorial

leaders with integrity in standing united and without partisanship to urge the Prime Minister to take immediate action in this regard. My hope is that this document and our motion today can send a clear message and influence our federal lawmakers to update a crucial component of the Criminal Code of Canada, while making the necessary investments to our justice system to achieve tangible outcomes and prevent the needless loss of life and injury from the few who have no regard for anyone but themselves.

And let's be clear, Speaker: None of these proposed amendments to this motion were heard by the participant members of this committee at committee. I didn't hear it. I was there every day.

The need for bail reform in Canada to protect everyone from this very small percentage of violent, chronic, repeat offenders is long overdue, and the call is not a new one. The murder of Provincial Constable Greg Pierzchala, sadly, highlights an issue that our practitioners have known about for many years and are forced to live with daily.

Police officers in Ontario and across Canada face significant challenges and risks that are unique to this profession. The oath police officers swear to serve and protect our communities and the risks they assume to place their lives in harm's way so that we can live and prosper in safe communities places these professionals at a very unique vantage point that few others have.

I'm privileged and fortunate for having that lived experience as a long-serving police professional, and now, I serve alongside you to share that perspective. I placed my life at risk, and I understand and appreciate this perspective uniquely, like they do. This experience allows me to better understand people—people at their worst and people at their best.

I also carry some of the burdens that our front-line first responders carry every day. I have felt first-hand the frustration and anguish of seeing persons accused of violent crimes against people they know, against strangers and even intimate partners, brought to justice by our law enforcement members only to be released on bail conditions to “keep the peace and be of good behaviour.” This has impacted and continues to impact the morale of our hard-working front-line members because it diminishes the dangerous and difficult work they do every day.

The risk to the safety of police officers while bringing a violent offender to justice takes a tremendous toll on their lives and on their families' lives. This burden includes, of course, the inherent danger of dealing with a violent person or an armed violent person; the high level of scrutiny, checks and balances that are rightfully built into the system to ensure accountability and integrity; and most certainly the time-sensitive nature and the keen sense of urgency, which few understand, that accompanies all criminal investigations to ensure that an accused is brought before justice in a timely fashion.

The safety of law enforcement officers is of paramount importance because it fundamentally is linked to the very foundation of a safe society. Section 7 of the charter, eloquently read by my colleague, says, “Everyone has the

right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.” Our society functions based on this premise. If someone chooses to live outside the law and harm others, they’ll be brought to justice and there will be consequences. In Canada, persons accused and then duly convicted of serious indictable offences could suffer the consequence of incarceration.

The component in between the accusation of committing a crime and the conviction or acquittal is an opportunity to see what Canadians and Ontarians should celebrate as some of our most precious legal rights also enshrined in the charter, particularly section 9 that says, “Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.”

Moreover, section 11(e) states that any person charged with an offence has the right “not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause.” This feature should be championed, notwithstanding circumstances where the evidence of crime is so egregious and the risk to our safety is so great that that accused must remain in custody pending trial. Used properly, the application of this section saves lives, and it would have saved the life of Constable Greg Pierzchala.

Unfortunately, the bail system in Canada has long been proven to be ineffective, leading to the release of violent offenders who go off to reoffend and continue to pose a significant threat to all our safety. This is unacceptable. There is a myriad of reasons why the current bail system is failing to protect us from violent repeat offenders. The conditions for release on bail are often inadequate and do not consider the actual risk posed by that individual.

In my own experience, I’ve witnessed first-hand many cases where individuals with lengthy violent histories are released on bail with few conditions or with conditions that are impossible to enforce. This puts the safety of police officers and the public at risk—our families.

1720

The bail system for individuals accused of violent crimes, all crimes involving weapons and firearms, and crimes against intimate partners should be examined with greater scrutiny and by the appropriate member of the judiciary with specific training and expertise, and they should be held accountable for their decisions.

By carefully applying and better aligning our bail system provisions with goals to better protect communities and our law enforcement officers, we can avoid the unintended consequences that are contributing to increased recidivism and prevent those accused of non-violent offences from spending lengthy times in provincial jails awaiting trial. As noted during the committee hearings, a great number of persons are incarcerated in provincial jails awaiting trial. This is costly and ineffective.

Enhancements to the bail system and investments to support the capacity and resources of our law enforcement officers to conduct bail monitoring, and embedding clinicians with specialized training in mental health and addictions to work more closely with our police officers will also protect persons from marginalized communities

by reducing systemic biases and increasing equality in our justice system.

