

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 77B

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 77B

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Monday
15 May 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Lundi
15 mai 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 May 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 mai 2023

Report continued from volume A.

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BUILDING A STRONG ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2023
LOI DE 2023 VISANT À BÂTIR
UN ONTARIO FORT
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

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

Bill 85, An Act to implement Budget measures and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I have the honour today to rise to speak about Bill 85, the budget bill. One of the major aspects of the budget this time is to look into a budget which is driving economic growth. We in Ontario used to be the economic vehicle for all of Canada. We see that is declining and we needed to assign and put money to promote businesses, to push the jobs numbers. I think this government has been very successful so far, and it shows in the unemployment numbers in Ontario and how many jobs got added.

This budget is a very, very ambitious budget. It helps with a lot, putting some money in every aspect of—Madam Speaker, I'm sharing my time with the member from Brampton East, just before I forget. Also, with this spending of money, keeping track of the fiscal responsibility and making sure that the budget is balanced, or close to getting balanced, is an achievement for this government.

We need to make manufacturing in Ontario a priority because, as my colleague on the other side was talking about, the auto sector and a number of jobs left Ontario—as we can see, thousands and thousands—and the Canadian auto industry lost its pioneer position in North America. We need to get that back. And as we can see in the latest announcement about Volkswagen or other announcements to bring electric cars and electric car batteries back to Ontario—I think that's an achievement for this government.

Actually, it's a full aspect; talking about green energy and talking about saving the environment is needed to look into from different perspective. Having the ability to bring those standard cars off the street and getting electric cars in the thousands is going to save the environment and

improve the evolution in Ontario without having to penalize manufacturers that were trying to do more job creation.

We attracted more than \$16 billion in investments in electric vehicle and EV battery manufacturing, including Volkswagen. Volkswagen by itself—this plant which was announced a few days back will add 3,000 direct jobs and 30,000 indirect jobs with all the ecosystem and the manufacturing around the manufacturing plant. So yes, we are adding thousands of jobs by some investment. Actually, it's a good example of the provincial government investing money in conjunction with the federal government to make sure that Ontario prospers.

Ontario also, in this budget, added the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, which is a 10% rebate, up to \$2 million. This is going to help a lot of the small businesses and medium-sized businesses who are starting manufacturing to get some help from the government to get their projects going. All those different elements are allowing an appealing environment for investors to come and start manufacturing in Ontario, and putting Ontario back to where it should be.

Also, we did expand the Guaranteed Annual Income System, GAINS, and 100,000 additional seniors will be eligible. As we know, seniors got affected very much with COVID. It's not only that, but inflation levels are also affecting seniors because they're considered low-income. By doing this tax modification or tax credit, it's helping them a lot.

Also, the gas tax and fuel tax cuts which we did—two different cuts, up to nine cents per litre until the end of the year—just to give some relief to families in Ontario, those families who have been affected by the gas prices going up. Yes, I understand there's some inflation internationally and the Ukrainian war caused gas prices to go up, but there is a big portion of that affected by the carbon tax which got imposed by the federal government, which we tried very hard to stop in Ontario, unsuccessfully. We said that it's not helping the economy; it's causing troubles, it's causing a lot of overhead. We can see all the food and every aspect of goods are going up because they have an element of transportation. Even international containers—when you talk to people who are importing from China, from Egypt, from any other country in the world, they're saying their container was between US\$2,000 and US\$4,000, and now the container is US\$14,000. That's adding a lot of money to cost and overhead to bring even goods which sometimes manufacturing and industry need.

The fare integration we did in this budget between the GO Transit and the municipal transit services is helping a

lot of commuters who are actually commuting from Mississauga, from Kitchener—from everywhere—to some work in downtown Toronto, where they take the GO train, then they disembark at Union and try to get onto the transit or the TTC. Integrating that cost is helping to get people again moving and going longer distances for work.

Homelessness prevention: We added \$202 million each year for community organizations and supportive housing. This is a good amount of investment. We know that lots of work needed to be done on this. It's added needed funding to help this sector.

Expanding the training centres: There's \$224 million put in training and promoting skilled trades. This is very important to feed the industry and feed the different sectors of the economy with trades, which are very needed. There's a shortage in all directions, from building and construction to experienced skilled trades. By adding this money, it will help to get the skills needed for growth.

Also, the immigration nominee program, which this government has been working very hard on, trying to move it from 9,000 immigration spots in 2021 to over 18,000 in 2025: This will help and allow Ontario to have a say on those skilled workers who are needed to patch the gaps in our economy, to fill in the spots which we need, to feed some of the industries which are very short but where we don't have a say in choosing those skilled trades to come to Ontario. I think this is a big, ambitious plan to link immigration to the market needs. That will help new immigrants arrive and find the right jobs, filling the jobs which need those trades.

