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Lundi
5 juin 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 June 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 juin 2023

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

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

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I ask everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem.

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

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

1020

WEARING OF BUTTON

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Point of order.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear an Our London Family button for the duration of my member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London North Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear a button during the duration of his member's statement. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAULT YOUTH SOCCER CLUB

Mr. Ross Romano: A lot of my colleagues here know that I'm involved in soccer coaching with my three young boys. The last time I stood and delivered a member's statement where I spoke about a soccer tournament, it ended in a bit of heartache, Mr. Speaker, but today's is not the case. Today is quite a great story.

Our 2012 Soo City Junior United boys' team was able to split into two separate soccer teams. We brought our two teams to Petoskey this last weekend—I have some sun still remaining from that. We brought our two teams to Petoskey's spring coast classic: 16 total teams in this age group, Mr. Speaker. Our boys, in their respective divisions, went 3-0; won their semi-final games; and met in the finals, playing Sault Ste. Marie versus Sault Ste. Marie. And guess what? Sault Ste. Marie won.

It was a great day. I'm so proud of all of our boys, the amount of work that they put into the sport, the amount of time and effort, and, obviously, the parents as well and all the work they put in. It's the third time I have been able to go to a soccer tournament with my own sons. I remember doing it as a youngster, as a kid. Sometimes we say as parents, "You live so much more vicariously through your children's eyes," and Mr. Speaker, I can say that is absolutely the case. It was an absolute pleasure to watch, although my son is a lot more competitive than I ever was. Those are my words, Mr. Speaker.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACTIVITIES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart. Tomorrow is the two-year anniversary of a vile act of Islamophobia, a cowardly act of hatred which stole the lives of the Afzaal family: Talat, Madiha, Salman and Yumnah. Out for a family walk, they were targeted for the way they appeared, whether their ethnicity or their attire. It was a despicable act by a weak person. We must not simply ask ourselves how could this happen, but also do what must be done to make sure this never happens again.

White supremacy gathers many targets. Over the last few years, xenophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and transphobia have increased to levels before unseen. No matter where you come from, how you worship, how you appear, your background, your abilities, your age, your gender or whom you love, everyone deserves to have a safe home, community and be the person you were meant to be.

When someone cuts us, do we not bleed the same? When we love another, do we not feel the same joy? Suffering loss, do we not all feel sorrow, remorse, guilt or regret? And when we smile and laugh, do we not feel the same lightness of spirit?

Rather than building fences or focusing on what divides us, let us instead find our common humanity and recognize that we are one family sharing this Earth and commit to share this Earth with fairness, justice and respect.

Let's all remain quiet and listen to others with an open heart. Remember to make space, elevate voices, bring others forward and share privilege.

Love will conquer hate, and it's up to us all.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: One year ago, I was honoured to be re-elected as the member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga—Erin Mills. Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard to fulfill our promises to build a stronger, more prosperous Ontario for the people.

In Mississauga, we are committed to building highways and transit projects. In December, we saw the Highway 401 expansion open. Work on the Hazel McCallion LRT is well under way, and Mississauga received \$19.6 million in transit funding.

Investments continue to pour into health care. We are clearing the backlog on essential surgeries and building a new Mississauga Hospital. Last year, the government gave \$4.2 million to Trillium Health Partners for upgrades and repairs.

We are also building long-term-care homes, including a new centre for aging and longevity at Ivan Franko Homes and 128 beds at a new facility by the Church of the Virgin Mary Coptic church.

Additionally, I was proud to announce last month, alongside the Minister of Labour, that the Professional Engineers of Ontario are the first regulated body to remove Canadian experience requirements, and over 30 more industries will be doing the same. Promise made, promise kept.

We are going to continue to be there for Ontarians, keeping our commitments to build more housing, support families, create jobs and keep the province open for business. We are getting it done for the people of Ontario.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: June is National Indigenous History Month. This month honours the contributions of Indigenous people to Canada and Ontario—our rich history, they say. It's a month that encourages people to have events that people can learn from.