As a former and proud law enforcement professional, I agree with Ontario’s police leaders, who unanimously agreed that bail reform will save lives.

To address these issues, the federal government need not look further than this motion today and the articulate, eloquent report that was completed unanimously by the committee members. These reforms are necessary to ensure the bail system is fair, equitable and just in protecting the public and deterring reoffenders. This will help to improve the safety of police officers and improve the safety of the communities we live in. By working together and supporting this motion today, we have a real opportunity to create a system that is truly just and effective.

Bail reforms will reduce violence and ensure our communities across Ontario and Canada are safer, while strengthening the confidence in our justice system by all participants and all citizens—and respect for the great work our police officers do every day on our behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

It’s a good day. It’s always an honour to be able to speak on behalf of Kiiwetinoong, but also to provide a voice for First Nations.

I’d like to acknowledge OPP officer Constable Greg Pierzchala, who was shot and killed on December 27, 2022. I know that at times like this, it is a time to come together as politicians, as people, to acknowledge the issues that we face. There is always so much work to be done to address the issues at hand with respect to bail reform.

I’d also like to acknowledge the OPP officers who suffer from PTSD. A couple of days ago, I was talking to an officer on the phone. He’s on leave. He talked about suicide to me: “Can you talk about it in the House at some point, what we suffer, what we go through?” I tried texting him earlier. It’s not delivering. I hope he’s okay. Two, three years ago, I had a long chat with him as well for about a half-hour. When we hanging were up the phone, we said goodbye. I debated with myself: “Is he saying goodbye?” It took me about one hour to reach out to his partner that we had to call 911. When we say we can do better—that’s what I mean by that. So to any officers who are out there, who are suffering, who need more support because they see things that we do not see—I remember this conversation in my head: “Can you guess how many dead people I’ve seen?” I said a number—but it was way up. So I think all officers—we have to acknowledge that. Thank you for the work. There are people today who are suffering from PTSD, who are thinking about suicide. Another question he asked me was, “Do you know how many OPP officers have died by suicide?” I can’t remember the number. This was two days ago. I just wanted to share that story.

With regard to the reform of Canada’s bail system, I’m going to read part of the submission from the Nishnawbe-

Aski Legal Services Corp. This is a group that represents 49 First Nations in northern Ontario. And I know we're going back and forth about amendments, subamendments. When I, as a First Nations person—that's your system that you guys play, whatever system that is.

Just last year, we put up the Seven Grandfather Teachings. I don't know who started naming them the Grandfather Teachings, but the Seven Grandfather Teachings are just ways of life. As First Nations people, that's how we grew up. When you see the wolf, it's humility. When you see the bear, it's bravery. When you see the raven, it's honesty. When you see the beaver, it's wisdom. When you see the turtle, it's truth. When you see the buffalo, it's respect. When you see the eagle, it's love. Sometimes when we are here, we do not function like that. Your system does not function like that. It's just a little reminder.

I know that sometimes in Kenora Jail, the Thunder Bay Jail—it has been a while since I visited. I visited Kenora about two years ago. I never know what to expect—but I know what to expect on my second visit. It was 98% First Nations people. Sometimes I'm really surprised at the people you know there, when you walk in there, when you walk by the cells. They're so happy to see you—the people you know from growing up in northern Ontario. It's the same with Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is not in my riding, but a lot of people go there.

I remember this kid who was working out like this, just by himself in the corner. I said, "Where are you from?" and then he told me the community. I asked him, "How long have you been here?" "I just got here." I asked him how old he was. He'd just turned 18.

About the reform of the bail system: "Accountability of individuals who cause harm needs serious consideration and must be weighed carefully against the overarching principles of access to justice, fairness and equality before the law."

We don't have courts in fly-in First Nations. We have fly-in courts. There are only certain times that you will have access to court.

1730

"As such, in balancing these important principles"—I know one of the things that the Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corp. has identified is areas of concern that should be reformed with the bail system, as requested by the Premiers, and I told those stories earlier, because of the disproportionate impact on First Nations people, on Indigenous people.

"Indigenous women, who comprise less than 5% of the population in Canada, represent 50% of the women locked up behind bars across the country." It's a fact. "Overall, Indigenous people make up 32% of the prison population while representing 5% of the Canadian population. In 2017/2018, Indigenous youth (aged 12 to 17) made up 43% of admissions to correctional services.... The situation right now as it stands in Canada's jails and prisons can only be described as a mass incarceration of Indigenous people.