Also, as we can see, which I spoke about in one of my debates before, adding money in nurse training and in PSW training and subsidizing the fees for some of the trades industries so that we promote people to get into those industries: Some of the workers might find it lucrative for them to change their career into the trades. Giving that subsidization for the fees allows them to take such a decision and allows us to get people who we are in dire need of.

I have only a few seconds. **Medical staff:** adding more spots to increase the number of medical workers to support our health system. I think this budget is one of the most ambitious budgets about adding more medical workers, medical staff to the health system in Ontario.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I pass the speech to my colleague from Brampton East.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Brampton East.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: As the member of provincial Parliament for Brampton East and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I'm pleased to rise here today to speak in support of Bill 85, the Building a Stronger Ontario Act.

As elected officials, the passing of this bill is crucial to our role in serving the constituents we represent. This bill covers many of the concerns we have been hearing over the years from our constituents and is the first budget that this Parliament is putting forward. It's a step in the right direction to serve the families of Ontario.

The greater Golden Horseshoe is one of the fastest-growing regions in North America. By 2051, the population rate is forecast to grow from 10 million to 14.9 million people, and the employment rate is forecast to grow from 4.9 million to seven million jobs, respectively. To accommodate this, the construction of Highway 413 and other highway infrastructure projects will reduce the inevitable gridlock that comes with population growth and give hard-working residents within the greater Golden Horseshoe more time with their families and less time spent on the roads, saving them an average 30 minutes per commute. That's up to an hour a day in time saved. That time can be spent better with their families, instead of being stuck in gridlock, in traffic.

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This act also allows our government to build a stronger Ontario by investing more than \$379 million into the gas tax program, which will help municipalities across the province improve their local transit systems. This means more transit vehicles, better stations and shelters, increased routes and service, and, ultimately, greater access to transit for riders. The investments into transit also mean that we will continue our work towards establishing all-day, two-way GO along the Kitchener line, which will provide all riders, including Bramptonians, with greater connectivity while travelling throughout the province.

Speaker, with over \$20 billion being invested into building Ontario's critical transit, health care and education infrastructure, Bill 85 will significantly improve the lives of residents. Specifically, I'm speaking to the 50 new major hospital development projects being developed across the province, which will bring thousands of new hospital beds and provide greater access to Ontarians, when they need it and where they require it.

I know it was music to Brampton residents' ears when they received the great news of the Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness being converted into the city's much-needed second hospital, a need which prior governments failed to deliver. Our government delivered on their promise with a new 24/7 emergency department and over 250 patient beds. Additionally, in order to address the health care staffing shortages, Bill 85 provides us the opportunity to continue working for Ontarians through investments into our medical post-secondary sector. With \$100 million being invested over the next three years to help expand and accelerate the rollout of 165 undergraduate and 295 postgraduate medical school seats, we will be able to train and retain more doctors right here at home, not to mention the expansion to our nursing education programs, which will also contribute to strengthening our health care system.

As many of you are aware, Brampton specifically will be home to a new medical school, which is the largest expansion of medical school education in the last 10 years, and overall in the last hundred years it's the first time a new medical school is being approved and brought into a city like Brampton. The new Toronto Metropolitan University school of medicine will open its doors in 2025 and will begin by housing over 80 undergraduate and 95

postgraduate students. Through Bill 85's investments into building infrastructure and creating post-secondary medical education opportunities, we will be able to better develop a more resilient health care system.

Speaker, I've also heard from countless concerned residents about the rise in auto theft occurring across the province. In Ontario, a car is stolen every 28 minutes. There has been a 72% increase in auto theft across the province over the last seven years, with a 14% increase in the last year alone. In Peel region alone, carjackings have risen 45% since 2021, and our recent announcement of investing \$51 million to fight auto theft and crack down on recognized crime networks was one of reassurance and hope for Ontarians. This investment will be delivered over three years, which includes the creation of an organized crime, towing and auto theft team, led by the Ontario Provincial Police; a new community safety grant targeting auto theft; and the creation of a new major theft prosecution response legal team.

Speaker, Bill 85 is an act that will bring hope and support to Ontario families, as it addresses key concerns and brings infrastructure services in areas where residents need it most. I'm proud to be part of a government that prioritizes residents and wholeheartedly support this bill. When we take a look at this bill and we take a look at Bill 85, we take a look at how we're going to further support Ontario families, how we're going to put more money back into people's pockets, especially at times like this.

