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Jeudi
1^{er} juin 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 June 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} juin 2023

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I don't think my guests are here this afternoon just yet, but I wanted to take a moment to welcome the consul general of India, Apoorva Srivastava. She's going to be leaving the province shortly, and I wanted to thank her for being here and for doing the great work that she does. She'll be here for the reception honouring the International Day of Yoga, which is going to take place in room 228 at 2 p.m. I think she has just arrived, so welcome, Consul General.

All the members are invited to attend this afternoon, and I want to let the consul general know that I hope to see international yoga day formally adopted in Ontario by the Legislature during our next session.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LIABILITY FOR CLIMATE-RELATED HARMS ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ À L'ÉGARD DES DOMMAGES LIÉS AU CLIMAT

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act respecting civil liability for climate-related harms / *Projet de loi 120, Loi concernant la responsabilité civile à l'égard des dommages liés au climat.*

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 like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Speaker. Myself, MPP Shaw, MPP Begum and MPP Bell are introducing this bill that sets up the legal framework for citizens, for businesses and governments to sue fossil fuel companies for the damage caused by their product or to pay for the investments necessary to prevent damage, risk to life and loss of life.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Happy Seniors' Month to everyone. June is Seniors' Month. It is a privilege to rise

today on behalf of every senior in Ontario. Today is the day when Ontario kicks off a month-long celebration of our seniors all over Ontario.

Because of COVID, it was a tough couple of years, but now, with the pandemic behind us, it's time to really get back into the swing of things. So today, I'm calling on all of our seniors across Ontario to get out there, get active and have some fun. To all of our seniors: Go and join a club, play sports, go visit a friend, call a friend, go and be social, go to a barbecue, host your own little party, go to a party, see the grandchildren, but most importantly, go be with people.

You can go to one of our seniors' centres to meet new friends and connect with old friends. That's what Seniors' Month is all about: being with people young and young at heart. It's time to celebrate being a senior. We seniors are the ones who raised families and have built the best province in the best country in the world. Seniors are the past, present and future of the province of Ontario. Yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard what I said: They are the past, present and future. Why do I say this? It's very easy, because it is true.

Seniors are the past because they are the ones who raised the families. Seniors are the ones who sacrificed. They are the ones who worked hard to feed those families. Some seniors worked two jobs, day in and day out; they never complained. They went about their business because they knew that hard work pays off.

Seniors are also the present. They're the ones who built the best province, Ontario, in the best country in the world, Canada. They are still working hard. Some have retired, but I don't see them slowing down.

Our seniors today are as active and involved as ever. They are the ones who are providing the leadership to get things done. And when it comes to getting things done, we know that our seniors are the ones who are still doing just that.

No matter where you turn in Ontario, our seniors are getting busy. They are lending a hand. Maybe they are coaching a team; maybe they are helping out with their extended family; maybe they are volunteering with their community club or organization; or maybe they've gone back to work, because that is a value of the greatest generation.

Seniors are also the future. That's right: It is the millions of seniors across Ontario who are the future. They are the ones with wisdom. They are the ones with experience and understanding. And they are the ones who continue to build our province. That is why our seniors deserve our dignity and respect.

That is why there is no greater advocate for seniors in our province than our Premier. Thanks to the leadership of this Premier, we have the first-ever ministry dedicated to seniors. This started from scratch with no funding, and now we have programs and services helping seniors all over this province.

Project by project, community by community, seniors are getting the support they need. I have heard from seniors in my riding of Scarborough North and all across Ontario. They all say the same thing: We must stop social isolation. Social isolation is public enemy number one. This Premier and this government understands that. Fighting social isolation is the best way we can help seniors.

That is why I am so proud to announce today that this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is investing over \$20 million to support seniors. This \$20 million is helping over 580 local and community-based organizations that are connecting our seniors with each other, keeping them fit, active and healthy.

1310

Today, we are announcing more than 280 seniors community grants. These grants are seeing over \$6 million being invested in local groups and organizations that are helping seniors.

We are also investing over \$14 million in Seniors Active Living Centres. There are almost 300 Seniors Active Living Centre and programs all across Ontario. They are doing a marvellous job of bringing seniors together so that they can participate in everything from Zumba classes—I have participated in a few of them—to learning seminars to cooking and knitting classes. They are the centre where seniors can come together and be together. When seniors are being social and together, we have a better quality of life.

As a super senior myself, I'm very happy when I am around people. People are my energy, and I know they are yours. Seniors are our past, seniors are our present and seniors are our future, and that is why we will continue to support and honour them.

And while I'm calling on all seniors to get out and celebrate like never before during Seniors' Month this June, I am also calling on everyone else in Ontario to please take the time this month to reach out to seniors, thank them, honour them and appreciate all the wonderful contributions they have made to this province.

Once again, Happy Seniors' Month, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank the minister for declaring today the beginning of Seniors' Month. I also want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing the bill forward to create an official month for seniors. Any way we can show respect to our elders is important and valuable.

I agree that it is crucial to keep people socially connected and engaged. The ministry provides funding for seniors' clubs, and that's great. I've visited many of these clubs in my riding and always learn something new and important from our conversations.

But seniors' clubs and active living centres address only one element of the many issues seniors are facing. Indeed, the government took a very hostile approach towards Bill 101, a bill that would have created an advocate for older adults as an independent officer of the Legislature. Surprisingly, during the last Parliament, the government moved exactly the same bill to second reading, but perhaps that was simply a public relations exercise made just before an election was called. In any event, I've received many letters expressing thanks for putting the bill forward and heard quite a lot of anger directed towards the government's rejection of the bill.

Another bill voted down by the Conservative government, introduced by the member from Waterloo, was intended to ensure that couples who have spent their entire lives together are not separated when they're placed in long-term care. It seems to me this would have been an easy bill to pass, but unfortunately, the government voted it down.

The financial, emotional and physical abuse of seniors remains at very high levels, but the government continues to leave those working to support seniors experiencing abuse, trying to do this work, on a shoestring budget. I'm seeing that the ministry has allotted quite a bit of money to support seniors, so I really hope some of that money is going to Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario.

I also want to note the extremely high death rates that took place in for-profit care homes during the pandemic. It is disturbing that this government has given the most egregious offenders new 30-year licences with no penalties whatsoever. It's one thing to have a long-term-care action line for complaints; it's quite another to actually act on these complaints and address the poor conditions found in so many homes, or to address the nearly 100 cases of the misuse of the trespass act to ban caregivers from accessing the homes of their loved ones. These are critical issues that seniors are experiencing, and they're not getting any relief.

We know from people living and working in these homes that conditions are dreadful in too many cases. We also know that the four hours of required hours of care isn't expected to be in place fully for another 10 years, so it's going to take a very long time for things to get any better. Perhaps, if the government had rescinded Bill 124, these crises could have been averted, but we are all, unfortunately, having to live with the consequences of these bad decisions.

But I want to highlight seniors' living circumstances and how little choice there is when an older Ontarian is looking to either stay in their home or find an easier-to-manage apartment with supports. In Thunder Bay, the wait-list for non-profit seniors' residences is five to seven years.

There is a beautiful seniors' residence, originally created by volunteers from the Finnish community in Thunder Bay, but open to anyone. This same group is trying to get a second building put up on their existing property. It would create 60 affordable units for seniors and free up a lot of housing in the region, but there is no provincial program that I know of to support such housing. The government did, in fact, support the opening of a similar facility in

Kenora, and I'm sure that seniors across the province would be happy to see provincial support for similar facilities in their own communities.

Finally, I want to thank the minister for declaring Seniors' Month. I must add, it also coincides with Injured Workers' Day, which is today. Seniors' Month is a nod in the right direction. I hope, though, that the government will now draw on the advice of seniors' advocates, such as those working for Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario, and provide them with the financial supports they need in order to provide seniors with the supports they need.

I would like to see the government take steps to improve seniors' actual living conditions. I see a lot of social opportunities, if they can get out, if they have a place to live, if they have access to medical care, but I only see one element being addressed. It's a good element, but there is much, much more work that needs to be done.

PETITIONS

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here from towns in my area: New Liskeard, Larder Lake, Virginiatown, Kerns, Kenogami, Earleton, Kirkland Lake, Sesekinika, Swas and Timmins. There are over 700 signatures, and on their behalf, I would like to read it into the record.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of this petition is to ensure the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing promptly and consistently enforces the rules in their bulletin (Information bulletin regarding off-grid development in unincorporated areas—dated November 30, 2022) when it comes to current and future off-grid developments in northern Ontario;

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

"That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing put a cease and desist on current development of off-grid developments in unincorporated townships until environmental compliance and prerequisite consultation with First Nations is completed."

I wholeheartedly agree, will affix my signature, and give it to page Raisha.

1320

TAXATION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I have the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will sign it and hand it to page Pierre.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition to raise social assistance rates. It is my pleasure also to recognize Sally Palmer, who is in the gallery today. Thank you for all the work you and your organization do on behalf on Ontarians. It's greatly appreciated.

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

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

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

I couldn't agree more. I will add my signature and give it to Silas to take to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would also like to thank Sally Palmer. I didn't know you were here, and that's exciting, that you are.

"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 small increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the ... OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

BAIT MANAGEMENT

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait plaisir de lire une pétition intitulée « Fix the Baitfish Zoning Boundaries in the Northwestern and Northeastern Regions ».

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the bait management zones in certain towns make it impossible for anglers to purchase live bait in their respective zone and go fishing in the area because of set boundaries;

“Whereas 95% of all stocked lakes near Hearst are situated west, and no legal option to purchase live bait and go fishing on those nice, stocked lakes;

“Whereas all the time and money spent throughout the years by government trying to stock those lakes and keep a healthy trout population for fishing enthusiasts to enjoy;

“Whereas the owners of outfitters in the region can no longer purchase their baitfish in the area with the new zoning and no other options exist by road to purchase baitfish in their zone close to the lodge;

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

“—to allow an exception or exemption option for the north, especially for towns like Chapleau, Wawa and Hearst, where two zones are separated based on the railway lines or roads;

“—to call on the Ford government and the Minister of Natural Resources to re-evaluate this new zoning regulation to make logistics possible for all anglers to purchase live baitfish and to enjoy this sport that represents our lifestyle in northern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and give it to Sally to bring to the Clerks’ table.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Deepak Anand: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas today Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage in a generation with over 300,000 jobs going

unfilled, 300,000 paycheques and opportunities for families across the province; and

“Whereas our previous work in expanding the employment services transformation builds on the success of the first three integrated regions...;

“Whereas the Second Career program has traditionally helped laid-off unemployed workers access the training they need to become qualified for in-demand, well-paying jobs; and

“Whereas in Ontario’s ... budget ... we introduced the Better Jobs Ontario program; and

“Whereas the Better Jobs Ontario program is another major step in our mission to work for workers by:

“—providing access to the program for people with limited or non-traditional work experience, including gig workers, newcomers and the self-employed who need training to get a job;

“—investing \$5 million in new funding in” 2023, “in addition to the nearly \$200 million invested over the last three years, paying up to 28,000 for short-duration, job-specific training, including those on social assistance, those who are self-employed, gig workers, youth and newcomers;

“—expanding on the current Second Career program, more applicants will be eligible for up to \$500 per week in financial support for basic living expenses, improving client experiences, supporting short-duration training, increasing funding for wraparound supports and prioritizing supports for laid-off and unemployed workers in sectors most impacted by COVID-19;

“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 progress being made in support of workers through transformative programs such as the Better Jobs Ontario program.”

I truly believe in this petition. I’m going to sign it and give it to page Sally.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome eye doctor Sally Palmer to the Legislature and thank her for the—it’s got to be thousands of petitions that have been submitted. 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 small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Tara.

1330

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I too would like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for sending in these petitions. Often, Dr. Palmer thanks us for reading the petitions, but really, this is us saying thank you for collecting thousands and thousands of signatures on this petition.

The petition reads:

“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 small increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I could not agree more. I support it and I will affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING HOMEBUYERS, PROTECTING TENANTS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À AIDER LES ACHETEURS ET À PROTÉGER LES LOCATAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 1, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development / Projet de loi 97, Loi

modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l’aménagement.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: As I stated earlier in the House this morning, the proposed changes in Bill 97 to the Landlord and Tenant Board are driven by the feedback we have received from both landlords and tenants and are specifically designed to address the unique needs of our local communities. By enhancing the legal protections for tenants and clamping down on bad landlords, we are fostering a safe and secure environment for all residents in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, additionally, our government’s commitment to investing an additional \$6.5 million to hire 40 new adjudicators and five full-time support staff for the Landlord and Tenant Board will have a direct impact in Ontario. This increased investment will effectively double the total number of adjudicators, providing much-needed resources to address the COVID-19-related backlog and ensure that cases are heard in a timely manner. Madam Speaker, this means that Ontario residents will experience faster resolutions to their housing-related disputes and greater access to justice. We are fixing the Landlord and Tenant Board. It is very, very critical for many, many residents and communities in Ontario.

Furthermore, the proposed initiatives within the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act will provide significant benefits to the people of Markham and Ontario. Other important things: The expansion of deposit insurance for the first home savings accounts to Ontario credit unions—this is another critical change to this policy—and the exploration of cooling-off or cancellation periods on purchases of newly built freehold homes will empower individuals and families to make informed decisions about their lifelong investments. Especially, Madam Speaker, first-time homebuyers are not well aware of the fine print of the purchase and sale agreement; this would help a lot for new Canadians and first-time homebuyers. Mandatory legal reviews of purchase and sale agreements for all new home purchases will provide added reassurance and protection to buyers in Ontario’s competitive housing market.

The Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023, is a testament to our government’s unwavering commitment to tackling the housing supply crisis head-on and ensuring the well-being of Ontarians. By investing in the housing supply, supporting homebuyers and protecting tenants, we lay the foundation for a prosperous and inclusive community, not only in Markham but also across the province of Ontario.

Our government is committed to meeting the goal in collaboration with our municipal partners. This is very critical at this time. To that end, we established an ambitious but realistic housing target for 29 of Ontario’s largest and fastest-growing municipalities.

I am pleased to note that my own city of Markham and Markham council have recently committed to its housing pledge of 44,000 new units by 2031 and acknowledged our

shared responsibility to get more homes built faster through our More Homes Built Faster plan.

Our government is eliminating development charges through affordable, not-for-profit and select attainable housing, which follows the approach already taken by many municipalities to increase the supply of affordable and non-profit housing. That also includes culturally sensitive senior homes as well. This approach stabilized the cost for homebuyers and incentivized the construction of new homes while still allowing municipalities across Ontario to collect millions of dollars in development charges for housing infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, we are revolutionizing the zoning and rezoning process and decreasing bureaucratic layers and delays. That is a historic change through this legislation.

The federal government shares our objective of building 1.5 million homes in Ontario by 2031, particularly at a time when it has set a new ambitious immigration target. The majority of new Canadians will be welcomed to Ontario in search of hope, of opportunities and fulfilling their dreams, especially the dreams of having a roof over their head that, for many young people, are fading away. Young Canadians, brimming with ambition and aspirations, dream of owning modest houses where they can raise a family.

Speaker, our policies and proposed legislative changes are necessary if Ontario is to solve its housing supply crisis and also meet future demand for even more housing.

I urge all members of this assembly to join in supporting Bill 97 and our housing plan. Let us put the interests of Ontarians first and work together to build a brighter future, one where every individual and family can find a place to call home.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to point out a flaw in this bill, because landlords will often either post their own letters on doors of tenants' residences or get verbal agreements, thereby leading tenants to believe that the landlord is acting in their best interest. One of the things that's not in this legislation is that we should be requiring landlords to go through the Landlord and Tenant Board, get those proper orders and actually give tenants their legal obligations and rights rather than just making them up or creatively putting them into their interest. Why has the government left that part out, to hold landlords responsible when they want a renoviction, to actually go to the Landlord and Tenant Board through the process so that tenants' rights are protected?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, member, for that question. The proposed changes in Bill 97 to the Landlord and Tenant Board are driven by the feedback we have received from both landlords and tenants and are specifically designed to address the unique needs of the local community. We've doubled the number of adjudicators in our history and that's how we've alleviated so many cases. I get first-hand information from my residents, calling and telling us through the constituency office that they are so

happy to see the process moving forward, and these are the changes we are doing.

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

Mr. Rob Flack: I'm glad to see that our government is taking this housing supply crisis seriously. I believe this is the fourth bill for our housing supply action plan, which builds on the success of the first three. Having said that, we're going to need 1.5 million homes in the next number of years. Can the member expound upon why he thinks, especially in the GTHA, these bills are so important and what we're going to do to accelerate the success of these housing initiatives?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from London for that great question. Over the last four years, our government committed to introducing dozens of new policies under the first government housing supply action plan: More Homes, More Choice in 2019; More Homes for Everyone in 2022; and the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022. These acts will accelerate and build more homes in our cities.

I was a councillor, Madam Speaker, and I have seen the process. Why are we in a housing supply crisis? It's the process. The process is taking so long to put shovels in the ground. I think this More Homes Built Faster Act would help to bring more housing supply into Ontario.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've been listening to this debate—very interesting. I was here this morning as well, and I heard about rents and about new Canadians and young people and getting an opportunity to buy a home. But do you know, Madam Speaker, today, the average price of rent in Toronto is \$3,000? I challenge anybody to tell me what new Canadian can afford \$3,000. I challenge anybody to tell me what new student coming to go to the University of Toronto or to Ryerson can afford \$3,000 for rent in Toronto. And in my riding, we're hearing from residents that are facing significant rent increases because they live in units built after 2018. In some cases, they can't afford their rent anymore.

So my question to the member: Do you think we should have rent control for all units in Ontario, as, quite frankly, it's unaffordable to pay \$3,000 on average in Toronto for an apartment?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that great question. The rental issue is a huge issue, and not only in the GTA but across Ontario. The reason why is our housing supply. We're building less rental units, affordable units, not only in the cities but across the province. We have to bring more attainable and affordable rental units into the system. That's how we could be able to bring affordability for the rental units. That's how we could bring more affordability for the low-income families and—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Rent control.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Yes, and also rent control.

Those are the things you could do through this housing supply plan: attainable housing, more affordable housing and more affordable rental units. That's how we could alleviate the rental price crisis.

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

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member from Markham–Thornhill for helping to explain this very important bill.

Like the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's, my children are in their late twenties, and two of the three are in the housing market. And we heard earlier today from the great member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke about the importance of supply and demand and how increasing that supply will help correct the market, and also, of course, make homes more available.

But relative to this bill, Bill 97, can the member explain a little further what protections are in there for our new homebuyers—in fact, for all our homebuyers—that are in this particular bill?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank to my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for that great question. We know that home ownership is top of mind for many families and individuals across our province. That's why our government is not only committed to building 1.5 million new homes, we are also exploring new ways to improve consumer protection for Ontarian homebuyers. That's why we introduced a number of protections under Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2023, including the most comprehensive fines for bad actors across Canada. That's how we're going to address those issues.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This government's plan to build housing—we agree we need housing. We need all kinds of housing. We need affordable housing. But your reliance on building on the greenbelt is not welcomed by the province of Ontario. In fact, there's a solid body of research and evidence that shows the GTHA has more than enough land already designated for development. We just heard today from the former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie, who said the province's plans to eliminate the growth plan and reform the provincial policy statement will mean more sprawl-style homes on the greenbelt and farmland, and this is completely unnecessary. There is no reason to build on prime agricultural lands or on the greenbelt.

Can you explain to me why your government is not building on existing land and is expanding into our natural areas, the greenbelt, agricultural land, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve? These are the things that we need to know, that people are looking for answers for, as to why your government is building in this area.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, member, for that question. Madam Speaker, I was a farmer's son. I understand protecting the farmland, especially sacred farmland in Ontario and across the province.

We are allocating some land—it's what you call the white belt—along the urban boundary to build more houses.

For example, in Markham, York region, we have land—yes, it's protected farmland, but along the urban corridors, where we can't bring the city services. We can't ask the people to move further away from Markham to settle if there is no transportation, there's no transit. That is how we are touching some of those areas where it's appropriate to build more housing closer to the cities and—

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: I am very pleased to see that our government continues to take the housing supply crisis seriously. This is the government's fourth housing supply action plan, which builds upon the successes of the first three. The More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, was introduced only a few months ago.

Can the member please let us know why the government is moving on this housing supply crisis so urgently and introducing yet another plan?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my good friend and colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt for that question. Madam Speaker, I only have 30 seconds to answer.

It's a housing crisis. We revolutionized the zoning process, as I said before—getting the zoning for the triplexes, duplexes, expanding the houses, which the previous government didn't allow. Now it's automatically part of the zoning process. You don't have to go to the city to apply for the rezoning process. That's how we're going to bring more supply into the—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House. Today, I'm going to focus on my role as agriculture critic and as a farmer and talk about mostly the agricultural part about this bill. There has been a lot of talk about Bill 97. I'm going to do a little bit of history on it from our perspective and then talk about one other issue that impacts my riding: the off-grid developments. Hopefully that will fill up our time without boring anybody too much.

The housing issue in Ontario: We need to build more housing for people who are coming and people who live here. But there is already enough land approved for development to build the housing we need. Let's start with that.

In this bill, in Bill 97—I'm going to back up one more thing that people should keep in their mind. What's the one thing that you need besides housing? There's actually two or three. You need water; you need air; you need food.

Something else that's a fact: Right now, in Ontario, we're losing 319 or 320 acres a day right now of land that produces food—

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Mr. Wayne Gates: A day.

Mr. John Vanthof: A day—I just said “a day.”

And someone will say, “Well, yes, but we're increasing productivity.” And we are—I'm a farmer by trade—we are. But the fact is, you're losing 320 acres a day, every day. At this rate, we won't have any farmland left in 100

years. Think about that. We know that's happening, so think about that in the back of your mind.

We're pushing really hard to slow that down. The government seems to be pushing hard to go the other way, to speed it up. Here is an example in Bill 97. In Bill 97 and in the changes to the provincial policy statement, which is behind Bill 97, there is a proposal for the ability to sever three lots off each agricultural property in the province. The reason given for this is that—and this is a legitimate issue—farmers have more workers, they're multi-generational, so they need more ability to have housing. That's a legitimate concern.

The issue is that they should be allowed to build more housing—and it is in most municipalities—on the farmstead itself. But once you sever a lot off the farmstead, a lot of other things come into play, because, as a former livestock producer, if I want to expand my livestock operation, something comes into play called minimum distance separation, and it's a formula; how big the farm is determines how close the next residential lot can be. And if the next residential lot is too close, you can't expand because you don't meet those standards.

There's a good reason why we have those standards. There's a really good reason. I'm proud to have been a dairy farmer for 35 years. If my kids had wanted it, we still would be dairy farmers. But there are consequences to farming, and one of those consequences is odour. There is a consequence. Actually, now that we're becoming much more environmentally conscious, there are other consequences: There are anaerobic digesters on farms. Anaerobic digesters can be dangerous, so you need minimum distance. But if you allow each farm property to have three severed lots, all of a sudden the chance of your being able to meet those standards declines rapidly.