"The numbers keep rising despite the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v Gladue* being released more than 20 years ago. Gladue states that a court that imposes a sentence should consider for all offenders all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders.

"Gladue principles are not limited to sentencing—they apply in all circumstances when an Indigenous person's freedom is at risk. This includes at bail and sentencing hearings, appeals, parole hearings, mental health review board hearings, not-criminally-responsible hearings, dangerous and long-term offender hearings, and civil contempt decisions."

Speaker, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services—"Nishnawbe" is First Nations people, people from the land. "Aski" is land. So that's basically what it means.

"The bail stage is arguably the most important and critical moment in a criminal matter—should the accused person not be granted bail, the chances of them entering a guilty plea go up significantly. This is simply because no one would rather wait for trial in jail for months, when they are offered the option to be released on time served. In *Gladue* and *Ipeelee*, the Supreme Court recognized Indigenous people are more likely to be refused bail and that this contributes to Indigenous over-incarceration."

I see it. We see it, we live it, in the Kenora district jail. We see it, we live it, in the Thunder Bay district jail.

We have to understand: "The criminal justice system is already imposing increased challenges on Indigenous people at the bail stage by:

- routinely requiring sureties;
- failing to accommodate accused persons living in remote communities;
- imposing onerous and legally unjustified conditions;
- requiring extensive background information about the accused, etc.

"Strengthening' Canada's bail system will disproportionately affect individuals who are already overrepresented in the criminal justice system, primarily Indigenous people, by making it less likely that they will be granted bail—hence perpetuating colonial practices.

"The impacts of the proposed bail reform are compounded by the upcoming changes to the Firearms Act through Bill C-21."

Another thing that they talk about at Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services is the lack of consultation with Indigenous communities and First Nations. Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services said, "The standing committee's hearings are being rushed in the face of growing calls for action—the adopted approach is reactive instead of deliberate. The proposed changes to the bail system will profoundly affect the rights and liberties of all Canadians, but specifically Indigenous people. Meanwhile, consultation with Indigenous communities and First Nations is lacking." We saw that when we had 20 minutes for some of the police

services whereas Indigenous police services only had seven minutes.

“Moving forward with reconciliation also means that Indigenous communities and First Nations must be included in the decision-making process, must be heard and consulted by provincial and federal governments alike, especially knowing that Indigenous people are disproportionately involved and adversely affected by the criminal justice system.”

The third thing that they talked about was the erosion of the presumption of innocence: “One of the proposed changes by the Premiers, namely to introduce a reverse onus on bail for the offence of possession of a loaded prohibited or restricted firearm in s.95 of the Criminal Code, is concerning. The presumption of innocence is the cornerstone of our criminal justice system and is entrenched in our Constitution.. This is why at bail, it is the crown’s onus to convince the court to detain an accused person pending trial. A reverse onus is and must remain an exception to the rule. Increasing the reach and the reliance on the reverse onus in the Criminal Code, thus putting the burden on the accused person to convince the court that they should be released, further erodes the presumption of innocence and weakens our overall justice system.”

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There was a written submission from the Canadian Mental Health Association: “The justice system is often the first point of access for individuals to receive any type of mental health and addictions services.” That quote reminded me of the people without homes in Sioux Lookout. I don’t know if any of you have ever campaigned with people without homes. You should try it sometime; you’d learn lots. In the wintertime, that’s exactly what people do—they go to Kenora because they get fed and they have a bed. They get better services in jail rather than being free and walking around without a home in these towns.

Remarks in Anishiniimowin. I am very honoured to be able to be able to speak today. *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.* That’s all I have for now. Meegwetch. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an honour to rise to speak to the government motion calling on the federal government to implement bail reform. This motion speaks to the public safety concerns related to acts of criminal violence, especially the tragic increase in the deaths of police officers, and I believe every member of this House is deeply concerned about the alarming number of police officers lost in the line of duty during the past year.

Speaker, every worker in this province, including the women and men who serve and protect our communities as police officers, deserves to come home safely at the end of the day. Calls for bail reform have grown since the tragic death of Constable Greg Pierzchala, an Ontario Provincial Police officer killed in the line of duty on December 27 by an accused person out on bail. I want to offer my sincere condolences to Constable Pierzchala’s

colleagues and family, as well as to everyone who has lost a loved one to criminal acts of violence and violent crime.