Indigenous people have many stories that need to be told and heard by Canadians. I hope that people take the time to attend events in your areas and to listen with an open heart about the real history of Canada: the genocide, the loss of our ways of life, the loss of our languages, our children and our lands.

Canada and Ontario have had many opportunities and lots of time to make changes in their relationship with Indigenous people. But most of the time, governments don't make the time to find the political will to create positive change. The political will comes from the people. Once you acknowledge National Indigenous History Month, take another step and ask yourself what you can do to move forward from just having this month, and use your voices to make change.

Our actions cannot be performative, and we cannot be the ones always reconciling. You have to do your part. Real change is about action, not words.

GALT GASLIGHT DISTRICT

Mr. Brian Riddell: Today, I want to introduce to you a new attraction in my riding that is the talk of the town and is attracting visitors from far and wide. The Gaslight District, established by Hip Developments, is located in historic downtown Galt. It's a mixture of residential and

commercial properties, retail shops, the arts and dining, with a focus on community and culture. It features a one-acre public square with a permanent stage, a large outdoor video screen, and it offers year-round free community events.

1030

The Gaslight District will host its official grand opening from July 28 to the 30th. The three-day event will feature a multitude of musical acts, artisans—and the best part, there will be a flyover, so I'm told—and a whole lot of free fun for families. With thousands of people expected to attend, it promises to be a celebration that Cambridge residents will remember for years to come.

Located on the former Tiger Brand property on Grand Avenue, the Gaslight District is a thriving hub in a revitalized urban core graced with the same vintage details as its former day. The Gaslight District is the place to be in Cambridge, and it is a destination that I am very proud of. I encourage you to stop by and discover all it has to offer.

POVERTY

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Ottawa is experiencing record levels of food insecurity. The Ottawa Food Bank had the highest number of food bank visits in their entire 38-year history last year with 403,467 visits; that's a 40% increase compared to 2017. And unfortunately, things are getting worse, not better. The Caldwell Family Centre food bank in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean served 53% more families in April 2023 than they did in April 2022. I'm hearing this from all of the food banks in my riding, Speaker. The demand is so high right now, and the capacity to meet it is being seriously strained.

We need this government to treat the affordability crisis like the urgent situation that it is and take swift action to address rising levels of hunger and poverty in our communities. That means doubling ODSP and Ontario Works so that people on social assistance can actually buy food and pay for rent. It means increasing the minimum wage so that food banks can stop extending their hours into the evening and weekends for people who are working full-time. And it means bringing back real rent control so that rent isn't taking up 80% or more of people's paycheques.

The wealthy lobbyists and developers that this government listens to might be doing fine, but in our communities, people can't even put food on the table.

Enough is enough, Speaker. It is time for action.

EDUCATION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my pleasure this morning to recognize the hard work and dedication our teachers and support staff provide to the students of my riding of Simcoe–Grey. Recently, I have toured many elementary and secondary schools in my riding, and I visited two Simcoe County District School Board schools in Clearview township on Take Your MPP to School Day.

My first stop was Stayner Collegiate, where Principal Kimberlee Hand took me on a school tour. Speaker, Stayner Collegiate is one of only two grade 7 to 12 schools in Simcoe county. They have a very active and robust student body and have achieved many milestones over the past year. I was joined by board trustee Brandy Rafeek and the board superintendent, Greg Jacobs. We then visited Clearview Meadows Elementary School, where we met Principal Lisa Saunders and Vice-Principal Amanda Harrison.

Speaker, of special note, I'd like to recognize Stayner Collegiate's skilled trades program. This program prepares students for much-needed jobs and for some careers in the trades. As you know, this is an agenda that this government has been working very hard on, and it was wonderful to see it taking form at Stayner Collegiate. It combines computer training on AutoCAD and hands-on woodworking training in the well-equipped studio shop. In addition, Stayner Collegiate operates an extensive co-op program, providing students with valuable first-hand on-site work experience and establishing important contacts with tradespeople throughout Clearview.

Speaker, I again recognize the commitment to excellence of the Simcoe County District School Board and want to congratulate the teachers and staff for their excellent work.

OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER GALA

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I would like to take this time to congratulate the Ottawa Riverkeeper organization for their recent gala, which raised over \$340,000.

The Ottawa River forms a boundary of the riding of Ottawa–Vanier. It is the lifeblood of the city, where we get our drinking water, where we fish, swim, boat, play and cool off. The river also connects us to the Indigenous people who have lived along, fished in and travelled on the Ottawa River for millennia. The name “Ottawa” itself derives from the Algonquin word “adàwe,” meaning “to trade.”

The gala paid special tribute to Algonquin elder Claudette Commanda, who thanked the organization for being collaborative and for respecting the Algonquin people and their heritage. Through many years of careless custodianship and lax environmental laws, the river has fallen into a polluted state. I recognize and appreciate the work done by the Ottawa Riverkeeper, whose goal is to ensure a healthy Ottawa River watershed for everyone.

For over 20 years, the Riverkeeper organization has been monitoring the health and the levels of pollution in the water and engaging and educating our youth to become the next generation of river stewards. These efforts all take a network of volunteers, compassionate staff and substantial donations to keep doing this work on behalf of our city's residents.

I congratulate Riverkeeper Laura Reinsborough, her team, board chair Geoff Green and the organizing committee of the Riverkeeper gala for their tireless work and success.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Last Friday marked the anniversary of our government being given a second mandate by the people of Ontario. In 2018, we promised we would work for the people. In 2022, we promised that we would get it done. Speaker, I can proudly say that we are delivering on both promises. We are getting it done for the people of Ontario. I am so proud of what we have accomplished.

In my own community of Oakville North–Burlington, investments include:

- five new schools in four years, with an investment of \$142 million for 4,403 student spaces and 352 child care spaces;

- a total of 1,153 new and redeveloped long-term-care beds for seniors, with four hours of direct care each day;

- \$138 million more in base funding for Halton Healthcare and \$69 million for Joseph Brant Hospital; and

- \$295 million of a total of \$1.8 billion investments so that Ford Canada can become an electric vehicle hub in North America, creating 3,000 new, good-paying jobs.

The government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, has made significant and positive changes in the lives of people across the province. We have made life more affordable for families, seniors and small businesses. I look forward to continuing to serve my community of Oakville North–Burlington and thank you for the trust you have given me.

CHRISTINE ELLIOTT

Mr. Lorne Coe: I am pleased to share with you that Christine Elliott, the former Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, will be presented with an honorary degree from Trent University at the 2023 convocation on June 16. Leo Groarke, the president and vice-chancellor of Trent University, had this to say: The individuals receiving these honorary degrees “exemplify the spirit of challenging the way we think to make a difference in our communities, our province, across the country and around the world.”

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Deputy Premier Christine Elliott will receive an honorary doctorate of laws in recognition of her service to Ontario as Minister of Health from 2018 to 2022, during which she oversaw the province's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as her advocacy and volunteerism for vulnerable community members in the region of Durham—for example, the Abilities Centre, which she and her late husband, the Honourable James Michael Flaherty, established, and the Grandview children's treatment centre, now situated in the riding of Ajax.

Congratulations, Christine.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to draw members' attention to a special guest in the Speaker's gallery today. Mr. Tim McGough has been selected by a

panel of MPPs to be considered by the House to serve as the Legislative Assembly's next Sergeant-at-Arms. Mr. McGough is present today to observe as the House considers the motion to order his appointment.

1040

Mr. McGough has close to 40 years of experience in policing. He began his career with the Royal Military Police and served in various roles with the Medicine Hat Police Service in Alberta.

If appointed by the House, he will assume his role as Sergeant-at-Arms of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on June 19.

Welcome, Mr. McGough.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to welcome to the House my husband, Albert Wai, who comes to Queen's Park to celebrate our 44th wedding anniversary with me. Thanks for all your support as I serve Ontarians.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome Jonathan Crozier to the House today. Jonathan made us some fantastic martinis down in the Legislature the other night from Vodkow. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Blais: On behalf of my friend and colleague from Kingston and the Islands, I'd like to welcome visitors from his riding: Gemma, Milo and Cole Zelmanovits, and Scott Grant, who are here to support their nephew and page Luke DeBoni.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Good morning. I have some guests today from IBT College: James Rice, Joe Shokour, Don Fenn, Anna Simonyan, Ken Rice, Andrea Kurth and Tenzin Norsang.