Now, don't take this from me. The first person who I saw really raise this issue—and I want to mention his name in the House here—is Dr. Wayne Caldwell. I believe he just retired or is retiring. He's a planner at the University of Guelph, and he raised this issue. I called him up, and he explained it to me. I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question here in this House, I believe sometime in April. I'll paraphrase: The government was being very thoughtful and everything was going to be okay; that wasn't the case at all. But obviously, it is or was the case—actually, it still is the case; we'll get to that in a second—because farm groups started listening to people like Dr. Caldwell and other planners and their own research people, and they started raising the question as well.

I've got to shout out to all the farm organizations. They have different issues, and it's not often that they almost all unite. On this one, they all united and said, "Whoa. Whoa. We've got a problem here." And I'm going to be pretty upfront: It's not that farmers in general and farm organizations in general are big NDP supporters. They largely supported the Conservatives in the last election and were very reluctant to go, "Wait a second. You people, your party, is making a mistake," and they had to push and they had to push.

On Monday—I believe it was Monday—I asked a question again, the same question, and the associate minister or the parliamentary assistant to Minister of Housing responded with a statement that she had to retract.

And then I asked again, and the Premier stood up, and the Premier said that he had a meeting with farm groups. That's the first I heard that the Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, look in Hansard. She had to retract.

So then the Premier announced that he had had a meeting with farmers, and he was very conciliatory; I grant him that. I appreciate that. And the government has now lengthened the consultation period—

Mr. Rob Flack: That's good.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and that's a good thing. I'm not saying it's not a good thing. But they haven't actually changed anything.

I commend the farm groups for going as far as they've gone, and I 100% believe that talks are going to continue, and I commend them for that. That is the way you're supposed to do it. But we vote on what's in front of us, not what might happen in the future.

And particularly—I have a quote here from the minister, from Minister Clark, in a letter. That letter is public; I've got this quote from Twitter, actually. It's a letter that he wrote to the farm groups. There's a quote in it that is really confusing. I've got to say, it's really confusing. Directly from Mr. Clark—or Minister Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs—I don't want to do anything unparliamentary Speaker: "It has never been our intention for severed lots to be transferred or sold to non-family/farm owners..." That's great, but once you sever the lot, that's the whole purpose of severing the lot. Why go through the effort of severing the lot—so when you're severing a lot, you're transferring control from one owner to the other. That's what a severance is, so that sentence doesn't really make sense.

So it could very well be that the government has missed this and that everybody missed it, and to the farm organization's credit, they said, "Okay, hold it. Hold the phone." It's amazing to me, shocking to me, that with several rural members on the government side, someone internally didn't say, "Hold the phone." It's a rural party; it's supposed to be, and no one seemed to—and even when other people brought it up, it was, "No, no, no." It took the combined forces of agriculture in Ontario to actually get the government to lengthen the consultation period.

I take the Premier at his word that they're going to look into this, but nothing has changed in the bill, and nothing has changed in their proposals on the provincial policy statement except they lengthened the consultation period, they're going to talk a bit longer. That's a good thing, but that doesn't say what's going to be at the end of those discussions. It doesn't.

So I encourage the government to continue those discussions, and I encourage the government to listen to agricultural organizations when they, in unity, said, "Hold it." But at this moment, there's nothing set in stone that says

that this is going to happen, and that's why I'm standing here. I believe this is the third or the fourth time that I've brought this issue up—twice in question period, once in the second round and now in the third round.

1400

I want to be on the record that the farm organizations have done a great job uniting and saying there's got to be changes. The government has recognized that something is not right here down on the farm, and that's good as far as it goes. I think I can say this fairly confidently that this is the second time—the first time was when they tried to use the “notwithstanding” clause in the education workers strike, that this government actually, one day, said, “Oh, do we need to do this?” And then all the members stood up and clapped when that bill passed—stood up and clapped to use the “notwithstanding” clause in negotiations. And a week later—a week later—they rescinded the bill. Nobody clapped. This is the second time that the government has said, “Okay, let's hold the phone. There's a problem.”

I commend the agricultural organizations for uniting, for doing what they did. I hope the government sticks to their word and actually looks at the future of farms that have to expand or want to expand, and that they aren't encumbered by lot severances that eliminate their ability to expand. I don't think anybody in this Legislature, regardless of party, wanted that to happen or wants it to happen. It's just so disconcerting that it has taken so long and such a hard fight—not to get anything changed, but to get the government to actually listen is a win. It's amazing. People are taking this as a win. The Ford government has listened to farmers. They haven't done anything yet—that could come—but they actually listened. That's a win. Well, if that's a win, then there's a few problems. But as the bill stands, as the PPS stands, there's no change.

I see that across the aisle they're looking at the statement from the OFA, and that's great. I highly commend the OFA for what they're doing. They've pushed at this the longest, and if the minister can come up with the reg change and the policy changes and make that happen—if he can announce that today, then we're golden, but I don't think we are. They haven't reached the finish line yet. They haven't reached the finish line yet, and we need to reach the finish line. So stay tuned.

If the talks are fruitful and the policy is actually changed so that agriculture is protected, I will be the first one to congratulate all parties. But when the consultation isn't over, then I will still be there—if it isn't satisfactory when the consultation is over, then I'll be there fighting for agriculture as well. Because, quite frankly, I'm not sure if some of the members on the other side did their job, because it never should've gotten this far. I say that with all sincerity.

Now, my next—I'm using up a lot more time than I thought. Something else that's covered in this bill: This bill—and no one else ever talks about this, because it doesn't affect too many other ridings—contains measures to implement some kind of building standards, environmental standards, safety standards for off-grid develop-

ments in unorganized townships. We've got one specifically—we have several now, but they're called Boreal medieval villages.

I worked a lot with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Except for not agreeing on some basic philosophical measures, I don't mind working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We are looking for a way to find, and he is looking for a way, to make sure that if there is development in unorganized townships, it's done safely, because you don't really need building permits. There are a lot of things you don't need. Under Bill 97, that's going to change, which is a good thing.

That's an example of how bills contain questionable things and they can contain good, and you always have to find the balance. But the issue with Bill 97 and off-grid developments is that the clauses in Bill 97 allow inspectors from organized municipalities to go into those unorganized municipalities and conduct the inspections. And in our discussions, the question is (a) there isn't enough inspectors in organized municipalities; (b) who is going to pay for the inspectors to go to the unorganized municipalities? I believe that the ministry will; and (c) and again, I'm being very serious: Who is going to regulate and who is actually going to make sure that these inspections can be done safely?

I say this with all seriousness, because people move to unorganized municipalities to get away from rules. The vast majority who live in unorganized municipalities—I have a camp in an unorganized municipality—want to obey them, want to have safe septic systems, want to have safe buildings, but not everyone. And now that we have groups of people subdividing, unofficially, themselves and going into these areas, it might not be quite as cut and dried to go in there and be a building inspector or a septic inspector.

In my few seconds, that's something that we have to look at. Unless you live close to an unorganized municipality, you haven't got a clue what's really going on there. There is no council. The provincial government is the only government they have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions and answers. I recognize the member for—don't tell me—Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. You got it. It's the place to be and it's a place where there's a lot of agricultural interest, certainly. I have not got an agricultural background, but now it's my home, and listening very closely to what the farmers are saying and, in fact, listening to what the member opposite was saying as well. He was making a big point of our listening, and I assure you, I am and we are.

I also heard him say that if we do make changes down the road, he will be the first one to congratulate us. I've made note of that and those of us here in the top row of this government will be looking forward to—

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's the back row.

Mr. Rick Byers: —top row—congratulations.

But with those changes coming and with the other positive work we're doing for the agricultural community,

I trust that the member, at one point, will be able to support us in this work of supporting the farm community.

1410

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a very good question. And I do make a point of when a change is made that benefits—and you can ask the Minister of Transportation. She has made a couple of changes in my riding, small changes that made a big difference. Lowered the speed limit in front of École St-Michel: I gave her full credit for that and made sure that everybody knew it.

I believe that's how politics should work. We can disagree on philosophical things, but we all want the same thing. But the fact is, on this issue, it hasn't changed in the bill or the policy statement, so I can't really vote on the Premier's promise, because the Premier had the power to change it before. I respect the Premier. I respected his answer. But I have to vote on what's in the bill, not what might be happening here.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to thank my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his presentation and just say that he is such a strong voice for northern communities, for rural communities and for the farming community. Of course, he is a farmer himself. I think the idea in terms of what is happening with the Boreal Forest Medieval Villages is really interesting. Of course, he raised some of the concerns with what's happening there and the developments. It's obviously not very common in southern Ontario. It seems like it is quite a problem, and growing, in northern Ontario.

My question to the member is: I would imagine that among the many concerns, there would also be concerns around whether these developments happen with Indigenous consultation or not. I'd like the member to comment on that.

Mr. John Vanthof: And that, actually, member from Parkdale–High Park, is a very good question. Up until now, the way it happens, an organizer buys a piece of private land in an unorganized township and basically unofficially surveys it into lots and then leases out the lot. So you buy a part of the company and then that half-acre or acre lot is yours to do with it as you will. And there are some problems with that, but because it is already private land, there isn't the same impetus, necessity to consult with First Nations as if it was crown land. Crown land and private land are different. First Nations communities are very concerned, but there isn't the same legal necessity.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks. I always enjoy listening to him speak in the House. He highlighted some great examples of our government, I would argue, listening—a government that is known for listening to a variety of stakeholders across the province and changing course when is required, as he alluded to in his remarks.

I'd also like to point out, though, that the words “severance,” “rural lot severances” are not mentioned once in

Bill 97, so Bill 97 is separate from the provincial planning statement proposals. Also, he alluded to the OFA's statistic around farmland loss, but it's actually interesting that the land and crops in acres remain the same, more or less, between 2016 and 2021. So it's interesting to have that fact on the record.

I was wondering if the member opposite would be willing to support this bill, as it does protect tenants. It does support those wishing to have air conditioners in their units. I was wondering if the member is willing to support those important protections as well.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. There are several parts to that question. The provincial policy statement and Bill 97 are intricately linked. So you could have changed the provincial policy statement sooner. You could have actually consulted before this, because I am aware of how hard the agricultural organizations had to fight to get your head office to listen. It wasn't just the—probably some of you had to fight really hard to get that done, too. It's kind of funny, though, that it took so much on something so simple.

I would say that I don't think this is an example of the government listening—not at all.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to thank my colleague and my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his—son allocation, his presentation. I know he's a strong advocate for the north, for highway safety.

But to get back to the unorganized township—because I did get some people from my riding talking about that because they are kind of worried. I know you mentioned it, but I'd like you to explain it even more, because they're saying, “Who puts in these regulations and how do we address them? Our municipalities are concerned. Does that fall on their plate? Will the municipal taxpayers pay for it?” And what about—because it's pretty well a free-for-all when you're in these unorganized townships. When you're close to a lake, you wonder about the sewers and you wonder about all the other stuff that could go into that lake. And if you're somebody who owns a property on that lake and you're not in an unorganized township—because there some that are on crown land; some are in unorganized townships. If you have a cabin and you're very regulated and some aren't, well, it's a concern, and municipalities are also very concerned. So I'd like you to expand on that if you please.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay for the very relevant question, because a lot of people don't understand how unorganized townships work. There are rules that they're supposed to follow, and the only rules that they really have to follow is if a public health unit puts in a septic system, if they apply for a septic permit. But if they don't, although there are rules, there's actually no way for the government to enforce those rules. That's the change in Bill 97. There's no way to enforce those rules.

The question is, will the building inspectors from other municipalities actually be safe doing it? And there are

some very well-meaning people in these villages, or potential villages. Some very well-meaning people, but not all. Not all. Some of them want to go above provincial standards, but there has to be some way that we can actually make sure that everyone is at least meeting them, and that is the crux of what's happening.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: I really appreciated the presentation made, but I want to inquire: I spent many years as a municipal politician in a rural area. I don't have the experience that the member has with the unincorporated areas, but certainly in southern Ontario, in the rural areas—a lot of agriculture and a lot of conversations with farmers over the years. A big part of that conversation led to, "What do I do with the land that cannot be farmed that is within my farm property? Why can't I sever that?" Can you answer that, please?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Final response for 20 seconds.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, it's a very good question, because if you sever that land and you put houses on it, if those houses are too close to the farm next door, they won't be able to expand because of minimum distance separation. And there's a reason we have the minimum. I don't think anyone here is going to disagree that we need minimum distance separation. You need a space between a livestock operation and residential.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise to speak to third reading of Bill 97. I just want to make it clear that I'm here to stand with the farmers, the housing advocates, the professional planners, local councillors, environmental NGOs and citizens who are speaking out against Bill 97 and the associated postings on the environmental registry that go with it. This bill, in the government's sprawl-at-all-costs agenda, is a direct threat to agriculture in this province. Some have described it as a frontal assault on farming in Ontario and it will actually make the housing affordability crisis worse.

1420

Just two hours ago in the media studio, the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario came to Queen's Park. It's an alliance of 73 organizations from agriculture, land use planning, housing, tenants, environment, neighbourhood associations, labour, health care, academia and business sectors. They came to Queen's Park to warn us of the catastrophic consequences of the government's plans to rip up planning laws in this province. But Speaker, don't take my word for it; take the words of some of the folks who were here.

I'm going to start with Mark Reusser, who's a turkey farmer in Waterloo region and president of Waterloo region's OFA: "If the province proceeds with its proposal to gut Ontario's planning laws, they will deliver a fatal blow to Ontario's agricultural community.... They will open prime agricultural land to development and forever remove it from growing the food Ontarians need. This will be the end of agriculture in Ontario."

Let me quote another participant: David Crombie, the former mayor of Toronto and the former chair of the provincial Greenbelt Council: "This is completely unnecessary.... Report after report shows there is more than enough land already set aside within existing towns and cities to build all the housing we need. There is no reason to build on the greenbelt and natural areas. There is no reason to build on prime agricultural lands."

Let's have another quote from somebody from ALO and Anne Golden, former chair of the task force on the future of the GTA: "This is the absolutely wrong way to deal with the serious housing shortages that we face.... We have a limited number of investment dollars, construction workers and building supplies. The province should be working with developers to make sure they succeed in building the housing we need where we already live, not on valuable farmland and the greenbelt."

Let's listen to another quote. This one is from Alejandra Ruiz Vargas from Toronto ACORN: This "will not help existing tenants nor get us the desperately needed affordable housing units built where people live."

Speaker, if you combine Bill 97 and the associated ERO postings in Bill 23, this government clearly has an agenda to impose an expensive sprawl agenda onto the people of Ontario against their will. The government's own Housing Affordability Task Force has clearly stated that land is not the barrier to building the homes we need in Ontario. Studies by planning experts have shown that we already have enough land approved for development to build two million homes, 500,000 more homes than our goal that we all agree on across party lines of building 1.5 million homes over the next decade.

And so the fact that the government appears—we don't know for sure, but it appears to be backtracking on the issue around farm severances. That is just the tip of the iceberg of what this bill and the associated ERO postings will impose on Ontario.

I want to quote from the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario's study around Bill 97. It will:

"—forever change agriculture in the province so that it becomes extremely difficult for farmers to continue to grow the food we all rely on by allowing virtually unrestricted development on prime agricultural lands;

"—turbo-charge expensive and unsustainable sprawl development that would fragment and isolate farms and farm communities and force municipalities to spend more and more taxpayer dollars to build new infrastructure to service geographically dispersed development;

"—remove policies that require developers to build the diverse housing types housing types Ontarians want and can afford in the neighbourhoods they want to live in;

"—worsen the homelessness crisis by eliminating policies needed to build truly affordable housing."

Speaker, we have some real decisions to make in Ontario. This is kind of one of those really important moments where we think about what our province is going to look like for generations to come. And the question is: Are we going to build homes that people can actually afford in the connected communities they want to live in, close

to their loved ones, in places where they want to live, work and play? Or are we going to make the housing crisis worse by imposing an expensive, 1950s-style sprawl agenda on the people of Ontario?

Here are some of the facts: It costs 2.25 times more for a municipality to service a home built through sprawl than one built within existing urban boundaries. The city of Ottawa did a study that showed that for every house built in low-density sprawl, it cost the city \$465 a year, every year, per taxpayer. But if they build within the city boundaries, actually, the city raises an additional \$606 per capita each year. That's almost a \$1,000 financial benefit to the municipality. It is less expensive for municipalities to service existing communities than to have to pay the exorbitant costs of low-density sprawl.

It will also hurt the wallets of young people. I've heard the minister, and I agree with the minister on this: We want young people to have homes they can afford, but why are we forcing them to drive until they qualify for a mortgage, and then imposing long, expensive commutes on them that take them away from their family, friends and volunteer opportunities in our communities, when, if we pass bills like my Bill 44 and Bill 45, which would end exclusionary zoning and create opportunities to build more missing-middle housing, we could build homes that people can afford in connected communities they want to live in?

I've talked to developers, and they are concerned about the delay in the approvals process to get those homes built. But when I talk to municipal planners, part of what's causing those delays is the fact that the government keeps coming in with so many changes to the planning laws that they're spending more time trying to figure out what the heck is going on than actually planning developments. So why don't we get on with ending exclusionary zoning, ending the red tape and allowing people to build homes where people actually want to live and where they can afford to live?

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's interesting to note the member talked about sprawl, but do you know what causes sprawl? It's when municipalities like Guelph don't build at all, and then people do have to drive until they qualify to the next municipality, which has to do sprawl because the one adjacent wasn't doing anything. We have that example in my area, where we're preventing that from happening, where we have a very well-planned, transit-oriented development community. We're embracing density. We're saving farmland. We're allowing people to eat and live in their community. But it's by embracing progressive, 21st-century planning rules and being nimble, not being stuck in the 1950s, as the member opposite quotes.

So will you not join us in allowing for flexible and more progressive planning policies? Because people do need places to eat and to live, but we can't keep having them keep driving till they qualify by NIMBY municipalities.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would ask the member to maybe come to Guelph. You're more than welcome to—

I'm happy to invite you to Guelph—and you will see the cranes in the sky. You will see the tall buildings that are being built in downtown Guelph near our transit mode. You will see the fact that we've had a “Yes! In My Backyard” campaign that had approvals now for three permanent supportive housing spaces, in neighbourhoods where initially there was opposition. But because the three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, came together—and I'll even say and I'll give the Minister of Housing credit: He actually came to Guelph to announce funding for one of those projects, and I appreciate the minister for doing that.

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We are building permanent supportive housing in Guelph. The Premier has said on numerous occasions that Guelph has the lowest housing starts in the province. That is simply not true. A quick Google search will show you that. And I'll actually say to my friends in Peterborough—I've been giving them a rough time—that they're much lower than Guelph. I see my friend over there. Do you know what? Let's be honest, we do—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I didn't get a chance to ask my question to my colleague, so I'm going to ask it to you, because we are talking about the Premier backing down. But what I wanted to talk about is that he talked about the “notwithstanding” clause. And seeing as the labour minister is here, he was the first one to stand up and clap in support of the “notwithstanding” clause, and then a week later, he had to back down on the “notwithstanding” clause.

We know that we're losing 319 acres of farmland every single day, but because we're talking about—it was mentioned in this—backing down: Do you think that the Conservatives should back down on Bill 124; Bill 60; anti-scab legislation, which was raised today, which this minister supports; and Bill 57, deeming—on Injured Workers' Day; he should support that. So I'm asking you, do they think they should back down on some of those bills that really affect workers in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I don't think it's necessarily relevant to this bill. But I will say, I went out and spoke at the injured workers rally, and absolutely, we should end deeming in this province. Absolutely, we should have WSIB actually supporting injured workers instead of denying them their benefits. When it comes to farmland protection and backing down on Bill 97, absolutely they should be backing down on Bill 97. Oh, and you mentioned Bill 124. Yes, if we want to hire more health care workers and have more front-line health care workers, let's get rid of Bill 124 and stop wasting money appealing it.

But when it comes to farmland lost—319 acres a day. To put that into perspective for people, that's like the size of the city of Toronto each and every year. We simply can't afford to lose the farmland that feeds us, that contributes \$50 billion to our food economy.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just wanted to continue my question to the member previously. You talked about planning policies. Well, municipalities have to start begging this government for ministerial zoning orders to build the right things and expand settlement boundaries because the planning policies aren't nimble enough. So we're helping them out. I know the member has strong feelings for MZO, but municipalities have no options. And so they go to the minister and ask him, because they know that they have to respond to their constituents they were elected by to build homes and fit the right balance.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: We need a Yes! In My Backyard campaign in the province of Ontario, just like all three levels of government in Guelph have come together for one. And one of the first places we can start with that is ending exclusionary zoning in this province. That's exactly why I've put forward Bill 44, that would allow four-storey walk-up apartments and fourplexes as of right. We need more missing-middle housing. That's why I've put forward Bill 45, that would allow six- to 11-storey buildings on major transportation corridors—

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

Mr. Rob Flack: I wanted to spend a couple of minutes setting the record straight. The honourable member for Timiskaming—Cochrane is not here right now—I guess I shouldn't say that, right?

Interjections.

Mr. Rob Flack: Sorry, I withdraw. Although I'll speak to him from my heart. He's right on a lot of facts, but let's get a couple of things fundamentally clear. Farm severances are off the table, as per the Premier earlier this week, as per the Minister of Housing, as per the Minister of Agriculture. Consultations for two more months encouraging members to communicate and share their ideas are on the table. We didn't have a fight. We listened and we learned, and I'm very proud of this government and this Premier for listening not only to the advocacy of farm organizations but to members of caucus, members of cabinet.

I'm going to just quote a couple of things here to get the record straight based on what was said for Hansard. I quote from Minister Clark:

“At the same time, we have clearly heard the concerns that have been raised about the need to preserve Ontario's farmland—and we share that goal. To be clear: It has never been our intention”—again, I want to emphasize here—“for severed lots to be transferred or sold to non-family/farm owners, nor for these lots to have anything” other “than single family homes (i.e. no multi-residential structures). Any ambiguity regarding our intentions will be clarified, eliminated and resolved.” That sounds like a pretty strong commitment.

Secondly, “We want to continue working with the agricultural sector to look at alternatives that would assist farm families in succession planning, but do not involve additional severances”—very clear.

“To facilitate these objectives, the government is extending the commenting deadline on the Environmental Registry of Ontario by an additional 60 days, for a revised closing date of August 4, 2023. This will give the public an enhanced opportunity to comment on the proposals and will give our government more time to consider alternative solutions to support multi-generational farm families without adding additional severances.” I don't think it could be any more clear than that.

Peggy Brekveld, president of the largest Ontario farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I believe representing close to or around 58,000 farmers, quotes in her statement, “That's why the news that the provincial government has heard our concern and will not be moving ahead with the three-lot severance proposal is so welcome.”