So yes, Speaker, I think the federal government should implement meaningful bail reform, taking the time to listen to front-line officers, legal scholars, criminal justice advocates and others on the best ways to increase public safety. And I say to the federal government, follow the evidence; study the statistics; listen to the experts and the victims—to talk about the best way we can implement bail reform in a way that increases public safety and community well-being.

And at the same time that the province is calling on the federal government for bail reform, I believe we have to look in the mirror, Speaker. I believe the provincial government also needs to take action to reform the bail system and the administration of justice while we invest in programs that prevent crime and promote community well-being. As the chiefs of police have said, we cannot look at bail reform in isolation. My hope is that we can have one of these rare occasions where we work across party lines to protect people and front-line officers by making changes to improve the province’s justice system and to invest in programs that improve people’s lives and community well-being.

I think it’s important to put on the record some of the reforms that experts have called for in Ontario:

(1) Timely bail decisions: People are waiting a year or longer for trial, and I believe it’s unacceptable that 77% of the people imprisoned in Ontario are in pretrial custody. We have a principle that you’re presumed innocent until guilty, and so we need a justice system that has more resources, more judges, faster processing and more funding for legal aid.

(2) We need to improve access to community services for the most vulnerable. Homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use, addiction and/or trauma are realities that make access to bail and adhering to bail conditions extraordinarily challenging. We will not arrest our way out of addressing these challenges.

(3) More funding for enhanced bail supervision programs: Bail supervision programs are a cost-effective way to monitor accused people with higher risks or needs in the community. We need the resources in place to do compliance checks and to have a more rigorous bail monitoring system in order to enhance public safety.

(4) Better inter-agency communication that increases communication among social service agencies, courts and police to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of our bail system in Ontario.

(5) Systematic collection of statistics: Collecting data and disaggregating it in meaningful categories is essential for informing evidence-based responses to ensure that we have a bail system that best protects the public in an evidence-based way.

Speaker, I want to close with a plea to all members of this House and to people across this province that we begin to actually invest in the root causes of crime and violence. I have spoken to so many front-line officers and chiefs of police who tell me that we cannot arrest our way out of the

mental health, addiction, poverty and homelessness crisis that we face in this province. We're asking front-line officers to respond to challenges in our community that they were never trained to respond to. It's not right, it's not fair for them and it's not fair for the most vulnerable members of our community.

And so I say that we need to care for and support our front-line police officers and our most vulnerable because we cannot have bail reform without social justice reform. That's how we build the Ontario we want.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I'll be splitting my time with the member from Mississauga Centre. I want to tell you why I'm supporting this motion. The member from Toronto Centre said that we had to listen to the experts that work within the system. I was part of the committee that came up with this report on bail reform. I performed bail hearings in Ottawa, Pembroke, Brampton, Oshawa, Brantford, Kitchener, Goderich, Guelph, Stratford, Walkerton and St. Thomas, just to name a few. At a conservative estimate, I've probably performed about 4,000 bail hearings and bail decisions in my time as a crown attorney. So frankly, I would consider myself to be an expert within the system. The reason that I ran for office was because of my experience as a crown attorney. I want to explain why this motion is so important and why it is the farthest possible thing from being a symbolic motion.

1750

I would also like to specifically thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane and the member from Orléans, who is no longer here. Those members attended the days of testimonial on our committee, but also attended the days on which we debated the amendments and recommendations and therefore informed it very helpfully in that manner, not leading to last-minute amendments as we are seeing today.

When I began as a crown, began in criminal law, it was about—I was called to the bar in 2014. So this was before the original bail reform considerably and, at that time, it was a completely different landscape. What a lot of people don't understand when they talk about calling for bail reform is that an aspect of bail reform already happened. What we are calling for is a reform to the reform.

So coming up on 2015-16, I was a crown at that point in time, and what we were seeing in Alberta, in Ontario and all across Canada was, I will full on say, an overreliance on utilizing sureties in Alberta specifically, and in Ontario, an overreliance on conditions that could not be complied with. For example, it was common to require an accused person to give their address, and then on their bail, include a term to reside at that address. Many individuals were homeless, could not possibly provide an address, and yet if they were found not residing at that address, they would then be charged for breaching their recognizance, arrested, brought back to court and very likely held for breaching. Those were issues that were widespread. Crowns were aware of it, defence counsel were aware of it, and police were aware of it.