It's through these measures that our government is implementing a more fiscally responsible way to govern, while delivering public services in a high-quality fashion. You'll see unprecedented investments when it comes to our health care, when it comes to our highways, when it comes to our transit. We're delivering more now than has ever been done by previous governments, and it speaks to the testament of this House and the members on the governing side in front of me and the members on the governing side on this side of the House that are moving with such fiscal responsibility that we're attracting jobs and investments from across the world. When we take a look at the number of investments—I'll give you my riding as an example. When we take a look at Brampton and Brampton East, in my riding we had Magna come in and introduce so many jobs for Brampton residents, and we had Chrysler come back and reinstate their plan to be a leader in EV technologies. Not only will we be building electric vehicles in Brampton; we'll be a part of the vehicle battery manufacturing process as well.

That's not only it, Speaker. Just last week, we had Lululemon come in and say they're going to be building one of their largest warehouses in Brampton, and that's just happening in my riding and my city alone. But when we take a look at the province as a whole, we're taking a look at thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs pouring into this province.

Speaker, why Ontario? People are choosing Ontario because of our government's fiscal responsibility. When we look at the budget that we're bringing forward, we're bringing forward a responsible budget which is going to improve our credit rating overall, create stability in Ontario's market and tell businesses that we're open for

business and we're ready for your investment, where your money's going to be well-kept and, moving forward, you'll have a very steady path to success. This speaks to the testament of our minister of trade. When we take a look at the biggest announcements that just came out of last month—when we talk about Volkswagen coming into Ontario, it's one of the biggest deals that we've been able to score. It's worldwide news that Volkswagen is coming into Ontario, and that's because of the great work that all of the members in this House are doing to make sure that we advocate and make sure that we deliver on the promises that we are making, making sure that we make Ontario a world-class province. These are the high-paying jobs that are going to result in well-paid residents living in all of our constituencies to then further bolster the economy and provide more supports.

That's just on the job front, Speaker. When we take a look at building investments into our infrastructure, it is only our government that stood with the residents that live along the Highway 413 corridor and said yes to building Highway 413. When we take a look at the budget, you'll see a specific line item that talks about Highway 413 and how we're going to be moving forward with it. As the parliamentary assistant, I'm very excited for that project to come to fruition as it's going to provide major relief not only in terms of congestion, but it's going to provide much-needed access to people that don't have access to adequate transportation options. The highway will have its own dedicated lane when it comes to having bus rapid transit routes. People that live towards Guelph, people that live towards Milton, people that live towards Georgetown will finally have adequate access when coming to Brampton or coming to Vaughan or connecting to the 400-series highways. These people now that have to take the back roads to come all the way down to the other side, that are spending 45 minutes to an hour going through the back roads trying to make it to the other side, will have a clear transportation path that will save them countless amounts of hours in transportation back and forth.

That's what this government plans to do: put more money back into your pocket, make life more affordable and provide that infrastructure that we so desperately need across all platforms, whether it's health care, whether it's transit, whether it's for car drivers, whether it's for transporters and everybody in between. That's what our government will do. Thank you so much for your time today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):
Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to both Speakers, hearing the same buzz tag lines: no one left behind; prioritizes residents; supports for Ontario families; high-quality. Yet, Speaker, I can tell you very clearly that that's not the story that I hear from my constituents. I hear of long wait-times, whether it's in our health care system; whether it's in mental health, children or not; whether it's the lack of housing available to people, the lack of supports. Quite frankly, it seems to us that every single ministry is on fire and not doing well.

Can the members—one of them—talk about what they actually hear from their constituents in their ridings?

Because it can't be that much different than what we're hearing from ours.

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Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Absolutely. When our government talks about delivering these much-needed items to our constituents, it's exactly the things that we're hearing. But the fact of the matter is, Speaker, every time we come up to the table with a solution, it is the members right across from me that come up and vote no. They had the opportunity to join us and be on this side of the House and support these much-needed projects that people so desperately need, but they repeatedly choose to say no. When the member has constituents coming to her with concerns, what solutions does the member have to offer when she votes no on every single item that's posted in front of her? Her members aren't going to see those benefits. If you stand up with us and agree with us—we're building transportation across Ontario, health care across Ontario, and that's for the members in your ridings as well. And once those doors are open, those members are going to be extremely happy with the services that they're going to be receiving.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments today.