I am proud of what our government did. I think we were open, we listened and we learned. We'll continue to listen and learn.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would suggest and recommend that I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): There has been over six hours of debate and 17 members have spoken. Mr. Flack has moved that the question be now put. I'm satisfied with the amount of hours. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

HAZEL MCCALLION ACT (PEEL DISSOLUTION), 2023

LOI HAZEL MCCALLION DE 2023 SUR LA DISSOLUTION DE PEEL

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to provide for the dissolution of The Regional Municipality of Peel / Projet de loi 112, Loi prévoyant la dissolution de la municipalité régionale de Peel.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise for the third reading of our government's proposed Hazel McCallion Act. Speaker, it's great to see you in the chair this afternoon. I just want you to know that I'll be sharing the government's time with the Associate Minister of Housing and the PA to myself.

The other thing I just want to say at the start is that I'd like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House at some point—I know we've had lots of T-shirts and hockey shirts and ties being worn; I have a T-shirt that I want to use as a prop. It's a T-shirt that the late Hazel McCallion gave to

me. I'll use it very briefly during my address, but I'd love to have the opportunity to use it in my leadoff today. So I'm asking for unanimous consent—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Minister Clark has asked for unanimous consent to use a T-shirt referencing the late Hazel McCallion. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I want to thank members. I promise that I'll use it sparingly and I'll use it at the end of my address, but it means a lot to me because it was given to me by Mayor McCallion about this particular subject that's in the bill. So thanks for everyone's indulgence.

Madam Speaker, it's really no secret that communities in Peel region are feeling the pressures of our housing crisis, as are communities all across our great, great province. Our government is fully aware of those pressures. We've proposed single-tier municipal structures for Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon as part of a solution we have to help meet the demand for new housing, and at the same time—and I want to emphasize this—maintaining and improving the high level of local services in these municipalities and what they rightly expect. Our government recognizes that single-tier status can help these municipalities address their housing supply issues and help them meet their municipal housing pledges.

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I want to take a moment to commend these three municipalities and all of the others in Ontario that have pledged to meet our housing agenda. Earlier this year, the city of Mississauga pledged to do its part in tackling the housing supply crisis by committing to meet a target of 120,000 new homes by 2031. In March, Brampton city council endorsed their municipal housing pledge to help deliver 113,000 new homes by 2031. And in February, the town of Caledon council endorsed a municipal housing pledge to deliver on its target of 13,000 new homes by 2031. It is this type of determination and co-operation that's going to take Ontario to meet its needs of an ever-demanding supply of housing that meets people's needs and their budget. We're in a housing supply crisis. We need all of our municipal partners to work together to help us.

I'd like to share with the House some of the things that our government is doing to help address the housing supply crisis in municipalities across Ontario, because it relates closely to the proposed changes that we're discussing in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon here today. Our government has been working hard to help provide the legislation and the framework to support building more homes across Ontario. To date, we have introduced, and the House has passed, three housing supply action plans. We introduced our fourth plan, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants, in April of this year—we just debated it in the House earlier today.

The actions of our government have basically provided some record-setting results. I know that I've done this in question period and in debate, but I think the numbers are quite astounding, so I want to make sure people who are here in the chamber and those who are watching at home

and in the galleries have the opportunity to understand some of the great things that are happening in Ontario. In 2022, our housing starts surpassed 96,000 homes. That's the single largest increase since 1988 and 30% higher than the annual average in Ontario over the past 20 years—huge numbers, really, really good results. Rental housing has improved as well, with 2022 being a new record of nearly 15,000 starts. It's amazing that we were able to add those numbers to the fold since we began our housing supply action plan.

Stakeholder support that the government has received because of our housing supply action plans really has been significant.

The Ontario Real Estate Association has commended our government on supporting prospective homebuyers, renters, rental housing providers, while also adopting our targeted approach to get those 1.5 million homes built and shovels in the ground by 2031.

AMO, the Association of Municipalities Ontario, said our measures recognize—and this is a great quote—“the full continuum of housing and attempts to make life easier for renters.”

I've had the opportunity to speak about housing supply challenges and aspects of our latest housing action plans with representatives from municipalities both large and small, in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario, and in the north, and it doesn't matter whether they're urban or rural, whether they're upper- or lower-tier; this is a very important topic that has been top of mind for municipalities in all of their meetings and all of their conferences that they've had. I'm pleased to report that the government received positive feedback at every meeting. It doesn't matter whether it was ROMA in January, whether it was OSUM or FONOM or NOMA or the big-city mayors' meetings that we've had in the last several months—really positive feedback.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to impress upon the members of this House that our government's goal to create 1.5 million homes by 2031 really includes rental homes, and I think that's very important. It's important in municipalities such as Mississauga and Brampton that have a large number of renters to begin with, and in Caledon, too, given the large number of new residents that are expected to go in and move into the town. So the rental piece—it doesn't matter where you live in Peel, whether it's Mississauga, Brampton or Caledon; having a good place to call home or a good place to rent is top of mind.

Many different costs contribute to the price of a new home. This is something where my colleagues in government know that we have a fundamental distance to our colleagues in opposition. There are many different costs that contribute to the price of a new home, and these range from land values and interest rates to materials and labour costs. But one little-known fact is that a variety of charges and fees that are levied by a variety of different government agencies have a contributing factor as well, and while a single fee might be small, the impact of the total of all of the fees that could be levied is tremendously significant in terms of the cost of a new home.

I want to take a moment, Speaker, to tell the members of this House about the findings of a report by the C.D. Howe Institute. They had a study that looked at municipal fees such as development charges and approval times, and they found that there was a wide variation across Canada, with an impact on new and existing homes of over \$100,000 in some Ontario municipalities. Think about that: The individual charge might be small, but collectively, in some cases, it's well over \$100,000 that gets added right on the end price of a home. So according to that report, government charges are a significant factor in the price of a new home.

So what has the government done? We're freezing, we're discounting, we're reducing municipal-development-related charges, to spur on new home construction and help address Ontario's housing supply crisis. To go into more detail in this, municipalities levy essentially three main charges on new developments, so I'm going to just take a moment and outline them.

First, something that many of us have discussed in this House: development charges. They fund infrastructure to support growth such as water, waste water, roads and libraries. Then there are parkland dedication fees, which can be in the form of funds or land for the purposes of parks and recreation space. Then, thirdly, are community benefits charges, which can be used to fund services such as community housing, or perhaps parking. I want to point out that these charges are for costs that result from new developments that are not covered by development charges or parkland fees. It's really important when you talk about the sphere of levies that you acknowledge that there are three separate and distinct charges that fund different things for different reasons.

I wanted, Speaker, as well, to give a bit of detail about initiatives that the government is taking with each of these charges to really help members of the House understand why we're doing what we're doing to reduce red tape and to increase housing supply. To help spur on new rental construction, our government has decided to discount development charges on purpose-built rental housing, with even deeper discounts of up to 25% for family-friendly units. It doesn't matter whose riding I go into, I always seem to meet someone who talks about the need for those family-size rental buildings. Our policies directly deal with that, with an up to 25% reduction in development charges.

We've extended the deadline for updating development charge bylaws from every five years to every 10 years, which we've done to reduce the administrative work that municipalities have. We've implemented measures to slow the growth of development charges, such as limiting the eligible costs that are recovered through development charges, and we now require that new development charges be phased in over a five-year period, which makes them much more predictable for people who want to plan to build these types of units.

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And then. Speaker, to further spur on the building of more homes, we've also reduced alternative parkland requirements for those higher density residential buildings.

For example, municipalities can impose a requirement of up to 15% of the land or its value for sites greater than five hectares and up to 10% of the land or its value if it's five hectares or less.

I want to point out that this can also be done to help reduce the costs for new condominiums and new apartment buildings. It's because municipalities are now required to develop a parks plan prior to passing any parkland dedication bylaw, so it's really ensuring that the cart's not before the horse. It's really, really important.

We've also frozen parkland dedication rates at the site-plan/zoning application stage to, again, make costs for builders and developers easier to predict, and non-profits as well.

So the proviso for developers is, they've got to get their building permit within two years. Again, we've looked at the process. It takes too long in Ontario to pull a permit. So our intent is to help speed up the construction while at the same time keeping costs down. I think, Speaker, you can see where we're going here. It's not just about reduction; it's also about getting shovels in the ground faster. If we need to get 1.5 million homes built in the next 10 years, we've got to make sure that the process—the status quo is just not an option, right? We've got to be able to look at the process, look at the pinch points.

And then to further keep costs down, in regard to infill developments—that's construction of housing units that are on a parcel of land with an existing residential building—the maximum community benefits charge and parkland levy is now going to be based on the new units rather than the entire parcel of land. It makes sense, right? We want to add that on the new lands that are going to be created by the infill development and not the entire parcel. Again, the goal is to reduce the costs of building new residential units in higher-density communities.

Another way in which we hope to speed up the construction of much-needed new homes is by now requiring that municipalities spend or allocate at least 60% of the parkland reserves and development charge reserve balances for critical services—things like roads, water, waste water—at the start of each year. This is, again, to encourage the building of the infrastructure and parks that communities need today.

All of these initiatives, Speaker, by our government are focused on one goal and one goal only—I've said it many, many, many times in the Legislature—and that's to get homes built faster to address our province's housing supply crisis. This is one of the key reasons we're moving forward this proposed legislation to grant Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon the tools they need to support our goal. These communities are shovel-ready. Their municipal leaders have signed on to our housing pledges. These municipal councils are eager to help get more homes built and they are resolved to address the housing supply crisis in their communities. And our government is standing by them. We're standing with them. We're ready to help them, and we're proposing to remove a layer of government so that these three municipalities can move quickly.

Speaker, I'd like to make it clear that while we're proposing to streamline local government in Peel region, the questions about boundary adjustments for the current three lower-tier municipalities are misplaced. On behalf of the government, I can state in this House that there are no plans or intentions to alter the municipal boundaries of Mississauga, Brampton or Caledon as part of our proposed dissolution of the region of Peel—full stop. I want to make it clear. I don't want to wake up a few hours from now and see that that's the major play from the New Democrats, because that's not where we're at. We made it very clear to the three mayors; we're making it very clear in the House today.

I don't see him nodding his head over there, but I'm watching the critic very intently.

Mr. Jeff Burch: That's my poker face.

Hon. Steve Clark: That's his poker face; yes, that's right.

The proposed Hazel McCallion Act would simply enable these councils to better deliver on the vision we all have of a home of all who can live in those three communities, and they're three great communities. It was wonderful to have the three mayors with me on bill introduction day.

And there are questions that have come up since that press conference about financial impacts of the proposed legislation on Peel residents if the bill is passed. And my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is going to go into more detail about the proposed transition board. But I want to reassure the House that an important part of the transition board's work would be to bring to light the full financial impacts of the changes that are proposed in this bill. Our government is looking forward to that full and detailed analysis so that we can ensure that there is a fair and an equitable outcome for taxpayers no matter where they live in the region of Peel, and there should be no disruption of the municipal service local residents rely on at any time throughout the proposed transition from regional government to the three independent municipalities. I said it in the House today; I said it was the press conference; I'll say it again this afternoon: The services that are provided to Peel region citizens today should be and will be the same services that they have on January 1, 2025.

While many details of the legislation and the related measures that we're taking will soon be detailed to you by the Associate Minister of Housing and the parliamentary assistant, the member for Perth—Wellington, there's one more element that I just want to talk about today. As part of our plan, we're going to be moving forward with facilitators who are going to be tasked with assessing the upper-tier municipalities in Durham, Halton, Niagara, Simcoe, Waterloo and York, and the question is, why these six upper-tiers? That's the question that I've been asked. And the reason is because, much like Peel, these areas are rapidly growing in Ontario. Our government needs to ensure that they have the local government systems in place that meet the needs of their residents.

It's going to come as no surprise to anyone, Speaker, to hear that one of the needs that they're most concerned

about in those regions and in Simcoe county is the construction of new homes. People living in one of these six upper-tier municipalities will be the first to say to you how important it is that the housing supply crisis be addressed and that the systems of local government need to be adequately equipped to deal with that growth. That's why we're asking our facilitators to look at the situation. We want to make sure that all of them are equipped to meet our housing targets, to deal with strong mayors, to have planning devolve from the regional level down to the local municipality level, because we need to make sure that this is not just true for housing, that there are other priorities like transit, like infrastructure—infrastructure is another one that it doesn't matter which region you go to, you hear the concerns about infrastructure. Those are paramount: transit, infrastructure and housing.

And I've had the chance to visit every one of these regions since I became minister. I've been really encouraged by the growth, the diversity and the optimism that I've seen in every one of those regions. Just a few months ago—and he doesn't know I'm going to say this—I was joined by the member for Whitby, the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, and I toured a non-profit in Durham region, some place that you've represented both as a provincial member and also as a regional councillor. These homes were built in collaboration with not just Habitat for Humanity but also with the Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp. Thanks to the measures that our government implemented through the More Homes Built Faster Act, they're able to save the government fees and reinvest them in more affordable and non-profit housing in the region, and that's wonderful; that's exactly why we did what we did in More Homes Built Faster, so those non-profits who do great things, like the one we saw in Durham region, that they can put the money back in; that they can create more affordable units, or they can create deeper affordability within those units.

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And, Speaker, I can tell this House that these organizations, like many of them that I've met in Ontario, are eager to get these homes built for hard-working people in our province. I think we can all agree that's good news. That's good news, but it also speaks to the challenge that we're trying to address through all the measures that this government is taking.

Folks, we have a responsibility to ensure that the province is supporting housing supply growth, but at the same time, governments also have to be set up to do the same, whether you live in Durham or Niagara or York or Waterloo, Simcoe, Halton or anywhere else in the province, including Peel region. And that's what this legislation does.

Before I turn it over to the associate minister, I want to briefly use my prop. I met the late Hazel McCallion shortly after the government decided to focus on service delivery rather than regional government review, and we decided that we would create programs like the Municipal Modernization Program and the Audit and Accountability Fund, because we felt that municipalities needed to look at those shared service agreements. She was disappointed, right? This was something that she had campaigned on—this bill

is named after her. And she gave me this shirt, and the shirt was her saying. Her shirt said, “Do your homework.” That was her saying, “Do your homework.” She gave me that because she wanted to ensure that I knew the depth of the discussion that she had, both as a mayor and as an ex-mayor when she left office, that this was so important for her. She wanted me to understand all of the work, all of the homework, that she did to lay the groundwork to this bill, where we are today.

I think it’s fitting that this legislation is really creating a new era for those three municipalities in Peel region. The fact that we’ve named the bill after such an iconic municipal figure—not just that she was a mayor from 1978 to 2014, but she oversaw tremendous growth. Some of her last advice that she gave our government is something that we should all take to heart, if this bill is passed, as we begin building a new single-tier community in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. I want to quote from her January 18 open letter to our government this year:

“In less than a month, I am to turn 102. You see a lot in a century.

“I have worked in partnership with colleagues, and adversaries, wrestling with challenges, conflicts, differences of opinion and agendas, and together we found ways to accommodate families in homes, communities and cities that people wanted and do call home.

“Over the last half century, I have watched the population of the greater Toronto area grow in ways that were almost unimaginable, and that growth is about to become even more startling and demanding.”

She goes on to say: “In my career, I have to say, I haven’t always been popular. But I have been very cautious not to adopt a dogmatic approach. Instead, I have worked hard with partners to reach consensus, collaborate and build ... communities for the vast and diverse population that call Ontario home.”

Speaker, I can think of no better words to close my remarks than to quote Hazel McCallion and to give you her message to me that we brought on the floor today with Bill 112. I thank my colleagues. Building communities with much-needed housing is the intent of our proposed Hazel McCallion Act. I urge all members of the House to join us in supporting this prosperous and wonderful era in our province as we move forward.

I’ll turn things over to the Associate Minister of Housing.

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for ending his remarks on such a wonderful note.

As I am a proud proponent of the Hazel McCallion Act, it really is my honour to speak to it today. As we know, the late, great Hazel McCallion has been a massive inspiration for me for decades, teaching me how to make the lives of my constituents better—and for all Ontarians.

This bill is especially meaningful to me, as the Associate Minister of Housing and the representative in this House for the riding of Mississauga–Streetsville. I always used to allude to former mayor Hazel McCallion as my favourite constituent. She lived just around the corner from me. We

met very often. She truly is not just an icon but an inspiration, and she did not mince words. So as a resident of this very region that would be impacted by this legislation, I do want to take this opportunity to reinforce a few of the crucial concepts.

Speaker, our government is approaching the question of municipal structures in Peel region in a careful, responsible way that considers all relevant factors. We remain mindful of the need to maintain services and good governance for residents throughout any potential changes. We are proceeding in a way that is very considerate and will be very principled as well. We believe the principles guiding this dissolution process make it very clear what our government wants to achieve and what our hopes are for the future of this very thriving region.

Our first principle is to respect and support the effective administration of local governance. Ontario has 444 municipalities that deliver critical local services, including waste water, roads, recreation, infrastructure and housing. They’re key partners in critical policies, programs and services on behalf of the province, such as emergency services, social services and health care, including public health. Every four years, voters across Ontario decide who will represent their interests and lead their municipalities by electing the members of their municipal councils. And there are rules for the conduct of council members and members of certain local boards. Municipal governments are responsible and accountable governments with broad powers and transparency requirements, and they must be treated as the important and respected partners that they are. That is why the Hazel McCallion Act, if passed, would not only begin the dissolution of the region of Peel and the creation of three single-tier municipalities in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon; it would also provide stability and fairness throughout the dissolution process to ensure that local governance and local residents are treated with proper respect.

Our second principle recognizes that municipalities should be empowered with the tools needed to plan for population growth. This includes the tools needed to build more housing options. In employing these tools, neighbouring municipalities should be working together in partnership and in a way that’s fair.

It’s no secret that the region I call home is under pressure from growth, and that this growth is, in turn, impacting how the area is governed.

As the MPP for Mississauga–Streetsville, I hear from my constituents how challenging it is to find adequate housing in Peel that people can actually afford. And while I know this holds true for many households across the province, Peel’s location in the greater Toronto area puts it near the epicentre of the housing supply crisis. I’m told that to get an affordable monthly mortgage, a Peel family with an average income would need to save for over 30 years for a down payment at today’s home prices—30 years. Just think of that. By then, any children in that family would have grown up, become independent, and they’d need to purchase a house of their own. That just really illustrates for us the need to act now on the proposed new single-tier structure for Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.

As independent, single-tier municipalities, these communities have a much better chance of addressing their housing supply issues and of meeting their municipal housing targets while maintaining and even improving the high level of local services that Peel residents like me have come to expect.

1510

Speaker, you've often heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I say before this House that right now, housing is a major—if not the major—challenge to the quality of life facing Ontarians and the residents of Peel. Our government has introduced a range of bold and transformative measures over the past several years to increase the housing supply, and as part of that, we've also taken a look at how we could increase housing options for the people of Ontario. From young people and newcomers to families and seniors, I'd suggest to you that as independent, single-tier municipalities, the communities of Peel would have a much better chance of expanding housing options for their residents.

In previous housing supply action plans, our government expanded options for housing by keeping Ontario's eyes firmly on the future. To this end, we updated Ontario's building code to make it easier to obtain building permits for factory-built tiny homes built and installed in different municipalities. These are the homes that are constructed in one municipality and shipped to the owner's property in another community. We've streamlined approvals for modular, multi-residential buildings, like apartment buildings or condominiums, and we've allowed for 12-storey encapsulated mass timber buildings as well.

We have also developed guides on a variety of subjects to help homeowners and homebuyers alike understand diverse and creative housing options. These have included the building of everything from second suites to tiny homes and laneway houses to different home ownership models such as shared equity and co-ownership.

In this same spirit, we've also expanded what is allowed to be built. As a result, up to three residential units are now permitted on most residential lots, and that's without needing a by-law amendment. These three residential units could include a main residence, a basement apartment and a garden or laneway suite. Homeowners and home seekers alike benefit from this broader mix of rental housing, so homeowners can pay their mortgage or accommodate extended family.

Speaker, returning to the principles guiding this dissolution process, our third principle recognizes that the delivery of effective front-line services and keeping communities safe are key pillars of local government. This includes preserving the jobs of the people who do this work. Let me assure you, as a Peel region resident and as a member of this government, that if the Hazel McCallion Act is passed, we would give full consideration to the impacts that dissolution of Peel region will have on municipal labour processes and staffing.

I'd like to spend a few moments to explain this principle in a little more detail. Our government recognizes that this restructuring would be a significant change, and we value and respect the contributions of Peel region's staff. Our

goal is to ensure that governments continue to deliver throughout the transition process, to protect services and to respect taxpayers. To this end, we would expect the region to put in place measures to protect front-line services and ensure there are no disruptions in any service.

Speaker, you'll hear more about this from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs of Housing. But our government is committed to putting into place a fair process through the transition board. This would help ensure employment matters are addressed in a fair and equitable way. Where possible, we would also expect that the transition board would bring forward solutions that leverage the existing expertise in the region and that would meet the growing needs of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.

That's why our fourth principle guiding Peel region's dissolution process involves an appreciation of the importance of value for money and of high-quality services efficiently delivered for the people of this region. Now, you may be wondering, Speaker, if single-tier status can help these municipalities better cope with growth pressures and deliver services more efficiently. Then why have a two-tier structure at all? How did we get here?

As I mentioned during second reading, growth pressures are not new to Peel, nor are municipal restructurings which have been used to solve those pressures. When it was created in 1852, Peel was originally part of the united counties of York, Peel and Ontario. After Ontario county separated two years later, the joined counties of York and Peel were administered by the city of Toronto. These counties separated in 1867, when growth made it beneficial for them to do so.

As a stand-alone county, Peel was made up of the five townships of Toronto, Chinguacousy, Toronto Gore, Albion and Caledon. The townships elected councils and took care of public utilities such as water and electricity, roads, libraries, assessment of properties, and firefighting and policing services. At the county level, the government took care of services and infrastructure services like a health unit, a home for the aged, a jail and courthouse, county roads and bridges and, in case of a natural disaster or war, the emergency operational plan.

After World War II, industrial and population growth put great pressure on many of Ontario's county governments. This gave rise to the regional government model as more regional co-operation was put forward as a solution. Parts of York county formed the first regional government in 1953 with the creation of the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. It was made up of the city of Toronto and the old townships of East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough and York. It also included several villages and towns that had been separated from these townships. Over 20 years later, in 1974, the old county of Peel was dissolved and replaced with the region of Peel as the upper-tier municipality.

At this time, Peel's population had grown to approximately 335,000 people. The previous five townships of Peel county, along with their respective towns and villages, became the cities of Mississauga and Brampton and the

town of Caledon. A key component of the new structure was the sharing of regional assets.