As a crown, I myself started abandoning those conditions fairly early on, because as an officer of the court and a person with, I think, a strong moral code, I was uninterested in putting conditions on people that they could not possibly comply with that had nothing to do with the real purpose of bail, which was to reduce risk in our society. However, like many things that we see in politics, in society, when a pendulum swings too far one way, the swing back doesn't stop in the centre. It continues on to the other side. Where we are now is the other side, the other swing of that pendulum.

You've heard about Antic. You've heard about the ladder principle. You've heard about C-75. What Antic did was—in many ways, when it first came out, it didn't seem like a particularly revolutionary decision. It essentially copied and pasted the provisions of bail from the Criminal Code and said, "FYI, guys, that's the law. Don't forget you're not supposed to be using conditions that are unnecessary or can't be complied with. A surety is the highest form of relief. Remember that." However, the federal government stepped in, codified that, and then we got the ladder principle. We got a term that persons identifying as coming from any theoretically vulnerable population should have custody considered as a last resort.

And not particularly gradually—actually, relatively quickly—after Antic and after C-75, I went from being able to—I'll put it this way: When somebody would come into bail court and you're making a bail decision, again, I'm an officer of the court and my role is to determine the risk that you pose. Quite frequently, certainly the norm, people are held for bail, and they are not held in custody. They go to the crown. The crown would make a decision, where I would be looking at, say, a domestic offender and decide, "You know what? He's releasable, but I'm going to need these conditions: that he stay away from the victim, that he not possess any weapons. But he's good to go otherwise." And he would go in, he would present that to the justice of the peace, and he would have discussed it with Legal Aid counsel beforehand. It would be agreed on. The person would be released on reasonable conditions.

But what started happening is the justices of the peace, all of a sudden, were so frankly frightened of having some sort of judicial review, of being told that they'd overreached their powers, that the crown's recommendations, as somebody who—the goal is never to step on the rights of an accused person. That is not the role of the crown. A crown goes in there to try to address risk.

All of a sudden, we wouldn't be listened to. It got to the point where, particularly during COVID, I could no longer, as far as I was concerned, ever succeed in having the accused held in custody. And these are people with domestic offences, with significant related prior records, who were charged with choking a victim, choking to the point of unconsciousness. These are people with loaded handguns down the back of their pants walking through downtown Guelph at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

We would do the bail hearing and I would present the evidence to the best of my ability, and then we would hear the justice of the peace decision and I would think, were we even in the same courtroom for this? Because from

what I can tell, we weren't. And I would go home every night feeling incredibly anxious, because I knew that I had done my best, but ultimately, I would be worried about that person who was now back out on the street.

The reason that we're talking, as I said, about the feds here is because, really, the codification of Antic in C-75, that is federal legislation. They do have a very, very significant part to play here when it comes to, as I said, reforming that reform, when it comes to making sure that that pendulum comes back into the centre.

But, yes, the province, of course, also has a role. The idea that this motion somehow—because we are asking the federal government to take necessary steps, that we are somehow absolving the province of responsibility is entirely incorrect. Anybody who reads the report that we created can see that there are a number of clear recommendations set forward for the province—and again, recommendations that I'm happy to have played a part in: for example, the suggestion of training or having certain offences heard by a provincial court judge versus a justice of the peace.

In C-75, interestingly, one of the new offences that was added was the offence of, basically, choking or strangulation. The reason that it was added was because it was considered that strangulation, the act of manually choking somebody, is such a serious offence that it was deserving of its own specific category, its own section number. And yet—I will not name them—I would regularly present cases to a justice of the peace who would refuse to give me a no-weapons condition on any bail hearing where the offender had allegedly choked the victim because, and I quote, "Hands are not weapons." And this is the type of training that we are dealing with.

So when we talk about femicide, when we talk about protecting women, I would go home regularly, every

night, genuinely worried if, the next week, I would find out that the worst had happened. That is what we are trying to address here. That is why we are calling on the federal government to make these changes.

I am proud of the work that was done on the bail committee. As I said, I would absolutely not call this a symbolic motion. This is real, this is substantive and this is addressing something that I saw, day in and day out, in my career as a crown attorney, as I said, performing at least 4,000 bail hearings over the course of my career.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): A gentle reminder to not refer to the absence of other members.

Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good afternoon. I'm pleased to rise today in support of government notice of motion 13, which calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.

I want to thank the member for Kitchener South-Hespeler for sharing her very, very unique and valuable experience as a crown attorney, which really helps to illuminate our discussion today.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, I had the opportunity to listen in on many testimonials from stakeholders on both sides of the equation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'm sorry to interrupt, but it is now 6 o'clock.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	