I note that the members opposite were talking about our budget being a mishmash and as exciting as a three-pack of socks in your Christmas presents, but sometimes you have to take care of the nuts and bolts. If we compare our budget to the federal budget, which is digging the trench far deeper and is accelerating our debt so that \$44 billion a year, \$12 billion a month is going to servicing the debt, I'm wondering if either of my colleagues could please speak to the fact that having a fiscally responsible, sensible budget, where socks and underwear are a key starting point—how is that impacting the residents of Ontario?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank the member for that great question. I'd like to talk about Ontario's fiscal responsibility through the work of our great minister and our great parliamentary assistant, who are making sure that Ontario continues to be on the right track. Whether we look at the federal government, whether we look at provinces around us, Ontario is moving towards a balanced budget much quicker and much more responsibly than the rest of us. And we're not doing that by any magic; we're doing that by bringing in investments, by putting in the work, by making Ontario an environment where employers around the world want to come here and set up shop, where employers are looking at other states, other provinces, but they still continue to come to Ontario because they know they have a hard-working team that will move mountains to make sure that those jobs come in and it's our residents in Ontario who get those jobs.

So to the member, we're going to continue to work hard to make sure that we do that, and we're going to continue to provide great, well-paying jobs while delivering a balanced budget to make sure we keep more money in the pockets of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to both members. My question for the member for Brampton East: In the previous reply, he was talking about the things he hears from his constituents, how happy they are with the services. In the time that Doug Ford has been Premier—sorry; that the Conservative government has been in power, the number of kids on the autism waiting list has gone up from less than 30,000 to more than 60,000. There's not one word—autism isn't even mentioned in this budget. Why isn't autism in this budget when you have 60,000 kids on this waiting list?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank the member for that question. The government of Ontario and our party believes in a government that should continuously work to improve to deliver better services for all residents of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: And if the member would even listen to my response instead of just heckling in the back, it would be a lot easier to understand how things work around here.

Continuing on to my message, Speaker: While we go ahead and make unprecedented investments in every single sector, including the one mentioned by the member, we continue to strive on delivering better services, and we continue to improve government services across the board. When it comes to investing more into health care, nobody is doing more than our government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my two colleagues for their debate. My question is to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills. Obviously, Mississauga—and Peel region in general—is a high-growth area, so I'm just wondering if you could elaborate more on our government's commitment to getting more homes built and the supports we have in the budget for that.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague in regard to questions on Mississauga. If we look into the budget and what is the allocation for Mississauga, we can see that we still continue investing in LRT to create good transportation in Mississauga and then driving more high-density allocations around the stations where people can live and work and enjoy in very close proximity. Without needing to add more cars, we can depend on reliable public transportation.

Looking into spending in health care, Mississauga is getting the biggest hospital in Canadian history. The biggest ER, emergency room, in Ontario is going to be in Mississauga. This is a huge investment needed to cope with the growth of Mississauga. As we can see—for 12 years, neglect from the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP—things need to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know, \$3 billion of unallocated spending—that's just money that you're sitting on. And what we see in our ridings, what you're seeing in all of

your ridings, are people that can't afford groceries. We're seeing growing—people that are living in homeless encampments all across Ontario, people that can't access child care. There's all kinds of people that are struggling with mental health. They can't access mental health—and you did not spend one dollar to address people that have children living with autism.

So my question to you is: You talk about being fiscally responsible; I would say you are immoral and irresponsible, because instead of supporting people, you're saving money on the backs of the most vulnerable in the province of Ontario. What do you have to say to the people of the province of Ontario that know you have the money but you're letting them suffer instead?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member has a point of order.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yes, I don't think that "immoral" is a good statement to be used against the government in a parliamentary set-up. I ask her to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much. Stop the clock.

I ask the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas to withdraw her comment.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Response, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank the colleague from the opposition in regard to pointing out some unallocated funds. When you say there's \$3 billion in unallocated funds and then you say we're spending zero dollars in this and this and this, it gives the impression that there is no money allocated for those services. There is money allocated for those services. If there is some unallocated money—which, again, I have to verify that; I can't be sure of this information—we'll check it. Again, it doesn't mean that those services you are talking about have got zero allocation. There is money allocated. Maybe there's some unallocated money. It can be allocated afterwards.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: My question is to the member from Brampton East. I was wondering if he could elaborate a bit on the great announcements of expanding the medical spots. I know, sure, Brampton gets a medical school; that's totally fine, from the member for Perth—Wellington. But I know some of those doctors will hopefully—and we'll work hard to attract them to my rural communities. So I'm wondering if he could elaborate on those important health care investments.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I would like to thank the member from Perth—Wellington for asking that amazing question. Our government strives to support health care workers in every which way we can, and that includes bringing more doctors into Ontario. When doctors look for seats to come and serve—Ontario was facing a shortage of those seats, and it's with your leadership, sir, and your team that we're bringing in that new medical university into not only Brampton but across the province, with more seats coming in, with more doctors graduating and then

bolstering and supporting our hospitals, bolstering and supporting family doctors and opening more clinics for all. So that's the goal in mind: With higher education and more supports, there will be more doctors, and we'll be thriving more as a province.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to get up to speak to Bill 85, which is the government's budget bill.