This, then, gave the new regional government more responsibilities than the former county government. By 2015, upper-tier responsibilities included public health, water and waste management, long-term-care facilities, paramedic services and policing. The lower-tier municipalities looked after local affairs, such as parks and recreation, tax collection, libraries and firefighting.

Peel continued to grow swiftly. By 2014, 40 years after its creation, approximately 1.35 million people called the region home.

As you can appreciate, Speaker, disentangling the regional structure will require careful consideration and close partnership with all municipalities. We feel the transition can be a smooth one that we can accomplish in about 18 months. If passed, our proposed legislation would include expertise and time needed for an orderly, structured transition.

Speaker, following this stage, our government would bring forward future legislation that reflects the transition board's recommendations. We expect that these recommendations will give us yet another chance to make sure the transition happens in a way that is timely, effective and supports local implementation by January 1, 2025.

Which brings me to our fifth and final principle. Where municipalities share assets and services, they should be treated in a fair and equitable manner—a manner whereby all residents, regardless of where they live, are respected and have access to excellent services. Let me say that again, Speaker: Our government expects Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to put the public interest first and foremost and ensure that front-line services are protected and that service levels are maintained for all residents.

Speaker, the Hazel McCallion Act, if passed, also gives the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing the authority to make orders with respect to certain municipal decisions, if necessary.

In conclusion, in reflecting these five principles, our bill proposes what is needed to help achieve these objectives. For our shared goals of thriving, independent cities that serve their residents' needs and plan for growth, we must proceed with wisdom, compassion and firm resolve. If passed, dissolving the region of Peel and creating three strong single-tier municipalities would position Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to better tackle their unique housing challenges in ways that work for their community, while at the same time giving some of our largest and fastest-growing municipalities the tools they need to build homes and the housing options that they can leverage, not just for current residents but for those still to come.

1520

I want to thank you, and I now would like to give the floor to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? I recognize the member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker, and it's wonderful to rise to speak on the Hazel McCallion Act this afternoon. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

and the Associate Minister of Housing have said, this bill is about supporting housing and helping ensure our cities, towns and rural communities grow with a mix of ownership and rental housing types that meet the needs of all Ontarians.

Ontario is a prosperous and growing province; the best place in the world to call home. Yet we recognize that for far too many Ontarians, finding the right place to call home is all too challenging. The housing supply shortage affects all Ontarians: rural, urban and suburban; north and south; young and old. To address the supply issues, our government has set an ambitious goal of 1.5 million homes for Ontario by 2031.

Everyone has a role to play in addressing the housing crisis, including our municipal partners, and our government has committed to ensuring all communities have the support they need to prosper. The bill before this place today proposes to dissolve the region of Peel and create three independent and vibrant single-tier municipalities: Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. The proposed changes, if passed, could help prepare these municipalities for future growth that is poised to happen in the years ahead. Addressing local barriers that are making it difficult to build housing is a key priority, and providing Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon with the necessary tools to build homes for their current residents and future residents. This is the important work our government is undertaking to build 1.5 million new homes across Ontario by 2031.

Speaker, it's worth noting that the municipalities in the region of Peel are some of the largest and fastest growing municipalities, both in Ontario and also in Canada. Our proposed changes would help position Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to better deliver on their obligations and priorities, because these three communities are currently home to nearly 1.5 million people, and that's projected to grow to two million people by 2041. That's half a million more residents in less than 20 years.

The proposed changes are aimed at reducing red tape and streamlining planning, reducing duplications that result from two layers of government. The Hazel McCallion Act, if passed, would allow for faster, better and more integrated decisions and services, ultimately giving Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon the tools and autonomy they want and need to deliver on shared commitments to build more housing faster.

Speaker, with this in mind, I want to highlight that speeding up planning approval is a key aspect to get more homes built right across Ontario. For instance, our government is proposing to streamline planning by integrating the provincial policy statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe into a single provincial planning statement. This would simplify existing policies and refocus them on achieving housing outcomes. For example, it would provide specific direction to large and fast-growing municipalities, such as Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, on increasing housing supply. We would also want 29 of Ontario's largest and fastest-growing municipalities, like Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, to be required to plan for growth in major transit station areas and other strategic growth areas—for

example, their downtown areas. Helping ensure density in these areas is part of our plan to address housing while focusing on Ontario's transit needs.

In our proposed provincial planning statement, all municipalities would be required to provide a range and mix of housing options, helping ensure the appropriate planning policies are in place to both support and protect our agricultural land, recognizing that one size does not fit all when it comes to planning policies around communities. Under our proposed PPS, municipalities would be required to support Ontario's agri-food network by designating prime agriculture land and specialty crop areas. Municipalities would be encouraged to adopt a watershed planning approach to protect water resources, and access to aggregate resources close to market—such as stone, sand and gravel—would be protected. We would also propose to create consistent requirements for aggregate extraction to ensure fairness between expansion and new applications. This would help municipalities, including the newly empowered Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, to get more homes built for the residents.

Speaker, we understand that municipalities have different options and face unique constraints, and we recognize the need for flexible considerations. As part of More Homes for Everyone, our third housing supply action plan, last spring, we made changes to the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act to require municipalities to gradually refund fees for zoning bylaw applications and site plan applications in certain cases. Those cases are where a municipality was unable to make a decision within a specified time period. However, in order to give municipalities time to adjust, we listened to our municipal partners at AMO and ROMA and their feedback and have postponed that start date from January 1 to July 1 of this year, if Bill 97 is passed, as we were debating earlier this afternoon.

We also heard from municipal representatives that they need to be able to address the type of concerns that may come up in a site plan review for some smaller projects, for example, small projects like housing near train tracks. To help deal with their concerns, we're proposing to allow municipalities to use site plan control for residential projects with 10 or fewer units in specified circumstances. If this legislation passes, we intend to take the same approach with Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, appointing a transition board to understand and discuss each municipality's unique concerns.

But before I speak about the transition boards, Speaker—I know many people want to hear about the exciting work that the proposed transition board will do—I'd like to take a few minutes to describe Ontario's municipal government structures and walk members through the impact of our proposed changes to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon into single-tier municipalities.

In Ontario, the Municipal Act, 2001, defines three types of municipalities: single-tier, upper-tier and lower-tier. Presently, the region of Peel is an example of an upper-tier municipality, and Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are lower-tier municipalities. Currently, these four municipalities operate together in a two-tier system. When we talk

about municipalities, it is necessary to point out that the official name of a municipality may include a term such as township, village, town or city, similar to my own riding, where that occurs often. Upper-tier municipalities often use terms such as county or region in their official names. However, to be clear, these terms usually do not determine legal powers and responsibilities of a municipality. The responsibilities and powers of each type of municipality are set out under the Municipal Act, with different levels of municipalities responsible for delivering different services.

Under the Municipal Act, the roles and responsibilities for the three types of municipalities in Ontario are standardized and clarified. An upper-tier municipality is usually responsible for services such as arterial roads, policing, sewer, water systems, waste disposal, and health and social services. Lower-tier municipalities are usually responsible for services such as local roads, fire protection, recreation and local land use planning. Municipalities in a two-tier system, with upper-tier and lower-tier governments, can work together to agree upon and change the division of responsibilities between tiers. All these different types of municipalities—single-tier, upper-tier and lower-tier—have municipal councils, and it's lower-tier municipalities that are responsible for collecting taxes for their own purposes for the associated upper tier and for the school boards.

This is a brief description of how a two-tier system works. On the other hand, a single-tier municipality is responsible for all local services. That usually includes everything from roads and transit to policing and fire protection, from sewer and waste water systems to garbage collection and waste disposal, and from health and social services to recreation and land use planning. One example of a single-tier municipality is obviously the city of the Toronto. Single-tier municipalities like Toronto are responsible for collecting taxes for their own purposes and for school boards.

1530

If passed, our proposed Hazel McCallion Act would begin the process to dissolve the region of Peel and establish Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon as single-tier municipalities, changing their responsibilities and powers and allowing them to serve their residents effectively into the future. I'd like to point out that this is a two-step process. Should the proposed Hazel McCallion Act pass, we intend to bring a second bill before this House that, if passed, would complete the dissolution process and bring the proposed changes into effect on January 1, 2025.

If the folks at home are still with me after that riveting review of the Municipal Act, I want to speak about the transition board now, Speaker. We recognize that a change of this magnitude cannot be rushed, and our government is taking time to get things right. As I alluded to earlier, if this bill is passed, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would appoint a transition board to help facilitate this change in local government structure for Peel region,

Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. Appointing a transition board is important to help ensure that the dissolution process is designed from the outset to help ensure fairness, respect for taxpayers and preserve the excellent front-line services these large and fast-growing communities depend on.

The transition board would have up to five members, or a number prescribed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It would include a diverse range of individuals to help ensure a smooth transition and bring certainty to the employees and residents of the region of Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. The transition board would include individuals with diverse expertise and experience in a range of areas, such as municipal operations, housing, service delivery, finance and labour relations. If the proposed Hazel McCallion Act is passed, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would work quickly to make the appointment so the transition board could begin their important work as soon as possible.

The board would have two main responsibilities. First, it would provide advice to the province on a range of restructuring matters, including service delivery, allocation of assets and liabilities, labour relations and long-term financial stability, among many others. Second, the transition board would oversee the financial affairs of Peel and its lower-tier municipalities—Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon—to help ensure prudent financial stewardship. This process would help ensure a stable and fair outcome that respects taxpayers while also supporting the needs of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. Lastly, the cost of the transition board would be shared in a fair and transparent way among the four municipalities involved: the region of Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. This is in line with past practices used in municipal restructuring in Ontario.

Once the transition board is in place, their recommendations to the government would be due next year. We want to make sure the board members have sufficient time to work closely with the four municipalities and provide expert advice to our government. The transition board's recommendations would inform subsequent legislation—again, if passed—and would address any outstanding restructuring matters and enable an orderly transition by January 1, 2025. And the transition board would be disbanded on January 31, 2025, or at a date prescribed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I also want to acknowledge that the work of the transition board would include a range of sensitive matters such as labour relations and contractual obligations in the respective municipalities. As with labour relations and contractual matters, the transition board's advice would touch on a range of sensitive matters, and our government does not intend to make their findings public. However, Speaker, I want to emphasize that if this proposed legislation is passed, the instructions to the transition board and the government's intentions throughout the entire process is very clear: There should be no disruption to front-line services. The nearly 1.5 million residents of Peel should

feel confident that the services they rely on every day will continue throughout the transition period.

Once the transition board is appointed, it would work with Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon on a transition plan, including any changes to the decision-making process in the lead-up to the proposed dissolution on January 1, 2025. The proposed time frame for dissolution has been set for January 1, 2025, to allow the transition board and the four municipalities enough time to work through these complex issues and ensure the services Peel residents rely on are protected.

The transition board would be tasked with supporting sound decision-making and helping ensure all impacted municipalities are treated fairly during the dissolution process. Our top priority is to respect the taxpayer and ensure that local governments continue to deliver throughout the transition process.

I am extremely proud of the work our ministry is doing to ensure that communities are served by strong and efficient local governments and that Ontarians can find housing that meets their needs and budget. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing mentioned in his remarks, because of actions that our government is taking through our various housing supply action plans under the last mandate and now this mandate, we have seen record starts in the number of homes. In 2022, we saw 96,000 home starts, the single largest increase since the 1990s. We also saw 15,000 rental starts in that same year, which is great to see—the highest ever, Speaker.

We're continuing to build on those important aspects with this piece of legislation. We will continue to deliver on our ambitious agenda. We continue to find ways to support local governments, because they are our partners in achieving this ambitious goal to build 1.5 million new homes by 2031, ensuring that our municipal partners across Ontario build vibrant, resilient and sustainable communities.

The proposed Hazel McCallion Act, if passed by this House, would allow the city of Mississauga, the city of Brampton and the town of Caledon to become separate single-tier municipalities on January 1, 2025. The proposed changes would help encourage greater efficiencies in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon and prepare these large, fast-growing municipalities for the future, setting them up for future success for many years to come, allowing them to thrive and creating more housing to address the housing supply crisis.

As I alluded to earlier in my remarks, our legislation continues to see results. I know it has been referenced in the debate on Bill 97 on the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario report—RPCO for the acronym—and in that report itself, as many members of the opposition like to quote, it highlights actions we have taken under Bill 23. Our as-of-right changes will see 150,000 new home starts in the province of Ontario because of our actions and our government.

I know, under the leadership of our Premier and the team at municipal affairs and housing, we will continue to

build upon those past successes, ensuring that communities like Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon remain great places for individuals who are coming to Ontario or who may already be here to live, work and play in our great cities and towns across Ontario, ensuring that we see growth not only in the greater Golden Horseshoe but in also in my riding, Perth–Wellington, as well, and up north and in all communities, rural, urban and suburban, ensuring that they are even better places to work and to call home.

I know I am proud to stand with a government that is fighting for the next generation to ensure they have the ability for home ownership.

With that, thank you very much.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the minister, associate minister and member from Perth–Wellington for their comments. A question for the minister, not confrontational at all: The minister knows I have asked a number of times about making municipalities whole and that whole conversation with respect to revenue losses from Bill 23. It is not hard to imagine, in a situation like this with a dissolution project of this size, that that could complicate matters. I am wondering if the minister would commit to looking at those municipalities first and making them whole before it further confuses the process that is about to be embarked on.

Hon. Steve Clark: We were asked this question at the press conference with the three mayors. If this bill passes, the transition board is going to be critical. I made my commitment to the folks who live in Peel. It doesn't matter whether you live in Mississauga or Brampton or Caledon, you need to have the comfort to know that the great front-line services you are having today will continue on January 1, 2025.

In terms of service delivery levels and some of those other issues, it is going to be critical that the three mayors commit to this process. This is a really important process. We need them to stick with us and roll up their sleeves, and let's get it done. The transition board is going to be critical to deal with those liabilities and assets that will be the basis of that financial discussion.

Great question.

1540

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

Mr. Rob Flack: I'll address my question to the Associate Minister of Housing, because she is the member where my parents live.

I grew up in Streetsville, and I remember when it was 6,000 people. I remember when regional government came into play and became part of Mississauga, which was a unique time in our province's history and Streetsville's history.

Our family also knew Mayor Hazel McCallion and her husband, Sam. Although they were older, I went to school with many of their kids. I actually worked on her first

mayor's campaign when she became mayor of Mississauga.

My parents are still alive. They've lived in Streetsville—now Mississauga—for 60 years. Jim and Esther Flack are 91 and 87. I get calls every morning from my father: "Just tell me exactly how this is going to work and what's going to change." He obviously doesn't believe me, so I'll ask—through you, Speaker—the associate minister: Can you allay any concerns they have? How is the transition board going to help Streetsville, Mississauga, maintain its strong reputation in the province?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the former great constituent of Mississauga–Streetsville for the question.

What's important, if this bill passes, is that we are putting together a transition board, and that transition board's responsibility will be to make sure that it will be as seamless as possible to make sure that the residents of Peel—Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon—are able to have no disruption of services whatsoever. The garbage will be picked up. The toilets will be able to be flushed. I think that's pretty important. Policing will continue. Paramedics will continue.

I've had many conversations already since we introduced this bill with police officers, with paramedics and others to make sure that there will be no disruption of any of the services. That is what we will make sure the transition board's job is to do—fairness for all of the municipalities involved.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this is a very unprecedented type of legislation, and the dissolution of this legislation basically doesn't allow for committee work. There are no public hearings, for example. It does not ensure municipal workers are being heard as part of the process. It doesn't ensure the voices of each municipality are represented fairly on the transition board. It doesn't provide for transparency, accountability on how decisions are made.

We know that there have been many pieces of legislation that have had unintended consequences in this Legislature.

So my question is: In the process of creating this Bill 112, why does the government leave out crucial representation of the people affected, who live in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, including workers—so the dissolution process and outcomes are fair and transparent, in order to avoid any unintended consequences, just like the bill we just saw today, Bill 97?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I don't know if the member opposite saw the press conference that I had with the three mayors, but they're committed to the process. They've had election campaigns in Mississauga on this issue. This is not something that is new. People who live in Mississauga and Brampton and Caledon are well aware that this issue has been on the table and on the radar.

As I answered to your colleague, the whole point of a transition board, if the bill passes, is to deal with those financial matters. I said it to your colleague; I'll say it to

you: Those three mayors have got to roll up their sleeves and work with the transition board to ensure that that is smooth so that on January 1, 2025, we get this right.

I took a significant portion of my speech to talk about the late Hazel McCallion. This is something that she championed. They had polling on this. They had consultants reports on the costs. This is big stuff.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: To the minister again, if I may: I was definitely here when I saw the mayors as guests in the House—Mayor Crombie of Mississauga, Mayor Brown of Brampton and the mayor of Caledon. I believe the Peel region chair was here as well. And then, of course, every member of the Peel caucus voted to support this bill, thus far.

My question is, then: With the most recent question from the member opposite and some criticism about pushing or rushing this through or a lack of consultation, why is this not coming into effect immediately? Why is this coming into effect, if passed, on January 1, 2025?

Hon. Steve Clark: That's a really good question. I want to make sure that people in the House understand that Peel region is going to continue until January 1, 2025. We made a commitment, as a government, that those fantastic front-line services that Peel citizens rely on are protected and are maintained, or even strengthened, by part of this process. The transition board has got a big job because they have to shine that daylight onto the finances of how we accomplish this as a government. So that's why we need until January 1, 2025, to do it and that's why the transition board, if the bill passes, is so very important to be able to work with those mayors and councils and administrations—not just Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, but also at Peel region, because we've got to get this right and we have to have that commitment from our municipal partners to do the work that needs to be done.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the MPP for Perth—Wellington. In the debate earlier, you talked about the loss of farmland in Ontario. We had a press conference here for the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario and there was representation from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance. There was also representation from the National Farmers Union. In fact, the National Farmers Union's quote was: "Ontario's productive farmland is a scarce resource, making up less than 5% of the land in the province."

Opening up farmland to development is a concern for those folks, is a concern for us and is a concern for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. In your debate, I was really quite taken aback that you would question the 319-acres-a-day loss that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture put forward, because muddling those numbers is not helpful as we try to build houses and protect farmland at the same time.

Mr. Matthew Rae: We're debating Bill 112 right now—

Hon. Steve Clark: She might have missed it; Bill 97 is closed.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, Bill 97 is closed, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing mentioned.

I referenced a statistic—the same statistic: The land in crops per acre has remained the same from 2016 to 2021. The yield has gone up, as my colleague also mentioned. But our government is focused on getting housing built in a variety of communities, including rural Ontario and urban centres, and ensuring that we encourage those constructions of transit areas in rural Ontario. There are transit areas in rural Ontario; I think of transit areas in Stratford. Our government brought the GO to Stratford and it's been very popular, and ensuring that we build in those areas and ensuring that we're part of a government that says yes to development and not a government or an opposition that is BANANAs.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 112, the Hazel McCallion Act, at third reading. I want to start out, actually, on a lighter note, if you'll allow me. It's Italian Heritage Month. I married into a wonderful Italian family and it's actually my wedding anniversary this weekend.

Applause.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you. I have a lot of Italians in my riding in Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne and I want to wish them all a happy Italian Heritage Month. I'll be travelling to Italy not soon enough—pretty soon—and one of my wife's cousins, Serena, actually follows politics at Queen's Park, so I want to tell her that we'll be there soon to see the family in Macchiagodena and Bojano. We look forward to that.

We're here after time allocation was passed. On Monday, the government decided to skip the committee process and public consultations entirely for this bill. I want to be perfectly clear on this and say it very, very clearly and on the record that the intention of the official opposition was to support this bill and send it to committee so that the public, including stakeholders, workers, residents, the people who will be affected by this legislation, could have their voices heard and we could discuss changes and additions to the bill that would have improved it and increased the level of public trust in the process.

1550

Once this government closed down debate and signalled that there would be no committee hearings and no consultation, we had no choice but to vote no to this rushed and, in our opinion, poorly communicated bill that will affect 1.5 million people and have tremendous effects on services, workers and the environment.

I listened to some of the closure debate. I heard the government House leader—and I respect the government House leader's speaking abilities. He certainly knows how to wind things up in the Legislature. But I really was surprised when I heard that he was suggesting that folks going back to their riding during a constituency break somehow passes as consultation. I'm not sure; maybe he was bumping into somebody in the grocery store in his riding and he said, "Hey, what do you think of dissolving

the region of Peel?” And maybe they said, “Sure, why not?” And he said, “Okay, fine then.” And he thinks that qualifies as consultation. That’s what he seemed to be saying. It was bizarre.

Then he said what was kind of repeated by the minister. He said, “You’re in favour of it or you’re not. People have been talking about it for a long time, so basically, what’s there to talk about?” That’s what we’ve come to in terms of consulting the public. It’s really quite disturbing.

There will be no public hearings or opportunities to improve this bill. The government is demonstrating once again that it doesn’t care what the public thinks, doesn’t care what workers think, doesn’t care what municipal governments think and is not interested in the due process that we can take advantage of in this House to make sure that the voices of people are heard, whether we agree with those voices or not.

I know many people would have liked their voices to be heard. Yesterday, I read into the record a petition that I received from a number of constituents. They went out, and I was quite impressed—well over 100 or 150 signatures from people mostly in Brampton, but also Mississauga, some in Toronto. They wrote a very well-researched petition in a very short period of time. The preamble was long enough that I couldn’t actually read it into the record, but I want to make sure that their voices are heard because this is a group that absolutely would have appeared at committee if we gave residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to have their voices heard. This is from a group led by Milan Slavic from Brampton.

It reads:

“Whereas it was recently announced by the government of Ontario that the region of Peel, an upper-tier municipality, will be dissolved to create the independent municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon, we call on the government of Ontario to stop and abandon this legislation and maintain the status quo regarding municipal governance in the region of Peel.”

Whether we like it or not, whether this side of the House agrees with it or not, or the government does, this is legitimate feedback from some very thoughtful constituents who took the time to go out and gather hundreds of signatures and would have liked their voices to be heard. Whether the government agrees or whether the opposition agrees, they should have had their voices heard.

They say, “The region of Peel was created in 1974 to deliver municipal services to the cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon as a single service provider. According to the region of Peel 2023 budget, these services today include, ‘public health, seniors’ services, paramedic services, housing support, income support, child care, community investment, transportation (including a transit service for people with mobility issues), waste management, land use planning, water and waste water, business services, legislative services, information and technology, real property and asset management, and a heritage, art and culture facility.’

“Due to the diversity of services delivered by the region of Peel, the municipality has amassed a budgeted staff of

5,065” full-time equivalents “as of 2022.... In addition, the total number of workers at the region has been quoted at 7,000 following” the Premier’s “dissolution announcement.

“According to a Deloitte report, which examined the financial impacts of changing the municipal governance structure in the region of Peel, dissolving the region ‘will ultimately require additional annual tax levies of’” over \$1 billion “that will need to be raised when compared to the status quo over the next 10 years.” That’s from the Deloitte report. “In fact, Deloitte LLP notes that ‘by the 10th year, it is expected that dissolution and amalgamation will require more taxes to be raised than the status quo’.

“The problem is simple: not all of the region of Peel’s services overlap with those delivered by the cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon. Simply, this means that services currently provided by the region of Peel will need to be duplicated, resulting in higher overall taxpayer costs without improvement to the services the taxpayers receive. Deloitte LLP notes, ‘The research we have conducted indicates that dissolution is not usually done with the objective of financial savings for one municipality over another, as it is intentionally moving away from the desired economies of scale that a regional government should provide’. Ultimately, dissolution will cost the taxpayers of the region of Peel more in the long run than maintaining the current municipal governance structure.

“On the other hand, Deloitte LLP found that making the region of Peel more efficient without a change in government ‘will generate tax savings of \$261 million [that] if realized ... will reduce tax requirements when compared to the status quo over the next 10 years’.”

These residents say, “The math is clear: dismantling the region of Peel will cost the residents of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon” \$1 billion “in the long run. This is in addition to the loss of potential savings of making the region of Peel more efficient, estimated at \$261 million.

“Furthermore, property taxes are not the only bills that taxpayers will see increased. Deloitte LLP further projects water and waste water rates in Mississauga and Caledon under one cost scenario will increase, with water rates in Caledon increasing by as much as 70%.

“Dismantling the region of Peel to fulfill Doug Ford’s promise of creating an independent Mississauga will not come at the expense of” the Premier, “who is not a resident of Peel region. Property tax, water and waste water rate increases will be passed onto the taxpayer, already struggling with a cost-of-living crisis brought on by high inflation.

“The costs are not the only concern we the taxpayers have. The 7,000 employees of the region of Peel have delivered exceptional services to the residents of Peel over that past 50 years. Should the region of Peel be dismantled, not only will 7,000 employees lose their jobs, but we will lose the knowledge and expertise they have acquired in delivering our municipal services. Given the unlikely scenario that all 7,000 region of Peel employees are offered employment in the expanded cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon, we risk seeing interruptions to municipal services as the newly independent cities lack the

expertise of the employees of the region of Peel to continue delivering the municipal services that the taxpayers of Peel currently receive. The risk of service interruptions and the expertise of the region of Peel's employees begs the question, what will happen to these 7,000 employees in" the Premier's "plan to dissolve the region of Peel?"

"Dismantling the region of Peel is inefficient, ineffective, and costly to the taxpayers of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. Cost increases and the potential for municipal service disruptions do not outweigh the business case put forward by" the Premier "or the city of Mississauga for the region of Peel to be dissolved. In fact, most of the savings quoted by the city of Mississauga will be reduced due to the upfront costs of dissolving the region.

"The taxpayers of Peel deserve the highest-quality services, for the lowest cost. We must accept nothing less from our provincial government than to abandon this plan to dismantle the region of Peel."

And they have, of course, referenced the Deloitte report from March 2019, Financial Impact Analysis of Service Delivery Models: The Regional Municipality of Peel, as well as media sources and the region of Peel's budget.

I know that was a lot to read, Speaker, but I wanted to get that on the record because they can't go to committee. I thought it was very well put, well researched, an intelligently-put-forward opinion, one of many that we would have heard if we had given the public the opportunity over the next couple of months to have their say over such a large project. Many of them are coming forward, including CUPE representatives, who represent over 4,000 in Peel.

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And since this government won't take the time to listen to workers, I'm going to use another part of my speaking time to read out a press release that was just issued by CUPE Ontario. They're just having their convention here, just down the road. I'm sure there's a lot of conversation about this legislation that will affect thousands of their members when they have no recourse or input into the process.

"The union says that it will advocate for better services and workers' rights as Conservatives proceed with dissolution of Peel region.

"At a time when the people of Ontario are concerned about an affordability crisis, it's hard to understand why the Ford Conservatives are prioritizing municipal restructuring, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

"As elsewhere in Ontario, residents in Peel care about the government's impact on the quality of their lives," says Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario. 'People care about affordable housing, they care about protecting public health care, they care about the quality of public transit in their cities. They don't care about what level of government is providing services.'

"Hahn says that as the province moves ahead with restructuring, the union will work with its allies to ensure that Peel residents continue to access quality public services provided by public sector workers and thwart any attempts towards privatization.

"Salil Arya, the president of CUPE 966, which represents 2,000 members employed by Peel region, says he is worried that workers were not factored into the decision to dissolve the region, at a time when investments in workers (and by extension services) are essential.

"Peel residents need better and more effective delivery of public services, not less,' he says, citing the example of precarious workers in Peel long-term-care homes affecting quality of care for seniors. 'It's the perfect example of workers being left out of the conversation. And without workers, you can't provide services.'

"Hahn notes that politicians been focused too heavily on taxation when discussing the breakup of Peel, without addressing the complementary piece on quality of services.

"Politicians like to preach the gospel of lower taxes without explaining how that impacts people,' he says. 'No one wants to pay for health care with their credit card. Similarly, no one wants a lower tax bill at the expense of poor road maintenance, or not having an ambulance arrive in time.'

"Hahn and Arya say that workers must have a seat at the table when the province appoints a transition board to oversee the dissolution process." CUPE wants a member on that panel.

"Ford likes to say that he respects front-line workers. If that's the case, he should appoint union representatives to the transition board,' Hahn says. 'It's workers who provide the services that Peel residents rely on, from waste collection and infrastructure maintenance to the delivery of social services. And they must have a say in how these services are managed in the future.'"

That is CUPE Ontario, who clearly would have been one of the presenters to committee if the government had not shut the committee process down, so I'm very happy to get their words into the record here.

As I mentioned in my second-reading lead, I spoke the other day with Salil Arya, who is the president of CUPE 966, over the weekend. What the president told me after speaking to his members over the weekend was that they all remember the Premier going around during COVID and calling them heroes. They actually lost several members to COVID. Long-term-care workers are still dealing with COVID to this day in these long-term-care homes, and they're disappointed. The president wanted me to say that they're disappointed and they're concerned about what will happen to the workers, many of whom are women. The cause of their concern is the complete lack of consultation.

Now, as I pointed out a couple of days ago, there's nothing to ensure that the board fairly represents the interests of the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. If he wants, the minister can stack the board with whoever he wants. The word "consult" is completely missing from the bill. There's nothing requiring the Ford government or the transition board to consult with Peel residents or businesses at all about a restructuring process that will have a huge and as-yet unknown impact on their taxes and services. And there's no requirement for the Ford government to publish the findings of the board with

respect to the costs, benefits and risks of various restructuring options prior to making a decision.

Public service workers have crucial knowledge of municipal operations and have earned a seat at the table in any discussions guiding a migration of services to constituent municipalities. Yesterday morning in question period—or it was the day before—I asked the minister, “Will the minister commit to putting a CUPE worker representative on the transition board, as requested by the Canadian Union of Public Employees?” The House leader answered the question, responded and actually gave a straight answer. He said, “We are not going to do that.” And that is considered by those workers and by the union a slap in the face to the public sector workers in Peel.

It didn’t take much time for me to reach out to speak to union leaders and to workers. I don’t know why the government didn’t do that prior to putting legislation forward. Legislation of this size and scope being pushed through this quickly creates great anxiety among workers and citizens and will damage the public trust.

This project is a massive undertaking. People have a lot of valid and very important questions, and now, without a committee process, the public won’t get a chance to have those questions addressed. In particular, Peel regional workers and residents of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are concerned about jobs and public services, and those calls are starting to come in. In question period, I also asked the minister, “Will the minister commit that there will be no disruption to public services and assure citizens and workers that there will be no privatization or contracting out of public services?” That is something the minister could do; he could reassure folks. The Associate Minister of Housing didn’t answer the question.

CUPE president Fred Hahn asked for direct discussions and a meeting and wrote to the government—I don’t think that they’ve even received a response: “Your government has embarked on a large and transformative project with Bill 112, the Hazel McCallion ... Act. The Canadian Union of Public Employees ... is a key actor in the region with several local unions representing thousands of workers that provide exceptional services to residents. We are requesting that CUPE and its locals be included in formal consultation on this legislation and offer our expertise for this reform.

“CUPE has the in-depth granular knowledge of the region that would be an asset to the transition board that will be set up to execute any migration of services to constituent municipalities. Including a CUPE representative on the transition board would give the government access to decades of knowledge on municipal reform, not the least of which is how to harmonize workers’ collective agreements which straddle across the three municipalities. An appointment to the board would channel one of the region’s greatest assets—its workers—to this complex process.”

So not only is this government refusing to give workers a seat at the table; they didn’t even have the chance to present their concerns to the government in committee process. And that is a shame.

Regarding other regions, which I’ll touch on for a moment, according to the reporting by Trillium, “Ontario also said it will appoint ‘regional facilitators’ in the coming weeks for the upper-tier municipalities of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Simcoe, Waterloo and York. Their job will be to find out whether the municipalities that make up those regions are able to stand on their own. ‘These facilitators will be tasked with reviewing whether the upper-tier government continues to be relevant to the needs of its communities or whether the lower-tier municipalities are mature enough to pursue dissolution’ ... and it’s unclear who those facilitators will be.”

Again, I’d like to reiterate that certainly myself and the folks on this side of the Legislature would not suggest that dissolution of the region is necessarily a good or a bad thing. We were engaged in the process, and as I mentioned, we were voting in favour at second reading of this bill so that we could go to committee and we could hear people like the folks who sent in the petition, folks like CUPE, folks like the residents of these communities who are not going to have a chance to do that.

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I think we all know that, across the province, different regions have different circumstances, different demographics and different histories. However, in any agreement or any plan, there has to be an element of public trust to move forward with it. You can’t build trust with the public if workers are not being consulted and their voices are being ignored by skipping the committee process entirely. Municipalities in Ontario and municipal politicians and associations are not being consulted.

It would have been great to hear in committee from AMO. The minister mentioned them in his comments but he shut down a committee process where we could have heard from AMO. They’re very representative folks who would have consulted with those municipalities, would have gathered information that those municipalities may have not felt comfortable telling the government. That’s one of their jobs, to come to committee, as they often do, and to give us the straight goods on what their members think of legislation. We are not going to get the benefit of that, certainly not before voting on this.

The government has developed a pattern of rushing to pass bills without proper consultation, then having to embarrassingly backtrack, which they have done a number of times. When I spoke to this bill on second reading on Monday, I mentioned the fierce opposition from farmers over Bill 97 and the proposed provincial planning statement, another example of moving forward too quickly. When we do have committees, some of people who present describe it as the “moving fast and breaking things” approach to governing.

The signatories on the letter to the government included the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—many of those folks were here today, as was mentioned, with David Crombie—the National Farmers Union Ontario, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission, the Beef Farmers of Ontario—these are all folks who are concerned

about how quickly this government is moving on some of this legislation, without having all the facts—Ontario Pork, the Egg Farmers of Ontario, the Veal Farmers of Ontario, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Farmland Trust, the Turkey Farmers of Ontario and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. These are folks who are very, very concerned about not only the speed with which the government is moving forward with legislation that is not clearly thought out, but with the over 300 acres per day of farmland that we're losing in Ontario.

Just on Tuesday, the Canadian Press and the Globe and Mail reported, "Ontario Government Abandons Proposal to Sever Farmland Lots in Response to Opposition." On the one hand, I'm criticizing the government for moving too quickly, but kudos for pausing and changing course. I wish they did that more often, but that's what the committee process is for, so that stakeholders and concerned folks can come and present their concerns to the government, the opposition gets a chance to put forward changes to be considered by the government, and we can make the bill better. That's the whole process. Skipping that process by saying that "I talked to folks in my riding" or "there's been enough talk about this already" just isn't good enough for people in Ontario.

Ontarians deserve a government that actually consults with the experts on the ground first, whether they be farmers or public workers in Peel. Instead of the government's act first, think later approach, that's what they should be doing. It's clear the government has not done their homework on this bill.

A Toronto Star editorial had an excellent analysis of the bill. They stated, "The consequences of a botched dissolution in Peel Region are very real, certain to impact property tax bills for years to come, perhaps even interrupt the provision of vital services. It's incumbent then that all the players get this right and ensure the divorce is amicable and orderly."

They said: "Done right, it could launch each municipality on an independent future. Done wrong and this political break-up could saddle each of them—and their residents—with a costly financial hangover."

A 2019 report done for Peel region by Deloitte, which I've already referenced, on government options pointedly noted that dissolving a regional government is a rare occurrence, nor is it done with the goal of saving money, since it is "intentionally moving away from desired economies of scale" provided by regional government, which is why regional governments were created in the first place.

It also noted that under such a scenario, "significant effort will be required amongst the local municipalities to negotiate how assets and services should be divided." That sets the stage for what is sure to be difficult negotiations to divvy up regional assets and liabilities and to sort out how services now provided regionally, such as waste management, housing services and maintenance of arterial roads, will be delivered in the future. Already, Mississauga and Brampton disagree on how to apportion policing costs.

I'll mention that I just asked the minister, in response to his comments, if he was willing to speed up his analysis of

how much money is owed to Mississauga and Brampton from the revenue shortfall from Bill 23, because it's not hard to imagine—in the case of Brampton, I believe an 80% tax increase was the calculation that that municipality and their budget folks came up with. To try to create or carry through with a dissolution project of this size when that much uncertainty surrounds the budget of future service cuts and tax increases I think is troublesome.

Unfortunately, the minister wouldn't answer. I was hoping that he'd say, "Yes, we're looking at that. That's something that could really complicate this process and create more stress and anxiety. We're going to look at Peel, and we're going to look at Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon first in terms of making them whole from their losses from Bill 23." But he didn't do that.

Back to this kind of brewing situation between Mississauga and Brampton: Global News reported, "Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie has said independence would save her municipality \$1 billion over 10 years because her city has been the 'cash cow' of the region, funding Brampton's growth.

"I look forward to opening our books so everyone can see for themselves the status of our finances and our reserves and what exactly Mississauga paid for the past 50 years towards the growth and the development of not only Mississauga but Brampton and Caledon' ...

"Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown has said he would welcome efforts to remove duplication, but believes Mississauga would owe Brampton under any separation because of all the Peel infrastructure that is in Mississauga.

"'Brampton would never accept our residents being taken advantage of,' he said....

"'Every single cent we put in to build that infrastructure in Mississauga my residents expect back because the infrastructure has been used up, the servicing capacity has been used up. It's like going for dinner and having one party eat the entire plate, give you the empty plate, and say, 'Let's share it now.'"

Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said she didn't want to leave Peel region, and described Caledon as the child of the Peel divorce, given its small size: "The region has served Caledon extremely well, so it isn't something that we wanted, but at the end of the day, we're here with this decision today, and I think that we just have to work with it." I think we all know that doesn't sound like someone who is requesting the dissolution of Peel. Clearly, they're the small actor here—in terms of population, not in terms of land. I would suggest that that land, including farmland, including land protected by the Oak Ridges moraine act, the escarpment act and greenbelt areas, is something that folks are very, very concerned with, because while Caledon may only have 5% of the population of Peel, they have most of the land.

Engage Peel organizer Harminder Dhillon said he is concerned that dissolution will mean weaker responses to environmental issues, like dismantling conservation authorities and building Highway 413 through Caledon and Brampton. These are some of the folks we would have heard from in committee. "This is a typical conservative

philosophy, just sort of divide and rule,” he said. “It’s a local decision and then you sort of pit one against another. We had a voice of Peel; now, we’ll have three voices.”

1620

While amalgamations have been relatively common in Ontario, as has been mentioned, the dissolution of Peel is unprecedented. This bill does not give the local municipalities of Peel an opportunity to negotiate the terms of the dissolution themselves rather than having a settlement imposed on them by the government. There’s no requirement that this government obtain the approval of local councils, as I’ve mentioned, for its dissolution plan, or even consider their viewpoints. That could have been done in committee.

There is no provision to compensate any municipality for the loss of access to any regional asset it helped pay for. In fact, this bill explicitly says that no one is entitled to compensation for anything under the act.

While large, urbanized municipalities the size of Mississauga—Mississauga is 718,000—and Brampton, with 656,000, certainly have the capacity to exist as single-tier municipalities, Caledon, with a population of 76,000, is a medium-sized, mostly rural town representing about 5% of Peel’s population but more than half of the region’s land area. With enormous provincially mandated growth expected for Caledon over the next few decades, and much of this growth sprawl-oriented and driven by MZOs and Highway 413, the town will face serious challenges in funding and building the infrastructure required to support this growth. There will be further challenges in maintaining such infrastructure and providing the services currently provided by the region with a small tax base but a large land area to serve. The Ford government has not explained how it intends to address this issue.

The dissolution was not sought by Brampton or Caledon—even though the minister likes to say they were here for an announcement; we all know how that works. How will the government ensure that a dissolution will benefit all three local municipalities and not just the one that pushed for it? The bill gives the Ford government an enormous amount of power over Peel residents and businesses who are now required to give a blank cheque to a government that has a record, let’s face it, of showing disrespect for local governments and democracy.

A great example of that occurred just a couple of weeks ago, in Mississauga, at a development called Lakeview. Mississauga residents and councillors, as reported in the media, are furious after this government granted an MZO request from a developer, which completely bypassed local planning processes and municipal council, to double a lakefront property development.

In 2021, I would remind the Legislature, the Premier said, “We only sign an MZO once we get a letter from ... the chair of the region, the mayor of the city and council. Once it gets approved, it’s an ask by them. We don’t go into towns and all of a sudden just issue MZOs. It’s an ask from each region and each city.”

I have asked many, many times in this Legislature, and that’s the answer I got back time after time after time.

When I’ve questioned the minister about MZOs, he’d say, “It’s not us. The council asked for it. The mayor asked for it.” Well, here’s an example of absolutely no one asking for it. It was just unilaterally performed by the minister without even consulting the local council.

The minister himself, in 2021, said, “Every minister’s zoning order that I consider on non-provincially owned land comes at the request of a council resolution to me. It’s up to the council to do their public due diligence. It’s up to the council to do their Indigenous consultation. We value our municipal partners, but they’ve got to dot their i’s and they’ve got to cross their t’s before they send the MZO request to me.”

On March 10, 2021, he said, “The municipality makes the request to the government and the government considers it. There is no other process, as the member opposite alludes to. Municipalities are in the driver’s seat.”

That was the minister and the Premier not too long ago, when we asked question after question about MZOs: “It’s not us; it only happens when the local municipality requests it.”

What were the responses? I’m going to read some of them because these are councillors who may have wanted to come to committee, and I know that the municipalities for sure would have shown up to the committee. First, I’ll go to Trevor Baker, who is president of the Lakeview Ratepayers Association—these are the tenants. He said “local residents were ‘pissed off and scared’ after seeing the municipal process thrown out and replaced with a decree from Queen’s Park.

“‘You’re darn right it’s scary,’ local councillor Stephen Dasko agreed later in the debate.” This was only a couple of weeks ago, Speaker.

“The planning decree was issued without telling local councillors, who repeatedly said during” the “planning and development committee meeting that the announcement had stunned them.”

Councillor John Kovac said, “‘Maybe somebody’s listening right now from the province, maybe they’re even cackling, who knows (if) they’re laughing, I hope not’....

“‘I don’t think we’re the villain in this movie,’ he also mused, suggesting ‘partner’ may no longer be the correct description for Premier ... Ford’s provincial government....

“Councillor Dasko lamented the sudden change to planning in his Mississauga ward.

“‘Right there, the strike of a pen detonated all these years of planning,’ he said. ‘Infrastructure, visioning, aspirations, making sure that we have a waterfront that is the envy of the world (are gone with) one strike of a pen.’”

Councillor Alvin Tedjo “accused the Ford government of planning Mississauga ‘on the back of a napkin.’

“One resident agreed, saying: ‘The wild west is here.’

“Mississauga’s chief planner added that, as a result of the MZO, what the city was now faced with was ‘completely unplanned growth.’

“Councillor Tedjo said staff who had worked on the project since its inception in 2010 were ‘devastated’ that more than a decade of painstaking planning and incremental negotiations had been wiped out by the MZO.”

Again, I want to be clear, we're not against development. We know we need more affordable housing in Ontario. We're against the way this province is treating municipalities by forcing their agenda and MZOs on them without the approval of local residents and councillors and little to no regard for the environment or farmland. Remember, the government's own task force very clearly said that land outside of the urban boundaries was not needed to build the 1.5 million homes.

This clearly demonstrates the government is now not afraid to use MZOs, not only without municipalities' permission, but without even telling them about it until it's already done. And that's very concerning, especially I would say for residents of Caledon, many of whom have contacted us and are very concerned about the removal of the region and what that means for their ability to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and greenbelt lands.

I have an awful lot in my notes about removals from the greenbelt. Unfortunately, my time is winding down, but I could probably go on for another hour about all of the lands that have been removed from the greenbelt and, in each single case, there are ties to the Progressive Conservative Party. Some of the things are already the subject of Integrity Commissioner complaints and other complaints. I'll see if I have time to do that, Speaker. I'm not sure I will, but that's been discussed an awful lot in this place.

I want to talk about how the government wrapped this announcement. I can't really call it that, obviously; it was rushed and there was no real consultation, but they said that this was one of their housing bills, basically, without ever explaining how a process that is going to dissolve a region without question and create a lot of confusion and chaos, even if it's well-managed—it's a huge undertaking. They haven't explained how that's going to increase affordable housing. As a matter of fact, it's hard to imagine, especially between now and January 2025, how it's not going to slow down affordable housing when everything, all of the planning departments and all of the employees, is in transition.

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The minister said, "The single-tier system would provide the municipal leaders of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon with the tools they need to plan for future population growth and to get more homes built faster." But I still haven't heard an explanation as to how that would happen. I heard some references to strong-mayor legislation—which, in itself, is problematic—yet there's not one specific measure in the bill to speed up the construction of homes. In fact, the words "affordable housing" do not appear in the bill at all.

A press release from the region of Peel from just in March 2023 outlines the kind of issues that Peel region is suffering from. It begs the question of why the government would embark on this huge, many would say navel-gazing, exercise when there's such a crisis when it comes to affordable housing.

The press release was: "Peel region joins the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in calling for the provin-

cial government to work ... collaboratively with municipalities on efforts to increase the supply of housing, and for it to tackle the homelessness crisis in Ontario....

"Increasing the supply of housing is a priority for municipalities across Ontario, including Peel.... Regional council unanimously passed a motion calling on the government of Ontario to take urgent action to end homelessness." I heard the associate minister mention some of the problems with the housing crisis and homelessness and the affordability crisis in her comments, but she didn't say how this bill could possibly contribute to addressing that problem.

"In Peel, the affordable housing crisis is seen in many ways....