As my colleague from Waterloo has stated so eloquently, a budget is about priorities. It speaks volumes to the priorities of the government. It does through this Conservative government and the Liberals before them. And, Speaker, I can tell you how incredibly disappointing this budget is. I just listened to a member on the government side, the member from Simcoe—Grey, say they're being fiscally responsive and responsive after, earlier this afternoon, I talked about the increase in the number of opioid deaths, the number of people experiencing homelessness on a sharp increase, the number of people accessing food banks.

We hear a lot of talk from the government side about the Moody's rating, and I can tell you that most of the people in my riding don't know what the Moody's rating is; what they know is they can't afford to live. The cost of everything is going up. And this government is doing nothing—nothing—to address that.

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What they know is that when they go to hospital, if they have an emergency and they go to the hospital, they are facing the longest wait times for health care that they have ever had in this province. I have a constituent who, just over a week ago, was telling me that her dad died while waiting for an ambulance, because this government is so grossly underfunding health care—not just nurses. We talk a lot about nurses and we talk a lot about hospitals, but EMS are struggling as well. We're seeing increased numbers of code reds and code blacks, not just in my community. We heard the three members from Niagara area raised it this morning, on this side of the House, not the Conservative side of the House—they don't want to talk about it. My colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas just raised her hand because they have similar issues. We're seeing it across the province.

These things are all intertwined. Let me draw that parallel for the government because they don't seem to get it: Those things are intertwined. The increase in EMS off-load times is directly related to the number of health care workers in hospitals. The number of health care workers in hospitals is directly related to this government's Bill 124 and attacking those very front-line health care workers. So we're losing health care workers across this province. And until this government addresses that, we're going to continue to see a health care crisis.

But the plot twist is the government doesn't actually want to support and invest in our publicly funded, publicly delivered, not-for-profit health care system. They are purposefully trying to cause that system to crumble to push their "privatization of health care" narrative, which we saw through Bill 60. Speaker, if you're really fiscally responsible and responsive, you would be putting money

into the publicly funded, publicly delivered, not-for-profit health care system to shore it up. A system, again, that's not for profit and that actually supports everybody in the province as opposed to taking taxpayers' dollars—I think that's the important thing for everyone to understand here: They're taking Ontarians' tax dollars and shovelling that money into private, for-profit corporations that have a legal responsibility to their shareholders first and foremost.

So to stand here and say, “We're being fiscally responsible and responsive”—I can't even say what's on my mind, because it would be unparliamentary, Speaker, but it's not accurate. Shovelling money into private corporations and shareholder pockets, where it costs us more for that care on the front end, and then when you actually need to access health care, if, by chance, you are able to be accepted by one of these clinics—my mother is diabetic. One of those clinics would never touch her and wouldn't go anywhere near her because of her health complications. Individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities? Uh-uh, they're not going to take them either. But the ones who can pay to get in, pay the extra—because we know they do it; we know the clinics do it—they're going to pay more up front or pay more for that appointment when they go in. So not only is the government spending the money to put in shareholder pockets, but then you as an individual, if you can actually afford to go or are healthy enough to go, are going to pay, again, more money out of pocket. That's not fiscally responsible or responsive.

I asked a question earlier of the member of Niagara West. He was talking about culture and how things are wonderful in his community, thanks to the government, in the Niagara area. Again, after three other Niagara area MPPs stood here this morning talking about EMS off-load times and code reds and code blacks—that's when there's one ambulance or no ambulance available—everything is sunny and everything is great.

I talked about the fact that, per capita, the Niagara area is in the top five for opioid overdoses, and the member's response was, “No, actually, we're doing great. We're investing in wineries and in culture,” and that's great for the people who can actually take advantage of that, to be able to go to those places. And then he said, “You should come and actually see what's going on.” I know what's going on. The same thing is happening in my community. The same thing is happening in Hamilton. The same thing is happening in Sudbury and London and Brantford and every other way—in the north, in Indigenous communities, across this province. People are dying. Food bank usage has gone up, homelessness has gone up, addiction has gone up in every single corner of this province. And yet, we've heard all afternoon from government members who say, “We're doing fantastic. Everything is great in the province of Ontario.”

I don't think—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Well, I was going to say “out of touch,” to my colleague. But do you know what? I've been here long enough, with this government, where I don't think that anymore. I don't think they're out of touch. I

think they purposely turn their backs; they actually just don't care.

We see seniors having to access food banks more and more. We heard one of the government members say, “We raised social assistance by 5%.” I know you hear it from your constituents—maybe not the people you're selling off the greenbelt to or the ones who show up to weddings and stag-and-does and things, but your actual constituents, the folks living it day to day. I know you hear from people with disabilities, people on Ontario Works and ODSP, who are accessing food banks, who can't afford a place to live because this government has cut rent control. Many of them are choosing medical aid in dying. That's your legacy. That's the Doug Ford Ontario, where rather than investing in people at the front end—and we know when people have stable, safe, appropriate housing, and supportive housing if they need it; when they have access to health care when and where they need it; when they have food security—when you invest in all of that at the front end, you have a savings to the education system, you have a savings to the health care system, you have a savings to the justice system.

So if you want to be fiscally responsible and responsive, then today, right now, right this minute, double social assistance rates; double ODSP and OW. But you won't do it.

“We're going to do 5% and say that we're heroes”—when those people literally are starving or, in many cases, choosing medical aid in dying.

Better is possible. You could do better; you just choose not to.

So as we're hearing from the Conservatives about how wonderful things are in Ontario, at least in their world, in their imaginations—and this is not the first time I've read this out in the House, but I'm going to repeat it. The government won't listen to it, but I'm going to repeat it: According to Feed Ontario, food bank use remains at an all-time high in Ontario. There has been an increase in food bank use of 42% over the last three years.

Colleagues, how long have the Conservatives been in power?

Miss Monique Taylor: Five years.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Five years.

Under your watch, a 42% increase—and a 47% increase in people with employment accessing food banks. I want to state this again: People with employment accessing food banks—47%, since the Conservatives formed government in 2018. That's under your watch. That's not under the Liberals. We can certainly throw some shade at the Liberals. They've earned it. But it's five years that you've been government. It is time for you to start taking responsibility.

You can talk about good things that you're doing, but you also need to acknowledge that people are actually struggling, and it's getting harder for them in this province, and your policies are making it worse.

In fact, Feed Ontario quoted in their latest report that it was government policy, not the feds—because you like to blame the feds too. And certainly there are some things we could say about the federal government. But the provincial government—it is provincial policy that is driving the

increase in homelessness, driving the increase in food bank use.

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It's time that you acknowledge that and do something about it. It's time to get real about it instead of patting yourselves on the back and saying everything is wonderful, because that helps nobody. It helps absolutely nobody when all you want to do is pat yourselves on the back. One in four children live in poverty in this Premier's Ontario. There's something to be proud of, don't you think, colleagues, while they're over there crowing and singing their own praises?

Two out of three people who access food banks are social assistance recipients, and I'm going to repeat it: If you actually want to be humane, first of all, if you really want to be fiscally responsible and responsive, you would double social assistance rates. You would make sure that people with disabilities and those that are trying to survive on social assistance have enough to have a safe, stable home, a roof over their heads. You would make sure that they are able to get groceries and not have to rely on food banks. You would ensure that they can access the medical care they need when and where they need it. You would double social assistance rates today.

As I said, there's more and more people in this province that are struggling. I'm going to go to how the government likes to talk about transit and highways all the time, how it gets people home faster so they can be with their families. There is an increasing number—and I think this really is out of touch. There is an increasing number of people in this province who have to work two, three, four jobs in order to keep a roof over their heads, to put clothes on their kids, to feed their children. Two, three, four jobs—that is this Conservative government's normal. So while they're focusing on, they're talking about, "We really care. We really want people to get home to their families faster and have more family time," the reality is, under this government's policies and their lack of action to actually address the affordability crisis, more and more people are working multiple jobs, taking them away from their families. It's really cognitive dissonance when you listen to this government. They talk about one thing. They do another. "Look over here. We don't want you to notice that what we're really doing over here is cuts."

They talk about building homes. We want people to have homes. We absolutely want people to have homes. We also don't want those homes to flood. We also want farmers to be able to grow food.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We want people to be able to pay the rent.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: We want people to be able to pay the rent. When you're building McMansions that nobody can afford except for the folks that show up to your fundraisers or your weddings and stag-and-does, explain to me how that helps the people in my riding. Explain to me how that helps someone who is working two, three, four jobs just to get by. Explain to me how that helps somebody with a disability, on social assistance.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It doesn't.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It doesn't. It enriches developers is what it does.

While this government is talking about building housing, building housing, building—great buzzwords. It sounds great. But if the average Ontarian can't afford it, what good does it do? We're not anti-housing over on this side, as the government would like to say, but we believe that people should actually be able to afford the homes that are being built.

And we know—it's not just we believe; we know—there have been reports that say you can build that housing not on green space. You don't have to build on the green-belt to do so. If you want to be fiscally responsible and responsive, build more subsidized housing, co-ops. Bring back rent control, because when people have that extra money in their pocket, when you actually provide housing that people can afford and they're not using everything they have to keep a roof over their head, guess what they do with that money, that little bit of extra money they might have? They spend it in their communities. It helps support local business in their own communities.