—shelter use increased by 26.9% in 2021;

—50% of demand for people with need for supportive housing continues to go unmet—one of out of every two people who need supportive housing don't get it, and we could imagine how many of those folks in Peel end up on the street;

—an estimated 91,000 households are in core housing need;

—an average-income family would have to save a down payment over 30 years," as the associate minister mentioned, "for an affordable monthly mortgage at today's home prices."

Under this government, it has become even more challenging to find an affordable place to live. Regardless of all the rhetoric, it's worse, not better, and there's nothing in this bill to actually build the houses that we need. The government's own budget shows the province moving in the wrong direction on housing, and their dismantling of the greenbelt isn't doing anything to address the housing crisis either. The budget predicts fewer housing starts next year than this year, and they're nowhere near on track to meet their stated goal of 1.5 million homes in 10 years.

As reported recently by Global News, "That means over four of the 10 years set out in the province's plan, just 23% of its total target of homes would be built."

In addition to this government completely missing its housing targets, we know that many of the homes that are being built are still not affordable—and this has always been a point of contention between the opposition and the government, the government concentrating completely on supply, and we've heard it over the debates on Bill 97, and refusing to admit that simply trusting the free market to address supply is not going to address the supply of affordable housing. It never has, and it never will.

According to mississauga.com, the average price for Mississauga real estate jumped 17% in three months.

According to InBrampton, the average home price in Brampton jumped \$20,000 for the second month in a row.

According to the Toronto Star, in the town of Caledon, the average price for a home is \$1.58 million.

The government has ignored the advice of its own experts, as we've frequently pointed out, and its own Housing Affordability Task Force, by not ending exclusionary zoning. The government is failing to enable missing-middle housing to make it easier for people of all incomes, ages, family

sizes and abilities to access affordable housing options in the neighbourhoods and communities they need to live in. Nothing in this bill, Speaker, will build new social housing or protect existing social housing in Mississauga, Brampton or Caledon. According to Peel region, the wait-list for an affordable unit in Brampton is five to eight years. In Mississauga, you're waiting five to six years. In Caledon, it's one and a half to five and a half years.

We've been calling for a strong public sector role to deliver new affordable and non-market housing that the for-profit private sector can't or won't deliver. This government has relied, as I've mentioned, almost entirely on the private market to deliver new housing, and their main tools have been deregulation, tax cuts and sacrificing more farmland and natural heritage to urban development. This approach has clearly failed. They have focused on delivering benefits to well-connected landowners and donors while sacrificing farmland and the greenbelt, instead of focusing on delivering housing that is actually affordable and meets the needs of regular Ontarians.

Speaker, this government's record in dealing with municipalities as partners, as I've mentioned, has been completely abysmal. We talked about Bill 23 and the loss of—by AMO's estimates—\$5 billion in revenue. Municipalities—and you can use Brampton as an example—say an 80% tax increase is what would result if they were to be made whole from the loss of that revenue. When I've asked the minister in the House, different folks have answered the question, but the answer has always been the same: They're not interested in reimbursing municipalities for that revenue. There's even some doubt about the figure that AMO has presented, which pretty much everyone agrees with and is based on some pretty hard numbers given to them by municipalities.

At one exchange in this Legislature, the Premier went on a tirade about when he was a councillor and saved \$1 billion for the city of Toronto—which I think everyone knows has been proven to be completely untrue—and accused municipalities who are losing \$5 billion of going hat-in-hand to the province. And as I've said, that's like calling a mugging victim a whiner when they ask for their wallet back. It's like a drive-by mugging that has happened with municipalities, and the best we've got from the minister is to say that they're auditing a few municipalities and that will maybe give them some ideas, whatever that means.

Municipalities are going to face steep tax increases—many of them—or service cuts. The minister today could have put a lot of people's minds at ease by agreeing to look at the lower-tier municipalities in Peel region first and reimburse what they're owed so that they can embark on this dissolution process without that complicating it.

This dissolution is unprecedented, and it's critical that the government get it right. As the government rushes to ram it through the Legislature, a lot of questions and red flags are raised. It does not require the residents of Peel region to be consulted. In fact, the government is ramming the bill through the Legislature and won't even conduct public hearings. It does not ensure that municipal workers

are being heard as part of the process. It does not ensure that voices of each municipality are represented fairly on the transition board. It does not provide for any transparency or accountability in how decisions are made. From controversial MZOs being forced onto municipalities, as I've mentioned, to Bill 23, which will leave municipalities in financial ruin and will force them to either cut services or raise property taxes, these are concerns that the government is not addressing while pushing forward with this legislation.

This was another missed opportunity for this government to fulfill their promise to make municipalities whole and to have a full consultation on a bill that's going to affect 1.5 million people. The lack of public hearings and opportunities to improve this bill is deeply troubling. The government is demonstrating once again that it does not care what the public thinks. It is not interested in due process.

1640

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member.

I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: This, respectfully, is the second time that this member in his speech today has imputed motive to this government. That's an improper suggestion under the standing orders. He's suggesting that the government doesn't care. That is improper under the standing orders.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will take that into consideration and I will allow the member to continue.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker. That's one of the more interesting objections that I've heard—in my five years, anyway.

Clearly, the Ford government intends to impose whatever it wants on Peel, regardless of what the people of Peel want. This government claims they are putting forward Bill 112 to help get more homes built faster. However, not once in the bill does it reference affordable housing or a specific action plan to make that a reality.

Lastly, as has been pointed out by countless experts, if this becomes a botched dissolution, "the consequences ... in Peel region are very real, certain to impact property tax bills for years to come, perhaps even interrupt the provision of vital services."

Speaker, I'm not going to ask the government to reverse course because I know that they're not interested in doing that. They weren't even interested in hearing from folks in committee. This is not the first time that this has happened, but I have to tell you, I can't figure out why it's happened with this bill.

I don't really understand what the rush was, why the government would leave themselves open to charges from residents, all of the stakeholders, municipalities. They could have just held committee hearings. It would have been very simple. Yes, there would have been people that showed up with objections. There would have also been folks to support the government's position. We could have

heard from everyone. And there was a good chance, as I said, that—the official opposition is not against dissolution. We want to hear more about it. We want to listen to people. We want to listen to stakeholders. We want to hear what AMO has to say. We want to hear what those municipalities have to say. We want to hear what citizens, like this group that went out and spent several days of their time collecting petition signatures, have to say.

But this government is not interested in what anyone has to say, and I can't for the life of me figure out why. The committee process is not a huge process. We're going into the summer months. It would have been really easy to schedule a few days. They wouldn't have had this kind of criticism, which they will continue to face about this bill. We could have had the committee hearings, heard from people, and we might have all agreed at the end of the day. This is a bill where we actually might have agreed. But that disrespect shown to residents, to municipalities, to businesses, to environmentalists, to all the folks who would have appeared at committee to give us their opinion—it's just a real shame that we didn't have enough respect for them to hold a few days of committee hearings.

With that, Speaker, I'm disappointed with the government's actions on this bill—not so much with the bill itself, but with the way that the government has moved forward with it, disrespecting everyone involved. I hope that they are open—even though they skipped committee hearings and are going to ram this through very, very quickly, by next week. I hope that they will have second thoughts about the transition board that is going to be appointed and they will give some folks in those municipalities that are not simply people that are going to agree with certain interests or certain folks in the government, but a worker representative, as has been requested by CUPE, and perhaps others who would inform this government in a way that they might have been informed in committee if they had shown the least interest in hearing from folks on this bill.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I have a question for the member opposite. I wonder if he's ever heard of something called representative or parliamentary democracy. Every member of the Peel caucus who was elected last year has voted for this thus far. We've listened to the member opposite for almost an hour, so we do care what people's opinions are. We may disagree with what opposite members say sometimes, but we will defend to our last breath the right to say it. I sat and listened to this House and saw him on the television screen when I couldn't be in the House.

I wonder if he has ever heard of parliamentary democracy and if he has respect for the fact that every mayor of Peel region and the Peel region chair is working with this government on the planned transitional board—if this bill is passed. And what's wrong with that?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for the question, although it is a fairly bizarre question. Part of parliamentary democracy is committee hearings, so I could

ask him the same—have you ever heard of committee hearings as part of parliamentary democracy? You have to be pretty far out there to ask a question like that, when part of the whole process and the subject of my entire hour was pretty much: Why do you not want to take advantage of the parliamentary process and hear from citizens in committee?

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much to the member for his very well-researched and well-thought-out discussion.

Can you speak a little bit more—and I know you touched on it initially—about the lack of consultation and what pitfalls can come from it? We've been hearing, certainly from those in Brampton, who have had some very serious concerns about this going forward. Can you talk a little bit about how a lack of consultation can lead to problems?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague for the question. It's a great question.

Actually, I think the worst thing that can happen is the erosion of public trust. That's why you do consultations. I learned this as a city councillor in St. Catharines, working with developers and developments: When you keep something secret from people, and then all of a sudden development starts—we all know that, but especially municipal councillors—that lack of consultation breeds all kinds of distrust. If you take the time to listen to people and bring them along, it actually makes your job easier in the end.

That's why, as I said, I don't understand what this government's approach is. If they had simply had committee hearings, brought everyone along, we actually might have agreed on this. But look at the situation now: All kinds of mistrust has been bred because of this government's failure to listen to people.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Let me get this straight: The member opposite wants a few hours or a few days of committee hearings in the summer of 2023. This bill, if passed, would not come into effect until January 1, 2025, so over a year and a half in time frame will be spent on a transitional board process, with input from all important stakeholders, including the mayors, including members of the region of Peel. I'm going to suggest that the member opposite—can he count? Would he at least agree that 18 months is much longer than a few weeks in committee in the summer of 2023, and isn't that better?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you for the question. Committee hearings—they've been getting scheduled recently; they're in the next couple of months. It's not that big of a deal. I don't understand why the government thinks that having committee hearings is such a big deal. You could do them in the next month and hear everybody. I don't know, maybe—let's say three days would do it. We actually like to ask for enough time so that everyone can be heard. That's our approach. A few committee hearing dates so that folks who are affected by this legislation and

who may actually give some pretty good suggestions would be a good idea, and it would, as I mentioned, increase public trust in the process. What you're doing is actually eroding public trust—already passing the bill and then consulting on it. You asked a question about parliamentary democracy earlier. That's not how parliamentary democracy works.

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

Ms. Sarah Jama: Thank you to my colleague, MPP Burch, for your contribution to this debate.

My question is this: Can you speak a little bit about how the manufactured housing crisis has been a bit scapegoated in terms of the way this bill is being used? How does this bill fail to actually talk about housing in the Peel region, and how do you think that the housing crisis is being scapegoated?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend for the question. It's a great question. I spoke a bit about collaboration between Peel region and AMO in trying to tell the province how serious the situation is in Peel region with not only the affordability of housing, but with homelessness as well. When one out of two folks looking for supportive housing can't even get an answer, it's pretty scary.

1650

Launching into a process like this without even listening to folks in committee who would have come forward and talked about homelessness and affordability in the region of Peel—that could have informed future decisions that were made in the transition process, but we won't have the benefit, unfortunately, of hearing from those folks.

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: I just was a little blown away by a comment that was just made by the member from Hamilton, so I will take that comment, that there is a manufactured housing supply crisis, and I'm going to ask the member: Do you believe that we do not have a housing supply crisis? I've travelled this province in the less than two months that I have been a minister of housing and I have seen homelessness, I have seen desperateness. We are trying to get housing built for everybody across this province. Do you agree that we have a housing supply crisis: yes or no? And will you be supporting this bill?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciate the question. First of all, I want to say, the member from Hamilton has been an absolute champion for homelessness and people who are looking for affordable housing and struggling, not only in Hamilton but across Ontario. The member should be aware of that.

Secondly, we have admitted over and over and over again that there is a supply crisis. We've said it over and over. No matter how many times you repeat that we don't believe it, it doesn't change the fact that we continue to assure you that we know that there is a housing crisis.

What you don't understand is that there is a housing affordability crisis and that there is a crisis in affordable housing. Trusting the invisible hand of the free market to

fix everything, when all through Ontario's history the only time we've been able to fix things is through an integrated process of public investment and private market investment—your housing program is not working. It's not. It's not working.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to my colleague for your one-hour presentation. I have sat in committee with you, as well as the members opposite, on many occasions, and I remember a committee speaker coming in and saying, "This government moves so fast. They move fast and they break things because they move too fast."

Can you think of some other examples where not going to committee or rushing a bill through has led to unintended consequences that have harmed the people of Ontario?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague for the question and for her work in defending the people all across Toronto and Ontario, especially tenants, who are having such a hard time right now finding affordable housing.

There are all kinds of examples of the government not treating the committee process fairly. Myself and my friend have many times sat on committee and asked for additional committee days, but I have never seen a situation quite like this, where they could have so easily and very quickly had some days for folks to come forward and increase that level of public trust, but they just completely refused—even though the opposition was going to vote in favour of the legislation and go to committee and participate with the government and listen to people alongside government. They just decided not to do it. I can't imagine why.

There are many examples of them, in our opinion, not consulting enough, but this is, perhaps, the most bizarre one that I've seen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have no further time for questions. Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very honoured to stand today to talk about this bill, Bill 112, the Hazel McCallion Act, for many reasons. One of the first and most important reasons is, I am a resident of Mississauga. It's important to me and to my family as we live in Mississauga, and I would like to see Mississauga growing and taking its position as not the third-biggest city in Canada but hopefully the second- or maybe the first-biggest city in Canada—maybe someday.

With all the challenges, like newcomers—bringing 500,000 per year in the coming three years. There will be a challenge to accommodate those newcomers from a housing point of view, from a business point of view, even entertainment, day-to-day life, restaurants—every aspect of life is going to be something we need to give some thought to.

And, God rest her soul, the late Mayor Hazel had been very visionary about Mississauga since day one. She had a vision for Mississauga. I would say she saw Mississauga where we see it today, but she saw that 30 years ago. She had the plan. She was walking toward making Mississauga

the Mississauga we see today. I think this is a very good legacy to Hurricane Hazel to make sure that her wish is coming true.

When we talk about dissolving Peel region, there is Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon affected by that. We know it's not going to be an easy task. It is a complicated task. There are many Peel organizations that are serving—not only the utilities or the services but even agencies and organizations: Peel Living, Peel Children's Aid Society. There are many, many organizations that are serving and working in Peel. Now, by dissolving Peel region, there will be a need to either create new bodies or split those bodies to different—or find some sort of resolution so that they serve three cities. I don't know. It's not going to be Peel region. It's going to be maybe “Living Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.” We don't know yet how that will look.

But we are starting the process. We're putting a committee to bring to light all the different aspects of that, including the impact financially. What is the bill for that? What is the invoice for these changes?

I would like to thank the Premier, Doug Ford, for taking the initiative to do this because we have long been hearing, and getting information and collecting information, from different municipalities in this level talking about how 80% of the people in Mississauga would like to see Mississauga as a big city and maybe some percentage in Brampton as well. Because there could be differences in the way they see the handling of growth either in housing or any other aspect of managing their municipality. Giving them the opportunity to take their own initiatives, put their own goals, choose what route they would like to go, what's the next step to take, how long the plan will be, how much they are willing to spend from their budget—I think that's fair for the three cities.

There are many duplications as well between the two-tier municipalities. We are trying to maybe simplify the process. The city of Mississauga, for example: For the past few years, the average number of new units was 2,100 units per year. This is far, far from the goal which the city pledged: to achieve 120,000 units within 10 years, which is an average of 12,000 units per year. From 2,100, there is a huge gap. They need to maybe make some decisions about how they're going to achieve that, and having two-tier municipalities is slowing the process. It might help the process a little bit to minimize the complexity of going to achieve their goals.

1700

There are many other things. When we talk about Peel region, we talk about why we did Peel region to start with. It was to save the costs of the infrastructure that was going to serve the three cities together, so having the police forces, the fire department, the different organizations, water, sewage, all kinds of utilities or services. It's much better to do some saving by building one infrastructure to serve the three cities.

But now, we are talking about Mississauga as the third-biggest city in Canada, and Brampton, which is the fourth-biggest city in Canada. Having two big cities in one region

with their different management, different mayors, different councillors, different ways of thinking, their goals—even public opinion in Mississauga might be different than the public opinion in Brampton. Now they have to live together in Peel. It could cause a lot of troubles now, with the size and scale.

I think it's time now to look into Mississauga as a stand-alone, Brampton as a stand-alone, Caledon as a stand-alone and start doing their planning, their five-year plan, their 10-year plan or their master plan. They can alter that and change that without having to go back and check with the other cities, because we are now one region. I think this is going to benefit the three cities, to scale up, to grow and to be able to serve their population and the future population much better.

Again, Hazel McCallion advocated for a more autonomous Mississauga because she believed this would allow the city to achieve the fullest potential, and so far, she did that. I remember when I first landed in Mississauga 28 years ago, from the Coptic centre at Eglinton and Creditview, you could see the Erin Mills mall, because there was nothing. As you look now, you kind of feel really amazed, how big the buildings are. There is no place left in Mississauga—Erin Mills now to build. It's almost all built.

So when I look into the autonomy of my riding, 65% of the people living in Mississauga—Erin Mills weren't born in Canada—65%, almost more than half of my residents, are immigrants. Thinking about another 500,000 immigrants coming, that's going to add more need for housing.

Again, when we look into the issue of housing, the housing crisis we are in, it's not happening today. It's not happening yesterday. It has been ongoing for many years of neglected planning, neglected vision about where we are going to end up. That's what we've ended up in now: in a crisis. So to have a little bit of a proactive approach and trying to say, “We need to build 1.5 million units in 10 years,” I think, is a very positive thing and a game-changer, to make sure that we can serve those new immigrants who are coming—and not only new immigrants, but even the people who are complaining now that there are no houses.

People come to my office and talk about, “I don't think I will be able to get my children to live in Mississauga. I can't find a good unit for them. I can't afford to buy them houses in Mississauga,” and I agree. Why? Because there's high demand in Mississauga, very high demand to buy houses. When a house goes on the market, there is a bidding war on it, which drives the prices up.

A few months back, there was a house on my street that came up for sale and, out of curiosity, I started following it to see how much it was going to get sold for. The asking price was \$1.2 million; it was listed for \$1.2 million. Anyway, 10 days later it got sold. As soon as I saw the “sold” sign, I had the curiosity to see how much it was sold for. It's identical to my house, so it's on the same street, the same builder, the same year it was built. It's an identical house—even from inside, it's the same layout. I went and checked and it was sold for \$1.68 million, \$480,000 above the asking price. What does that tell us?

There were 10 offers that were put on that house. So why would somebody put an offer on a house where there's already been an offer? Because there are no more houses available on the market. By adding more houses to the supply, that will stop the bidding wars. It will bring the pricing down. That's 100%. It's availability-and-demand theory.

We could look into this crisis for housing from multiple points of view. We can look at pricing from how long it will take to build a unit. When we were doing hearings for the last housing bill, the president of the mayors' association was one of the witnesses at one of the hearings, and I asked him the question: How long will it take a builder or a developer from the day they put in their request to acquire the land to the time they can start selling units? He said the average was 11 years.

Eleven years means that if my goal or this government's goal is to build 12,000 units in Mississauga this year, it's not going to happen because we will see those 12,000 units 11 years from today. I don't know if this government will be here or not at that time, but it's irrelevant to that. If we need to get some results, if we need to achieve the goals, we need to think a little bit out of the box. We need to come up with ideas. The status quo is not acceptable.

This bill is maybe more localized to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, but those three cities, by themselves, are a good portion of another GTA kind of thing. There is the prospect of two million people who will be living in the Peel area, the Peel region of today, in 2030, so we are not very far. I don't know how that will happen, from 1.2 million or 1.4 million to two million, in five years if we do not accelerate the process.

Part of accelerating the process is giving—with accountability comes authority. We are giving the municipalities the tools to execute that. With Mississauga pledging to deliver on the promise of 12,000 units per year and 120,000 units in 10 years by 2031, I think it's fair to give them some of the tools which allow them to do what's needed to be done, with close attention given to the level of services to make sure that all the residents of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are getting the same level of service they are getting today, within the transactional process and after the process. The committee will have a huge task in trying to put in a plan on how we can dissolve the complexity of the utilities and how we're going to make sure that each one of the cities are getting the same level and same coherent set of services without any interruption, without lowering the level of service or the quality of service during the process and after this process.

1710

As we heard earlier from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Associate Minister of Housing, we are committed as a government to make sure the process goes smoothly and in a timely manner. The goal is 19 months, but part of that is how the committee will come back and tell us what is needed to be done and how we'll do it and, of course, the most important thing, the financial impact. Be it Mississauga, Brampton or Caledon, we need

to make sure that the process is fair for the three cities, from the initial cost used to build this to the costs we need to offer the services in different areas of the three areas of the dissolved Peel region. We need to look into how we can make sure that there's no interruption in services; how we can ensure the safety of the residents, police services, water and sewage and all kinds of services we currently have—how we're going to offer that at the same uniform level in the three cities during the process.

One of the aspects of this is, as we are requesting municipalities to look into how to improve their plans for housing—affordable houses and all kinds of other related issues to housing—we need to make sure that they are in a situation where they can deliver. We are here to listen to them. One of the aspects of this bill and the timing of this bill is, we are listening to the people. We are listening to the people from Mississauga. We are listening to the people from Brampton. We are listening to the people from Caledon and the people who are asking us to do that. They are asking to have their way to deliver if we want them to deliver, and we are saying, “Yes, we want you to deliver. We want you to be successful. We want you to deliver better services. We want you to grow. We want you to have your own planning tools for your growth and what exactly your targets are in the coming years, so we are offering this. We are taking the effort to deliver those tools to you so that you can achieve your goals.”

Even the Premier said that we'll work together with you, with guidance, through the process—with the committee, with the municipality—to make sure it's successful. And I think the Premier said it: “I will be there for the people of Mississauga. I will be there for the people of Peel to help them through that.”

We need also the municipal leaders to take some initiative in that and try to be proactively working with us, hand in hand, because they requested it, we listened to it, and we're trying to deliver it. Please, sit together. Sit with the province and, most importantly, sit with the committee. Help them to do their job. Help them to help you. You need to get results. Co-operate with them. Get them to do their job. The faster they do their job, the faster they come back with those numbers and plans and the faster we can start executing. We are hoping to get that ready by January 2025. That's a very short period of time. If we don't work very hard to achieve that, it might not happen.

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

Mr. Rob Flack: I find this legislation very interesting because of my history in Peel county, as I said earlier, growing up. I can say that I remember as a kid driving my bike from Streetsville to Brampton, following Creditview Road and ending up going to Shoppers World, which was the main mall, obviously, at the time. It was interesting to participate in—friends back and forth, sports activities, high schools etc. Peel was a somewhat urban but rural county at the time, and it has grown immensely over the last 50 years.