I cannot tell you how infuriating it is when I see government members taking pictures at food banks and giving props to the food banks for the work that they're doing when we know that it is this Conservative government and their policies that are actually driving the need for food banks. And those food banks are not getting properly funded by the province. What they're doing is going to the community, the very people they are trying to support with the food bank, and saying, "We need you to donate so we can feed more people in the community." How absurd is that? And then these characters show up at the food banks and say, "Well done." It is absolutely absurd. And it's not because they don't know that they could do something to actually reduce the reliance on food banks; it's because they choose not to. They just want to show up for the photo ops, and then at the end of the day, it's real people who suffer the consequences.

In Windsor, we rank among the highest for auto insurance and home insurance—that's if you can get home insurance in Windsor, by the way, because many people are denied. We have been asking the Liberals and, now, the Conservatives, for five years, to stop consumer price gouging when it comes to auto insurance and home insurance. Our auto insurance just went up 17%—it was about \$250 per year. And I know there are other areas—I think Brampton went up 37% or something like that. But Conservatives are doing great. How do people afford it? People aren't going to be able to afford to drive under this Premier's Ontario.

Speaker, I know I'm almost out of time, but I just want to talk about—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I think it's important to bring real, lived-experience stories to this Legislature, whether the Minister of Education wants to listen to them or not. I think I've said it in this place before, and I'll say it again: At 17 years old, I lived on the streets. I was homeless. I didn't have a place to live. I didn't have food. I've lived it. It was because of generosity of the community that took me in and believed in me—they helped me get on social assistance at the time, which wasn't enough then, but it sure as heck isn't enough now. I've lived in poverty. I've

lived on the streets. I've been one of those people the Conservatives walk by.

I don't know how you can walk a block outside Queen's Park and not see the homelessness crisis or the opioid crisis. I see it in my community. The government wilfully ignores it.

I've lost a brother to addiction, to an overdose. I know what it does to a family. My mom deserved better than that. My brother deserved better than that.

It's this government's policies, where people cannot get connected to the supports and services that they need, that are causing the overdose crisis, causing the health care crisis, causing the housing crisis, causing the food insecurity crisis, causing a climate crisis. And no matter how much we plead on this side of the House—because they say we vote against everything they do.

We had Bill 60, the health care privatization bill—75 amendments. The Conservatives voted against every single one of them.

We brought forward motions to double ODSP and OW. They said no.

This isn't just politics and gotcha—"Boy, you got a good shot at me today." These are real lives we're talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I appreciate the member highlighting some issues with respect to affordability.

I will add that the opposition has supported a carbon tax, which increases the cost of everything—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, please.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I know members over there are saying, "Oh, please"—but you do realize this supports and increases the cost of everything we buy.

I think one of the members opposite talked about how some of their energy bills have gone up, and why are the natural gas prices going up? Well, carbon tax plays a huge role in that.

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I'd also like to mention that the members opposite voted against the LIFT tax credit, which was the largest tax credit in the history of Ontario for low-income families.

We've also brought about a reduction in the gas tax for people paying for gas.

So are these—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Response?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Well, the member for Oakville sure is auto-centric. There are people who walk. There are people who take public transit. There are people who cycle.

But what I'm going to say to that is, we had a cap-and-trade system here, provincially. It was actually the Conservatives who got rid of cap-and-trade. You are the reason that we have the carbon tax.

Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Oakville just made my point. While I'm talking about the fact that there are real lives at risk—and the government members just want their gotcha moments: "I just one-upped you in the Legislature. Aren't I smart?" The reality is, right now,

right this second, people are dying, people are going hungry, kids are going to school hungry, there are people who are dying trying to access health care, and all this government wants to do is get a gotcha moment in the Legislature.

I'm not here for me. I'm here for my constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Windsor West for sharing her personal experience. She brings a lot of passion and empathy and connection, because she actually experienced what she's talking about.

She talked about food security and rents. Right now, in London, there are the Webster apartment buildings, and a new owner has taken over, and they are giving 83-year-old people—Christel Barrett got a renoviction notice. She's 83 years old. She's on a fixed income. Can the member explain or talk about what's going to be the outcome of Christel's future? How is this government going to help Christel with that situation?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from my colleague.

What I can say is, this government could stop that from happening today. They could end renovictions. We've asked them to do it. Guess what? They said no. We've asked for rent control. They cut rent control. We've asked them to bring back rent control. What did they say? They said no.

We are talking about a senior, someone who helped build this province. This government is allowing landlords to put them out on the street while talking about, "We're doing great when it comes to homelessness. We're doing great with supporting the elderly and the frail and the vulnerable."

I'm asking the government side to listen to what you just heard and take it to heart. This could be your parent. Would this be acceptable if it was a family member? No senior—no one in the province, frankly, but especially a senior—should be pushed out of their home by a landlord who just wants to increase the cost of rent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member opposite for her wide-ranging remarks on a variety of different bills.

Really, my focus is on the budget and what we're debating here. I know we've increased the GAINS tax credit, which they voted against. I'd also like to highlight that there are actually no new taxes in the budget, which is very refreshing—compared to the federal government, right now. And our Premier is committed to keeping costs down for people.

She mentioned housing earlier. Does the member opposite support our 40% increase, just from last year—and that's moving forward annually, as well—for the homelessness prevention? I 100% agree that homelessness is an issue; so is mental health. We're increasing that by \$425 million.

Will she support these important investments in all of our communities?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, what I'll say is this: The government brought in Bill 23. There are municipalities all around the province that are saying to this government that with Bill 23 you are taking revenue away from the province. The developers are the ones getting the break. There's nothing in that legislation that says they have to pass that on to the homeowners. You are taking money away from municipalities. Many of them are having to increase property tax.

So I want the people in the province to understand: The reason the municipalities are raising your property tax is the direct result of the fact that this government has brought in a policy, a bill, that starves municipalities of the money that they need in order to build supportive housing or not-for-profit housing, in order to take care of the roads and bridges and sewers and other infrastructure. This is on the government.

So when you say that there are no taxes in this budget—through Bill 23, you have actually added a tax on every property owner in this province. If you want people to be able to afford homes, then stop taxing them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member for Windsor West. It was a great debate.

She was talking about Bill 60, and it has to do with the budget, in terms of underfunding—what the Liberals did forever—and then underfunding to create this crisis. With Bill 60, they're going to privatize health care. One of the phrases she said was, "They're shovelling money into shareholders' pockets." One of the first things I thought of with Bill 60 is, they're going to save health care the same way that they saved long-term care.

To the member: Do you believe this is going to save health care, or is it going to make things worse, the way that they made long-term care worse?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate my colleague from Sudbury.

I can tell you unequivocally, this is not going to make health care better. We have two other jurisdictions, Quebec and BC—all you have to do is look at them. They are actually starting to buy back these clinics and bring them back into public domain, making them public—publicly funded, publicly delivered, not-for-profit—because they have seen the disaster that privatization and profitization of health care has caused. And while those provinces are bringing it back into the public fold, this government is charging full speed ahead, and the result is that we are going to lose more health care workers. We have Bill 124. They're going to go into these private clinics, where they're going to get paid better, get better hours—no weekends, no holidays; they're going to get 9-to-5 full-time hours—and our public system is going to collapse because of it, which is exactly what this government wants, because it's their friends who run the staffing agencies for nurses, and it's their friends who are making money off the private clinics.

So, no, this is not going to help the health care system. It's going to make an even greater crisis for the vast

majority of Ontarians, who cannot afford or aren't healthy enough to be able to go to these private clinics.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I always appreciate hearing the member from Windsor West participate in debate. She speaks with passion and with eloquence, and I know that every member of this House appreciates her willingness to engage with difficult subjects and also to advocate for the issues in her community. So my thanks to the member opposite for that.

I know skilled trades are important to the member. I know skilled trades are important to so many in all of our communities. I understand that the member opposite doesn't appreciate large swaths of this bill, but does she at least support the investments in the Skills Development Fund? It's funding that's going to labour partners, to unions, to so many across Ontario, to encourage more participation in the skilled trades, to make sure that people have an understanding of the careers that they have in the skilled trades, and to address that labour shortage. I'm wondering if the member opposite could speak to her support for that.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

I also want to point out what this government is doing when it comes to employment: It is funneling public dollars into private entities to provide employment services for people who are out of work and those who are on social assistance. They're literally pushing them into jobs that they are not qualified to do or it's not safe for them to do, and they keep going through the cycle where they come back—and every time they come back through that employment service, through those agencies, this government gives that private, for-profit entity even more money.

So do we support supporting workers here? Absolutely. That's what we do. We do it every single day—not like the government, which brings in bills that actually are anti-worker.

The reality is, the money that this government—the focus of the budget and this government is to funnel public dollars into for-profit, private entities. It's not about the outcome for people—ensuring there are good outcomes for people, the general public, Ontarians. For this government, it's about ensuring that those private entities are making their profits at any cost, regardless of whether or not they are actually providing good supports and services for the people of this province, and that's just not something that we can get behind.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It being 6 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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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	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Vacant	Scarborough—Guildwood	