How do you feel this transition board is going to help in the entire breakup of these major urban centres?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to my colleague for his question. Again, it's yet to be seen—the members of the committee. As we speak, our understanding is that that's going to be collected members of the different levels of the current municipalities sitting together. They have been seeing the issues. They have been attending some of those discussions, understanding what the issues were, being in Peel region together, and I think they would be in the best position to try to help everybody to be happy and make sure that whatever is needed there is fulfilled through the decisions they're going to make.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills. This bill has been passed through very fast. It has been debated for maybe seven days. The government is looking at eliminating an entire level of government. Some mayors are happy, and it seems that some mayors are not so happy. They're worried. They're concerned. They think they're going to get a raw deal.

My question to you is: Is this government looking at taking this model of getting rid of a regional government—is this government looking at taking this to other regions of Ontario, such as the Durham region or Waterloo or Simcoe or Niagara?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member from the opposition.

I believe that any change comes with some fears. With big changes like this, there will be some people with and some people against. There are always some pros and some cons, and some people will be more with the pros; some people will be more with the cons. This is the same exact discussion I heard when we said, “We'll change Toronto's borders and make it this specific number of wards”—which looked at, as amalgamation, shrinking the number, the government's size. Again, that same exact discussion—it was the same: Now we are saying we are making it smaller, we are making it bigger—if you add a level, some people will not be happy; if you remove a level, some people will be not happy. So I think it's a balance between the needs of the people and the ability for those municipalities to function.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I listened intently to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Like the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London, I have strong connections to Mississauga, being born and raised in Mississauga. My parents still live in Mississauga—Lakeshore, a great community, and they too have been asking me about what's happening, and they've been quite supportive to what they understand will happen with the dissolution of Peel region. They've lived in the same community since 1965, and they've seen Mississauga grow from a very, very small community to, as the member mentioned, the third-largest city in Ontario. It makes sense to get rid of that extra layer of bureaucracy and planning and areas such as that.

My question to the member is, we know that this will have a positive impact on housing supply by being able to

speed up planning development, but what other efficiencies and benefits does he see in the dissolution of that extra layer of government?

1720

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member from Oakville. There are many duplications in the two levels of government where I think the bill will help us to simplify processes: simplify the process of getting permissions and simplify the process of approving budgets for different projects in Peel region. We have to understand that the three cities now have their own different goals. Now there's one level of government trying to push their agenda and the second level of government trying to make a balance between the three different municipalities and trying to be fair. Sometimes there are tough decisions to take. I think this will simplify and lessen the tension within the municipalities.

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

Ms. Sarah Jama: We know that Peel region is one of the most diverse regions in the province of Ontario. I'm asking this question honestly, in good faith. I'm just curious: Has this government consulted with any racialized communities—not elected people, racialized communities—about the dissolution of Peel?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: There is always consultation with different organizations because, again, Mississauga is one of the most active cities when it comes to ethnic-based groups, ethnic-based communities and racialized communities, as you mentioned, and also not-for-profit organizations that serve those different areas. All of them have been talking about that. It's not new. Talking about dissolving Peel region I would say, minimum, has been ongoing for the past, maybe, five, six years—maybe before that, even, during the Liberal time. I'm not sure why it got higher in latest years. I think because of the size of the cities, the need to take some decisions and also maybe the differences in the way each city culturally, economically, planning-wise and engineering-wise are looking to different goals and now they are not able to handle it in a balanced way.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to the member for his remarks. I had the pleasure of interacting with Hazel McCallion in my previous life when I worked at the OMERS pension plan. OMERS owned a company that did the local electricity distribution in Mississauga. It was called Enersource at the time. I was on the board of that company and Hazel was there. Now, she was young and spry at the time, I think in her early nineties, but it was unbelievable, the energy. She did her homework, and at the board she was absolutely incredible. So I think that her vision here, as espoused in the bill, is so appropriate.

I never got a T-shirt. Maybe that meant she thought I did my homework, as opposed to the minister. I don't want to comment on that. Anyway, it was a great privilege.

The member has talked about the benefits for Mississauga. Are there any further benefits that he sees for Brampton or Caledon as well? I'd appreciate his thoughts on that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for a final response.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I think the three cities are going to benefit, not only Mississauga. Yes, Mississauga is ahead a little bit in development. On the growth curve, we are a little bit in front of the three cities. But Brampton is growing like no tomorrow. Caledon now has potential and it has started getting up to speed, especially with the new Highway 413 that is going to bring life and accessibility to Caledon and the Malton area of Brampton.

I think it's going to benefit the three cities equally. Maybe in Mississauga, because of the size of the city, it might start showing that now the city can take their decisions. Again, as he mentioned, it was my pleasure and honour to work closely with the late mayor Hazel McCallion. I learned a lot. It will stay in my memory—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for further debate. I recognize the member from Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Sarah Jama: I would like to share my time with my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, MPP Shaw. This is my first time participating in the House in a debate, so don't all get excited at once. There will be lots of time for questions.

One of my favourite sayings goes as follows: "Relationships develop at the speed of trust." Rushing through the dissolution of the region of Peel with little consultation and bypassing committee processes does nothing to build trust amongst constituencies in these ridings.

A change of this magnitude deserves time and transparency. There has been little to no clarity on who will be on the transition team involved in this dissolution, and there has been little to no room for municipal workers to be heard in this process. The speed at which this dissolution has suddenly been brought into the House for debate, and will inevitably be rammed into law, is very concerning. It is a testament to the lack of care and consideration that this government has had for the electorate. To not implement public committee hearings goes against supposed values of progressive conservatism, which suppose strong belief in democratic processes. This rush is in fact antidemocratic and, again I say, alarming.

We already know that the region of Peel is facing a \$2-billion shortfall over the next 10 years due to Bill 23. This bill does not have real solutions to deal with this. This bill does not require that Peel region residents be consulted. In fact, the government is jamming this bill through the Legislature and won't conduct these public hearings that people have been asking for.

The housing crisis, which has been created and bolstered by this government through the over-prioritization of corporate landlords and greedy developers, continues to be the scapegoat of the antidemocratic legislation being put forward by this government. Nearly every measure this government has taken on housing has been ineffective or, in fact, worsened the housing crisis. This was seen in the

carving and selling of the greenbelt, the fact that property taxes continue to increase and the fact that renters are left without proper protections. Developers keep getting bailed out and supported, while municipalities are left holding the bag. That's exactly how crises are made that wouldn't have otherwise existed without proper resources.

This is what I would call a random idea, and this dissolution needs to be given time for proper consultation. It does not provide any transparency or accountability for how decisions should be made in this House.

The costs, benefits and risks of this dissolution are also completely unknown. A 2019 study commissioned by Peel claimed that dissolution would require property tax increases across the region of more than \$1 billion over 10 years to maintain existing service levels. Confusingly, a 2019 study commissioned by Mississauga claimed that dissolution would save Mississauga more than \$1 billion over 10 years. These competing studies have been a source of conflict within the region of Peel, and there have been no answers in terms of how to address this.

While this bill's preamble has good language about supporting local governments and ensuring access to excellent municipal services, these values and principles are not explicitly incorporated into the bill itself. In fact, this bill does not state any purpose or goals for dissolution other than dissolution itself.

There's also nothing to ensure that the appointed board will fairly represent the interests of the people of Mississauga, Brampton or Caledon. If he wants, the minister can stack the board with whoever he wants, his buddies. We've seen this happen before with shady deals around the selling of the greenbelt—and weddings. Side note: My wedding will also be coming up soon. I don't know if people here would want to come. You may or not be invited, in a non-shady way.

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Jama: I thought it was a funny joke, because I'm killing time.

The word "consult" is also missing from this bill. There is nothing requiring the Ford government or the transition board to consult with Peel residents or businesses about restructuring processes that will have a huge and unknown impact on their taxes and services. Unsurprisingly, there is also no requirement for the Ford government to publish the findings of the board with respect to those costs, benefits and risks of various restructuring options prior to making this decision.

Truthfully, the local municipalities of Peel deserve the right to negotiate the terms of dissolution for and between themselves. Imposing this upon them without proper consultation is—well, I would say—authoritarian in nature. There are so many people in this province struggling with high costs of living, and this includes in the Peel region. As elected officials, we all have a duty to cause the least amount of harm possible. But treating people's homes and cities as chess pieces on a board without speaking to them first is just asking people to roll with rapid changes without caring about the repercussions. Why hold elections for seats on councils, why ask people to engage in

voting during elections, when the truth is this bill is showing us that everyday voices, everyday people do not count in big decisions?

1730

This bill also has no guidelines to address impacts on municipal workers whose jobs are at stake or the fate of various collective agreements, including provisions to limit outsourcing.

There is also, in this bill, no provision to compensate any municipality for the loss of access to any regional asset it has helped pay for. In fact, the bill explicitly says that no one is entitled to compensation for things done under the act.

We also have to think about relationships and previous conflicts that will be exacerbated by this rushed bill. Responsibility for regional infrastructure costs has been an ongoing source of conflict between Mississauga and Caledon in particular, and a major driver of Crombie's longstanding desire for independence. However, there is nothing in this bill that clarifies who will assume responsibility for funding growth-related infrastructure in the region, or even whether dissolution will actually shift such cost burdens off of Mississauga taxpayers.

It's also not clear whether the three existing municipalities will retain their current boundaries. The truth is, this dissolution was not sought out by Brampton or Caledon, so how will the government ensure that a dissolution will benefit all three local municipalities and not just one of the municipalities, or the municipality that pushed for this?

I don't tend to find myself agreeing with Brampton mayor Patrick Brown often—I would say it's a rare occurrence—but even he has claimed that this dissolution would require Brampton to replace whatever regional assets may be transferred to Mississauga, including regional water and waste water facilities located in Mississauga. In a province that currently has entire Indigenous communities who are without access to clean water, it's a bit ridiculous that we're rushing through such a drastic change and taking for granted water and waste water facilities that currently do exist with no real plan.

Regional governments exist to enable growth by allowing built-up areas to share costs with growing areas. This dissolution seems to eliminate this and gives the Ford government an enormous amount of power over Peel residents and businesses, who would be required to give a blank cheque to a government that has a record of showing disrespect for local governments and democracy.

Engage Peel organizer Harminder Dhillon said he is concerned that dissolution will mean "weaker" responses to environmental issues like dismantling conservation authorities and building Highway 413 through Caledon and Brampton. He said, "This is a typical Conservative philosophy, just sort of divide and rule ... It's a local decision and then you sort of pit one against another. We had a voice of Peel; now we'll have three" separate voices.

Ultimately, these changes and the constant efforts by this government to undermine democracy are all about this government representing themselves and their own opinions instead of listening to the constituencies that did elect them.

This government is very preoccupied with random rapid changes that I can only assume would benefit developers over the people who have to pay increased property taxes because of this bill. Rather than rush this bill, this government could take the time to conduct the consultations that folks are asking for, create a transparent appointment process to this board, while focusing on the immediate and on-the-ground needs of everyday working people in the region of Peel. So much time and energy will be spent on the dissolution. Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to increase not only in the region of Peel but across the province.

I said this the other day, but earlier, in the 1990s, it was actually the Tories who argued that the number of municipalities in Ontario was "excessive and a burden to the taxpayer." It was the Tories who forced the province's big regional areas to merge into big cities, beginning with Toronto. These amalgamations took a lot of time and had way more voices involved, so it's a bit of a contradiction that this is moving rapidly and this process of dissolution is being treated with less respect than the amalgamation processes in the past.

Looking at the Hamilton amalgamation process as an example, in 2001, the transition board set up 27 task forces—27—that looked at merging everything from economic development to emergency services to hydro and public works to social and public health services to public housing and libraries. That process took time and effort and over \$58 million. In contrast with this dissolution process, there are not enough people or voices involved to make sure that this dissolution would go smoothly.

This government consistently points fingers at the NDP every time, in question period, about how we have voted on harmful legislation, but the truth is, there's not such a thing as a good bill with poison pills in it.

And without proper consultation, there's no way to ensure that the passing of this bill will not cause some form of hardship upon the constituents of Peel.

I would like to pass my time to my colleague MPP Shaw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I'll just remind the members that we do not refer to the member's name but rather their riding.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member for Hamilton Centre. I'm going to repeat quickly some of the things you've said, because they bear repeating.

We talked about a lot of this during the debate we had on time allocation—which, so people understand, is a bill that this government put forward to truncate debate on such an important undertaking. It needs to be said that this is a colossal undertaking. This government is proposing to dissolve a region that has 1.5 million people living in it, with billions and billions of dollars' worth of assets, and it leaves uncertainty when it comes to the services that the people rely on in this region. There's some confusion as to whether the Peel Regional Police services—the headquarters is actually in Brampton, and it serves the entire region—how that will be resolved. There are the water and waste water facilities—some of these facilities that serve

the entire region are in Brampton; some of these, actual bricks and mortar, are in Mississauga; some, perhaps, are in Caledon. The scale of what is being proposed here is colossal, so, again, it needs to be said that rushing this debate—essentially, I think we've had five days, so far, of debate on this—makes absolutely no sense. It does a disservice to the people of the region of Peel—Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon—and frankly, it discredits your government when it comes to people having trust and confidence in the words that you say regarding this.

It is not for us to say whether dissolution will be successful or not successful—it really, frankly, is not for this government to say; it is for the people of the region of Peel. They should be the ones who have input into whether this is the road that they should be embarking on, rather than this being a forced journey. People are being forced to go down this road without assurances, without things in the bill that provide them a backstop.

This is a government that's saying, "Yes, 1.5 million people, just trust us—actually, don't trust us; trust five people the minister will personally appoint to determine your fate." So people are a little uneasy. I can certainly understand that.

The minister has assured us that things will go smoothly, but in fact it's just at the outset and right out of the gate things are not going smoothly at all. We've heard in this House the quotes from the very public spat between Mayor Crombie and Mayor Patrick Brown. They're publicly exchanging barbs at the outset of a process that will require these mayors to be on the same page, and clearly they are not.

Patrick Brown said, "Every single cent we put in to build that infrastructure in Mississauga, my residents expect back." That's what I would expect that the MPPs from Brampton would be saying. Mayor Brown is standing up for the residents and for their assets. I don't hear that from the MPPs on the Conservative side who represent Brampton. When the Minister of Housing was asked about Mayor Brown's concerns, he said he thinks a deal will come that works for all three municipalities. Really, that's just a hope and a prayer. He's not going to make this happen. This is a serious consideration.

What I would like to talk about are the people we should all be talking about, the real people who live in these communities, whose lives you are upending with the stroke of a pen. We know that people who are living in all of our communities are struggling with an affordability crisis, and add to that this uncertainty about whether they're going to be facing disruptions to services, the uncertainty about the costs that the taxpayers are going to be bearing with the decisions that you've made with your housing plan.

1740

Bill 23 is purported to cost billions and billions of dollars. How many dollars is it purported to cost? It's \$5 billion in the region of Peel alone. That's a lot of money that will be borne by taxpayers. So taxpayers, put your hand on your wallet as you embark on this journey.

I will just give you an example—I guess it's a tale of caution—that comes from Hamilton's experience with amalgamation. The city of Hamilton is the result of a forced amalgamation. It was the Conservative government of the day. Mike Harris determined—I don't know; I thought the Conservatives weren't fans of big government, but this Conservative Premier, Mike Harris, decided that he would force the small municipalities that existed in Hamilton into an amalgamated city.

The promise that was held out to the residents of Flamborough, Glanbrook, Stoney Creek, Dundas and Hamilton was that their taxes would go down, that there would be cost savings, but we know now—significant bodies of evidence show—that, in fact, that is not the case. In fact, taxes went up by 50%. Taxes paid by the taxpayer went up by 50%.

Not only did taxpayers have to pay residential tax increases—a warning to all of the residents of Ontario, all of the taxpayers in all of our communities—but the provincial government had to pony up to make not only Hamilton, but Ottawa, whole. They had to fix the problem, which was the disruption of services. At the time, in today's dollars, the contribution that the province had to make to the city of Hamilton and the city of Ottawa was \$350 million in tax dollars that came from the province's coffers to these municipalities, to cover the costs of this amalgamation that did not go smoothly, as the minister has promised us that it will.

I would just like to spend the balance of my time talking about what is so shocking about this, and so disappointing: the complete disregard that this government is showing for any vestige of the concept of democracy in our province. This short-circuiting of debate, ramming through a bill that short-circuits debate; debating late into the evening, when people may not be able to hear what's going on and understand their fate that is being discussed; not having committee hearings—why are you not allowing people who are embarking on this uncertain journey, which puts so much at risk, so much at stake—why are you not able to follow Westminster parliamentary democracy procedures and allow there to be committee hearings?

Instead, you're going to appoint a five-person board, a transition board of members that will be appointed by the minister. This is an enormous and unprecedented amount of power that is being given to five people, and the shocking thing is that this board does not have to disclose any of their findings. In fact, they don't have to disclose if they're being paid, how much they're being paid. They don't have to disclose their findings. They present those findings to the minister, who, again, doesn't need to make that public to the people of Brampton, the people of Mississauga, the people of Caledon. All of this, their fate, is being determined by five people behind closed doors, and the unprecedented power that is being put in their hands is shocking.

I will just end by saying that in this bill, if that's not enough, there is a clause in here called the Henry VIII clause. This gives the government the power to change

legislation by regulation. Henry VIII liked to rule by decree, as we know. He thought that Parliament was a bit of a nuisance, and it seems that this government is going down the same path as Henry VIII.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my two colleagues across the way for their remarks. I just wanted to mention to the House—I did mention it in second reading, I believe—and repeat some comments that I made there. I said in my speech earlier this week that there are no plans or intentions to adjust the municipal boundaries of Mississauga, Brampton or the town of Caledon as part of this dissolution process.

My question is for the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. You went at length during your time provided on the transition, the consultations and those items. There will be a second bill. Minister Clark has been very clear about that. The transition board's deliberations will not be public because of the confidential labour negotiations involved, but the bill will be public. The bill will be debated in this place. The intentions of the government will be very clear at that time through that bill.

Will you support this bill, yes or no?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think I would like to make sure that people understand that, despite what the government is saying in their debate, the word “consult” does not appear one single time in this legislation. The word “housing” doesn't appear in this legislation. So while this government talks about this bill facilitating housing, that remains to be seen.

You can say that everything will go smoothly. You can say, “Trust us. We're not going to change the regional boundaries.” But we have seen a government that has no compunction at all about issuing MZOs, sweeping legislation that overrides planning, overrides zoning. You've done it before, and “trust us; we're not going to do it again” is not really working for the people of the province of Ontario, especially the people in the region of Peel.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank both members from Hamilton for your comments today, but I will address my comments to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. You mentioned that this legislation has a Henry VIII clause, so that the government can change legislation through regulation, which means they can basically govern by decree. We know this government has no respect for the democratic rights of the people of this province. In December, they passed Bill 39, which stripped the people of Toronto, Peel, Niagara and York of their right to majority-vote democracy at the municipal level.

The question that I have for you—so now they're proposing this legislation to break up Peel region. Will this mean that the people of Peel region will get back their majority-vote democracy? Do you know, or has the government discussed that at all?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member. You know, that's a huge question and that's a really good question. I am sure that's a question that's on the minds of all the

people of the region of Peel. Really, I would say if I were living in Brampton, Mississauga or Caledon, I would wonder what's actually going on here, what really is going on here, because the cover story that this is about housing is belied by the fact that we have Mayor Bonnie Crombie maybe running for the Liberals; we have Patrick Brown, the former leader of the Conservatives; we have poor Caledon, the victim in this divorce. If I were a citizen living in Brampton, Peel region, Mississauga or Caledon, I would feel that I was just a pawn of this government. Just like Henry VIII used his citizens as pawns, that's what I would feel like if I was in that region.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: If the idea of representative democracy is to go to your constituents as part of a team with a message, like our government's five priorities of last year, hopefully receive a mandate across the province and in your own individual riding as a candidate—if that's the point of representative democracy, it's also to listen to the people when you are in office. Then, when the message to the NDP is that they're wiped out of Peel region by the people's vote of June 2, 2022, doesn't that demonstrate that NDP members in Peel failed the test of representative democracy, because they were thrown out of office, and therefore we have the mandate to go forward because we have representatives in Peel? Have you not learned your lesson from the results of June 2?

1750

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question to the member from Durham: Have you not learned the lesson from the Tudors and Henry VIII? Because this is how you're behaving. You purport to respect Westminster parliamentary democracy, but the actions of your government show completely the opposite. You ran under a mandate, through the Speaker, to not open up the greenbelt. Well, we know that that was completely not the case. The greenbelt now is up for bids. The highest bidder or the highest contributor now has their hands on the greenbelt, so—

Miss Monique Taylor: Health care.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Health care, privatizing health care: Did you run on a mandate to privatize people's health care in the province of Ontario? No. So if you run under one banner and you govern under the other, I would call that—I can't use the word I'm trying to say, but I would call that—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's antidemocratic, let's just say that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's disrespectful and antidemocratic, and the people of the province of Ontario know that they've been had by this government.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the member from Hamilton Centre, but before I say that, I must say that in speaking to many people from Brampton, they certainly have a lot of buyers' remorse after the last election when it comes to the issue of auto insurance, in particular.

What I would like to ask is: The member from Hamilton Centre has been a very strong and active community leader and advocate and someone who really believes strongly in the importance of consultation. I would like to ask if you could share why it's very important that governments and those in power consult when they make decisions affecting many people.

Ms. Sarah Jama: I always think consultation is important, especially—like I said, Peel region has some of the highest numbers of diverse populations in all of Ontario. The fact that people who are already struggling with the high cost of living and hidden poverty, especially in areas like Mississauga and Brampton, are going to be left behind in the increased taxes that will be an outcome of this possible dissolution—those are my main concerns and why I think consultation should definitely be a priority.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: To the member from Hamilton-Ancaster-Dundas—I hope I got that right—

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Sorry, west—you know what I mean.

I think I would beg to differ a little bit with your comparison to the Tudors, because—you know, I look at our party. We ran and won an election. We have a leader who actually ran against other people to become the leader.

Now, if I look over to the opposite side, I don't think your leader ran against other candidates. They were crowned as leader, the way Henry VIII was, so your comparison might be a tiny bit of a stretch.

I would also beg to differ with your comparison to a divorce between the communities. I look at it as more of a growing up. Mississauga and Brampton are the third- and fourth-largest cities in Ontario, and I think it's time for them to get rid of this extra layer of government, get more efficiency, get planning done quicker, save the taxpayers money. So come on board and support our government and all the MPPs in Peel that support this—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): For a response, I recognize the member for Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the member from Oakville: I really didn't hear your question. I would say there are a lot of distractions here. But who would expect that at 6 o'clock on a Thursday afternoon we would be talking about Henry VIII and crowning? I think maybe we should be talking about beheading, but then that's just me; I don't know how we feel about that.

I would really say that—I want to just keep this as civil as possible, and it's not that easy for me, so I'm trying. But what I want to say is that there is something here that is difficult for people to accept. You talked about how your Premier ran to be leader. I don't know what happened there with Christine Elliott—there was something; people just still don't understand what happened there. There was Patrick Brown running out of this building for some reason. That is a messy situation that I wouldn't have wanted to bring up, so thank you for the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We've run out of time for questions. It is now time for further debate.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: In the short time I have before 6 o'clock, I want to simply say this, that I am proud of the mandate that our government received a year ago tomorrow, June 2, 2022. That included a Peel caucus that is 100% Progressive Conservative.

As I've said before in this House, one of the great honours of parliamentary democracy is not only to be part of a great team, led by Premier Ford, but also to have gone to the people for a second mandate, to be judged on our first mandate and then to have a plan to go forward. Everything we do is about implementing that plan.

Also, as we say, there are always going to be issues that come up in the term of a Parliament. That means that we're elected not just for a plan, but for the leadership of Premier Ford and his good judgment and our good judgment as members of the team. That includes listening. For decades, we've listened to people in Peel region, especially the late, great Hazel McCallion, who for decades asked successive governments for greater autonomy for the great city of Mississauga.

Now, as of June 2 of last year, celebrating our anniversary tomorrow of that great mandate from the people of Ontario, the Peel region caucus is with this government and we are putting forward this bill, Bill 112, for consideration by this House to give Mississauga and Brampton and Caledon greater autonomy, to remove duplication associated with two-tier government, and to implement a transitional board that will take its time. It will not be hurried. It will be careful and deliberative. It will work with the mayors, it will work with the region of Peel to make sure the transition is smooth, to make sure that government continues, to make sure there's no disruption in services, to make sure costs are kept under control, to work toward a reasonable date.

To hear the NDP speak, you'd think that we had proposed a bill that would have dissolution in place by July 1, 2023, or January 1, 2024. No. It's January 1, 2025, a perfectly reasonable period of time to work with all interested parties.

I'm proud of the mandate we received. I'm proud of the proposals in this bill, the plan in this bill, the thoughtfulness that went into it, the listening and consultation that went into it and the listening and consultation that will still go into it.

I'll tell you one thing: We won't be following the practices of the members opposite, laughing and talking over somebody who is speaking. What we do is we will listen carefully. We will roll up our sleeves. We will pick, thoughtfully, members of a transitional board and they will work constructively with the mayors and with the region to get it done right for the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. Because that's what a good Progressive Conservative government does.

I'm proud of this initiative. I'm proud of Minister Clark's leadership on it and the Associate Minister of Housing's leadership on it. I thank the House for the opportunity to address Bill 112. I did have an opportunity very late in the evening to address the closure motion the other night and

I know that we're going to be getting to private members' business shortly, so with that, I would say let's move forward on a positive basis. I intend to vote in favour of this bill, and I defer to my caucus colleagues in Peel, who know best their community. That's another part of parliamentary democracy. We are a team, we have a plan, we work together—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Durham and I apologize to the House. I know we're all enjoying this late debate but unfortunately, the clock has reached 6 o'clock and it is now time for orders of the day.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

1800

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SERVICES IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the value of Ontario's prison chaplains in providing spiritual care and preventing crime and recidivism should be recognized, and community reintegration tables should include the involvement of chaplains and Indigenous spiritual leaders, elders or healers in their governance structure with spiritual group representation added to their membership in order to provide connections to religious and spiritual services for those offenders who express interest.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I am thankful to be able to rise today in the Legislature to speak to a motion, which I have brought to the floor of the chamber, to make our streets and communities safer and bring about rehabilitation and reintegration in the lives of criminal offenders in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, some of you may have watched or at least heard of a famous film based on the book by Carl Bernstein called *All the President's Men*. This film was a hit in the 1970s and has remained a classic to this day, walking through the investigative journalism that led to the discovery of the Watergate scandal.

One of the leaders of that notorious event—one of the president's men—was a man by the name of Charles “Chuck” Colson. Described as a “hit man,” the “‘evil genius’ of an evil administration,” Chuck Colson was convicted for his role in the Watergate scandal and sentenced to prison in 1974. It was in prison that Chuck Colson would have a literal come-to-Jesus moment and become a born-again Christian. He would speak with regret about his role in the Watergate scandal. After he left prison, he would go on to start Prison Fellowship ministries, the world's largest Christian non-profit for prisoners, former prisoners and their families, providing educational

material, spiritual care and reintegration support in countries around the globe.

Chuck Colson once famously said, “Power is like salt water. The more a man drinks, the thirstier he becomes”—words we can all heed in this place.

The positive impact that non-profit faith-based organizations and individuals can have on those who have committed criminal offences and are incarcerated can be immense. Research from Robin Wilson and Janice Picheca, published in the *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* in 2007, shows that professionally facilitated community-based volunteerism led to a 70% reduction in the probability of reoffending. This was a study that took place in southwestern Ontario.

According to a report submitted to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime by the International Prison Chaplains Association, prison chaplains act as “a safety valve to diffuse potentially violent situations” and “the presence of prison chaplains helped to reduce violence and rule-breaking among prisoners.”

Tim Dixon summarizes the distinctive role of the prison chaplain and its place in reducing reoffending as follows: “Chaplains are themselves liminal figures,” he said, “on the margins between their faith community and the institution they serve, and themselves somehow outside of the prison hierarchy. This itself makes it easier for them in some ways to identify with the liminality of the prisoner, who is inhabiting a limbo, often without a definite end or finishing point.... One way they can help rehabilitation is by helping people through this time of disorientation into a place of reorientation where they can see their lives in a new light and find hope for the future.”

But don't just take it from these sources, Speaker. I reached out to a number of faith-based organizations and diverse communities to get their feedback on the expansion of chaplaincy services proposed through this motion. I asked them about the addition of chaplains and spiritual services to the community reintegration table structure. Here's what I heard back.

Abdullatif Bakbak, the executive president of the Muslim Association of Canada, had the following message of support for this measure. He said, “The Muslim Association of Canada expresses its support for member of provincial Parliament Sam Oosterhoff's motion that calls for the inclusion of multi-faith chaplaincy work in the Ontario prison system. This motion is an important step towards improving the reintegration of offenders into society and promoting community safety.

“As Muslims, we believe that all individuals, regardless of their circumstances, should have access to spiritual and religious services that can provide comfort and guidance during difficult times.

“This is particularly important for those who are incarcerated, as they are often cut off from their families, communities, and support systems.

“We applaud” this motion “to ensure that religious and spiritual group representation is added to the community reintegration table membership. This will ensure that the needs of all faith communities—including Muslims—are

represented and met. In our experience, Muslim chaplains play a critical role in providing spiritual guidance and support to Muslim inmates and those of other faiths as well. Their support can help inmates develop a sense of purpose and responsibility, which can in turn motivate them to work towards positive change in their lives.

“We urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support” this “motion and help ensure that all Ontarians, regardless of their circumstances, have access to the spiritual and religious services they need....”

Stacey Campbell, the president and CEO of Prison Fellowship Canada, had the following to say:

“I am writing to express Prison Fellowship Canada’s full endorsement of the motion proposed by MPP Oosterhoff. The motion recognizes the vital role of prison chaplains in providing spiritual care and preventing crime and recidivism in Ontario’s correctional facilities....”

“The motion’s call for the involvement of chaplains and Indigenous spiritual leaders in the community reintegration tables governance structure is a critical step towards promoting the successful reintegration of prisoners into community.”

“We fully support the motion’s call for religious and spiritual group representation to be added to the community reintegration table membership ... providing access to these services will help reduce recidivism and promote community safety. We urge all members of provincial Parliament to support this important motion.”

The director of chaplaincy services with the Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto, Rabbi Ronald Weiss, stated the following:

“Our office provides spiritual and religious care to Jewish patients in hospitals, Jewish residents in long-term-care facilities and Jewish offenders in correctional institutions in the province of Ontario.”

“Over the past 29 years I have spent countless hours in correctional institutions working shoulder to shoulder with the institutional prison chaplains ministering to a unique—and very difficult—congregation.”

“Institutional prison chaplains are, indeed, very special people. They” often “work long hours under difficult circumstances to help offenders turn their lives around. I, personally, know many individuals who have been inspired and encouraged to build a productive life in the community, as a direct result of the involvement of the prison chaplain serving in the institution where they had been incarcerated. I applaud the efforts of” this motion “in recognizing the efforts of this select group of people and support” this “proposal to include institutional prison chaplains at the community reintegration tables.”

Dr. Andrew Bennett, the former Canadian ambassador for religious freedom and director of faith communities at the respected think tank Cardus states:

“There is good social science evidence that religious programming in prison, which chaplains often help facilitate, helps reduce recidivism after release.”

“Other research suggests that the intensity of inmates’ religious practice while in prison is ‘inversely related to the presence of in-prison infractions.’ In other words,

chaplains have a role in making our prisons safer for inmates,” but for staff as well.

Speaker, I believe these words speak for themselves. This motion will ensure that we support those who are helping our offenders in the province of Ontario be reintegrated into society, ensuring that when they are exiting the correctional services, they’re able to not go beyond the correction services without any supports but having in place supports that ensure they keep our communities safe.

Having had the opportunity to meet with some of the front-line prison chaplains who do such important work in our institutions here in Ontario, I know that they are some of the most caring, diverse and committed individuals in this province. I ask for the support of all members of the Legislature in passing this motion, supporting these individuals and ensuring that we are preventing released offenders from reoffending in our communities.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to speak in the House and, this evening, a particular honour to speak in response to this motion. I’d just like to read it, just so everyone knows what we’re speaking about, for those who are watching and for my end:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the value of Ontario’s prison chaplains in providing spiritual care and preventing crime and recidivism should be recognized, and community reintegration tables should include the involvement of chaplains and Indigenous spiritual leaders, elders or healers in their governance structure with spiritual group representation added to their membership in order to provide connections to religious and spiritual services for those offenders who express interest.”

I’d like to say at the outset, we are in favour of this. People of faith—regardless of faith—serve a unique role in our society. And for people in our prison system—I’m going to be blunt: They need all the help they can get.

1810

As MPPs, we have a unique opportunity—I’m sure most of you have done it, but if you haven’t, I encourage you to do so—and that’s to tour a correctional facility. I have one in my riding in Monteith, and the North Bay Jail is close to my riding.

I toured the North Bay Jail, and the correctional officers put me in the pen. I asked to be put in the pen. When you go into a correctional facility, they put you in a cell and hold you there as long as possible so you can’t smuggle things in, so you can’t—there’s a lot of things going on in a correctional facility. When you hear that door slam, and you’re lucky enough that you know you can ask for the door to be opened and you can walk out—but I encourage all of us to go tour, and then you know. You have just a slight taste of what that feels like.

When I toured Monteith—Monteith is a bit different facility, because they have ranges. They have individual cells, but they also have ranges. And you don’t know what it feels like until you see fellow humans on the other side of bars. That’s something. And for prison chaplains and Indigenous faith leaders to go in and do what they do is

truly a calling—it's truly a calling—and to be included on these tables is a good idea. What's right is right, and I commend the member for bringing this forward.

But I also have to say that we also have a responsibility to do what we can do, and I'm not sure that we as a group are doing everything that we can do. I'm going to use Monteith correctional centre as an example: 70% of the people in Monteith have never been convicted of a crime. They're there waiting for access to justice, and they're there sometimes for a long time.

And do you know what happens sometimes in Monteith? When someone from the coast gets charged with a crime, they end up in Monteith. They stay there a long time. The courthouse is in Cochrane. So they finally get their chance at justice, and often they are innocent or they are not proven guilty. But do you know what happens then? They're from the coast. They have no money, and, "Oh, you're free to go." There you are in Cochrane with no way to get home. We know that's happening, and it continues to happen. They don't have even a chance at any kind of table. Then we wonder why they have problems in Cochrane, and we know this is happening.

I fully commend the member for this, but there are so many other things that we also need to do and that prison chaplains, particularly Indigenous faith people, have to deal with. We know this is happening. We know it.

Last night, we had another debate about how much funding police should have—again, very nuanced; it was a good debate. But one of the things that could make policing easier in Cochrane—and I'm just using Cochrane as an example, because I'm sure this happens in other places. One of the things that could make policing easier in Cochrane is if we didn't strand people from the coast and leave them there.

If they actually had—do you know what? Where we have problems with recidivism, if you are in a correctional facility and you've never been convicted of a crime, and you're there sometime for months—you don't think you kind of lose faith in the system? And you are with people who are convicted of crimes. You don't think that rubs off, as well?

You have people of faith—and I commend the member, because we actually share much history in our faith. I'm not trying to put words in the member's mouth or whatever, but he made it very clear: It's of all faiths. Christian, Muslim—it's not about one faith or the other. Faith, to us, is a belief system. It's faith.

But one thing we have to think about is one way—what the member is advocating, which we fully agree with, and he provided examples, is that by being exposed to people of faith, some—not everyone, but some—will take that exposure and use it to their benefit, and will practise. Perhaps they won't accept the faith, but they will try to live their lives in a belief system rooted in that faith. I see the member nodding. I think we fully agree, and I think that's why he brought this forward.

But think of it the other way. Put someone in a correctional facility who has never been convicted, and leave that person in that correctional facility for months with

people who have been convicted of crimes and should be there. Don't you think that rubs off as well? Don't you think that also has an influence on their lives? So we should be trying to make sure that people who are charged—rightfully or wrongfully; we should all have access to justice—have as quick access as possible, so that there's less chance of that, because that is an issue.

I was shocked when I toured Monteith—I've been through there a few times—that the number is 70%, because when you think of a correctional facility, you think, "Okay. You do something wrong, you go to court"—and I'm simplifying this incredibly. I can get very detailed about dairy farming, but I can't get detailed about this. But just in layperson's terms: You do something that's against the law, you are apprehended, you are tried. If you are convicted, if it's under, I believe, two years, you go to a provincial facility; if it's over, you go to a federal facility. That's what your common person thinks. I didn't realize until I toured Monteith that 70% of the people in that facility had never been to court. They had been charged, but had never been to court.

So the member's motion, we are in full support of. We are in full support. Free and fair access to faith-based systems—it shouldn't be mandatory; the member made that clear in his motion—should be part of our system.

1820

But true access to justice for all also needs to be part of our system, and that is all of our responsibility. But right now, the government of the day has the chance to improve that. I encourage you to do that. We will support that. We will fully support this motion and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm happy to speak in full support of my colleague and friend the MPP from Niagara West's motion this evening. Chaplains do more than just provide religious services to inmates during times of incarceration. In addition to spiritual guidance, the chaplains offer clear paths to inmates, and these paths include productive, positive post-release life.

In its advice to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, the International Prison Chaplains Association noted: "Inmates benefiting from spiritual assistance frequently wish to continue to do so on release. Assistance from the same chaplain after release may not be practical or desirable ... but chaplains can supply those nearing release with the details of local churches and/or other faith-based communities, thus facilitating continuity of pastoral care and informal support, helping former offenders to change their habits and stay away from bad company." This is perhaps the strongest reason why chaplains and native inmate liaison officers have a role in the membership and governance of community reintegration tables.

Additionally, there is good social science evidence that religious education and programs in prison—which, I might add, chaplains often facilitate—help to reduce recidivism after release. Other research suggests that the intensity of inmates' religious practice while in prison is inversely related

to the presence of in-prison infractions. Or, in other words that I can understand, Speaker, chaplains have a role in making Ontario's correctional facilities safer for inmates and for staff.

Quite often, inmates serving sentences are cut off from family, from friends and from community support systems. All individuals, regardless of their circumstances, should have access to a support network that has a proven track record of often helping those who are incarcerated to find a better life outside of jail. All faith communities play a critical role in providing spiritual guidance, and sometimes for the first time, to inmates who are serving time.

Speaker, including multi-faith chaplains in the community reintegration table is an important step to ensure all Ontarians, regardless of their circumstances, have access to the spiritual and religious services that they need. As a province, we need to be committed to supporting the rehabilitation of prisoners and the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners into the community. The inclusion of spiritual care is essential in transforming lives for the better. As chaplains of all faiths provide a significant role in addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of offenders, it helps them find meaning and purpose, giving them hope and motivation to make positive changes. The powerful effect of spiritual care in the rehabilitation journey of offenders is essential in promoting successful reintegration and ensuring a safer community for us all.

And thus, Speaker, I am fully in support of this motion. Having gone through COVID together in this House and all the things that we have faced, I can say to everyone here and anyone watching at home that having a chaplain here—by name, Charlie Lyons—who was able to come by to spend time with us and to pray with us has meant so much for me, personally, and for my family. To be able to make that more accessible to people who are in prison is a top priority for me.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise today to support the MPP from Niagara West's motion 55, regarding correctional chaplaincy services.

I totally agree with all the other speakers who mentioned earlier that this motion highlights the invaluable role that prison chaplains play in providing spiritual care, preventing crime and promoting successful community reintegration for offenders in Ontario. It is crucial that we recognize the value of their work and take steps to enhance their involvement in our correctional system.

Research has consistently shown that accessing chaplaincy services while incarcerated helps reduce rates of repeat offences. When inmates have the opportunity to engage in meaningful spiritual guidance and counselling, they often experience a positive transformation in their lives. By addressing their spiritual needs, we provide them with a sense of purpose, hope and support during their time behind bars. This, in turn, contributes to their successful reintegration into society once they are released. By recognizing the importance of chaplaincy services, we are

ultimately making out communities safer. Fewer reoffenders means fewer victims and a more secure environment for everyone. Providing inmates with access to improved chaplaincy services while in prison and facilitating their connection with spiritual care after release is a vital step towards achieving this goal.

It is important to note that some inmates are struggling to practise their religion behind bars. Prison chaplains not only provide spiritual guidance and counselling, but they also advocate for religious accommodation to ensure that inmates can practise their faith within the confines of the correctional system. They play a crucial role in fostering an environment of respect, inclusivity and understanding for prisoners of minority faiths.

Furthermore, many chaplains have maintained meaningful connections with prisoners even after their release. They have helped former inmates connect with faith communities, ensuring a continuation of spiritual support during the critical transition period. This support not only helps individuals rebuild their lives but also reduces the likelihood of them falling back into their criminal behaviour.

By adding spiritual group representation to the governance structure of community reintegration tables, we can ensure that chaplains and Indigenous spiritual leaders, elders or healers have a voice in the decision-making processes. This will facilitate the provision of religious and spiritual services for those offenders who express interest, allowing them to maintain their faith and find solace during their journey towards rehabilitation.

I urge all members of this House to support this motion and work together towards a more compassionate and effective correctional system in our province.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's my pleasure to stand up on behalf of the residents of Barrie–Innisfil in support of my colleague's motion, the member from Niagara West, who is proposing to support chaplain services in jails. He really builds upon a lot of things the government is doing in bringing hope to those people who are in our correctional facilities.

Having chaplain services will help with self-reflection, which is the beginning of instilling hope in the world of someone who has lost hope, and by reconnecting, it gives them that hope. Hope is the beginning of rehabilitation.

It builds on what our government has done; for example, our very own member who is here in this Legislature today, the member from Oakville, with his motion of peer-to-peer supports. Many of these members who are receiving chaplain services may go out and may decide that they want to support others to go through and, again, help them with rehabilitation and reintegration back into society, which will also help them with recidivism.

1830

This also builds on the work we're doing in terms of housing and transitional housing—again, not only helping them with the recidivism and the chaplain services to give them that hope and that re-connectivity in the community,

but also complements the work we're doing on transitional housing.

It also complements the work our Minister of Labour is doing. In fact, just recently, he announced an investment of nine programs. They're initiatives to help about 2,000 people leaving the justice system who have a previous criminal record to find meaningful jobs with local businesses, helping them create connections and a sense of belonging within their communities. We know, Speaker, that stable employment has been shown to help address the root causes of crime and reduce the likelihood of someone reoffending, and this particular motion builds on that help to prevent those particular individuals who have been incarcerated from reoffending.

When the member proposed this particular motion, I found a few studies that support his motion and what he's trying to do. There are studies on both the Canadian side and the American side, but I found it interesting—there was a study done in the US, and the member had quoted the Prison Fellowship ministries that were set up in 1975 by Charles Colson, a former president aide for Richard Nixon. Well, part of the work he was doing—there was a study done where they analyzed 185 inmates who participated in this fellowship program that had the help of chaplains. They were released with the same cohort, about 2,289 individuals. They monitored these individuals for about 14 years and they found that the individuals who participated in the fellowship program, which involved chaplain services, had a significant lower rate of recidivism, Speaker.

So again, this builds on a lot of the work our government is doing and, of course, other reports that came out, like the report I quoted which is from a journal article entitled "Prison Religion in Action and its Influence on Offender Rehabilitation," which is written by Thomas O'Connor.

Also, this particular motion not only addresses different religions—I'm personally Jewish, and so I'm happy that Rabbi Ronald Weiss is very supportive of this—but also helps our Indigenous community. It really addresses an article that I read back in 2017 that talked about access to religious services. There's a quote by Chris Brooks, a correctional service worker in Canada: "Prisons allow some Indigenous religious rituals to be done inside institutions," says elder Chris Brooks. He said it would also help if more people from Indigenous communities spent time visiting inmates to help strengthen their connection to the community, so when they get out they feel connected and supported in an area." Speaker, this motion will do that, so I am very pleased to support it and I want to thank my colleague for having the vision and really building on some of the work that our government is doing to help this population.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We now go back to the member from Niagara West for his final response.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate hearing from all the members today and for their words in support. The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the member for Brantford–Brant, the member for Richmond Hill and the member for Barrie–Innisfil: my thanks to them for their comments.

Speaker, I think we've all heard, "If you do the crime, you do the time," and I think we all agree with that sentiment. I know I do. I believe that there are people in our society who have committed severe crimes against their communities and deserve to be put behind bars.

But we also know that we have periods of time that are associated with different crimes, and once that time has been completed, we want to see those people reintegrated into society. We don't want to see them going back again and again. We don't want to see people enter a system of institutionalized or generational crime where they and their children are back in and out of that institutional correctional facility. If we as a Legislature can ensure that they have access to the supports, to the training and, yes, to the spiritual care that is needed to ensure that once they depart from that institution, from that correctional facility, having hopefully learned the importance of contributing to communities and building up stronger communities and abiding by that social contract that we are all part of—I believe that we all have an obligation to do that.

The research that I've seen demonstrates that providing meaningful access to spiritual care from diverse backgrounds ensures that we see massive reductions in the rates of reoffending. And I know that's not going to be for every inmate; I recognize that. That's why I want it to be very clear that it's for those who express interest. But if there are those who express interest and we're able to provide that care—there are so many real-life stories that I've read about, I've heard about, and I've spoken with people who have had those second chances and been supported, whether it's by peer-to-peer or whether it's by other supports. And so, if this motion can ensure that a few more people are able to stay on the right path, avoid crime and keep our communities safe, I appreciate the Legislature's support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

Mr. Oosterhoff has moved private member's notice of motion number 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 on Monday, June 5.

The House adjourned at 1836.

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

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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	
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	