From the consul general of the Philippines' office: Rodney Jonas Sumague, Gil Galang and Jennifer Alog Lopez.

I also have a friend who is visiting who is a recent graduate of the PSW program and a recent IBT PSW award-winner: Patrick-Mary Okafor.

I invite all members to join the IBT lunch reception in room 230 following question period.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's my pleasure to recognize our page captain today, Sally Tabachnick, from my riding of Davenport. Sally's parents, Scott and Nadia, and her brother Alfie, who was also a page here, are with us in the members' gallery. I look forward to meeting with them all later today. Congratulations, Sally.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I'd like to welcome two amazing members from my constituency team today: Victoria Varela and Aleks Draca. Welcome to your House.

Mr. John Jordan: I'm pleased to introduce my wife, Brenda-Leah; my daughter, Amanda; and her friend Powell Hedley from Nashville. Last night, we attended the country music awards Ontario in Hamilton, and I'm proud to say Amanda was nominated for the Rising Star Award.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Luke DeBoni is also page captain today. Joining us in the House are Luke's parents, Jill Zelmanovits and Ross DeBoni, and Luke's grandparents Judith Zelmanovits and George Zelmanovits. Welcome.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I would like to welcome two people from the riding of Burlington who are with us in the gallery today. Welcome to Michael and Mark Mazzucco.

Ms. Jess Dixon: We are having a family affair today. Last week, I introduced Chris Golder. We now have Keiko Yano, who is the mother of one of our wonderful pages, Arisa. I'm so pleased to welcome Keiko to the House.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome Justin Watkins to the House. He's working for the city of Kitchener, but we used to volunteer our time with the United Way of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to wish my colleague from Oshawa, Ms. Jen French, a very happy birthday today.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I also, as we're celebrating birthdays, would like to wish my good friend and colleague Jeff Burch a very happy birthday today.

APPOINTMENT OF SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader and Minister of Legislative Affairs.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the next Sergeant-at-Arms of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the next Sergeant-at-Arms of the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

Once again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in accordance with subsection 77.5(1) and (2) of the Legislative Assembly Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.10, Tim McGough be appointed Sergeant-at-Arms, commencing on June 19, 2023.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, in accordance with subsection 77.5(1) and (2) of the Legislative Assembly Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.10, Tim McGough be appointed Sergeant-at-Arms, commencing on June 19, 2023. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations, Mr. McGough.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. Last week, we saw the emergency rooms close in Minden and Thessalon. The urgent care centres in Fort Erie and Port Colborne closed overnight—permanently. We saw another code black—no ambulances available—in Windsor-Essex. This past weekend, the Conservative staffing crisis forced the emergency room in Carleton Place to close overnight. It was closed for 16 hours this weekend—16 hours—the third closure so far this year.

To the Premier: How many more ERs like Carleton Place will have to close this summer because of his government's inaction?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The temporary or permanent closures are disturbing for communities, but I have to say, as we continue to invest in health care, the party opposite, the NDP, continue to vote against those investments, whether it is 50 new expanded renovations of hospitals in the province of Ontario, whether it is Learn and Stay programs that ensure paramedics, lab technicians and nurses can train in the province of Ontario and have their tuition covered if they are prepared to serve in an underserved community.

You continue to defend the status quo, and we continue to make the investments that are going to make generational changes in the province of Ontario. We're doing that work. I only wish that the party of the NDP and the party of the Liberals, when they were in power, were making similar investments so that we were not, in Ontario, finding the same thing that is happening across Canada and, in fact, worldwide: shortages of—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: And emergency rooms continue to close; they continue to close. How many more is it going to be this week?

1050

Their plan is not working, and ordinary Ontarians are worried about what this means for them. Nearly 400,000 Ontarians took action in the Ontario Health Coalition's citizen referendum. Members opposite dismissed it as a stunt, but this past weekend, across this province, tens of thousands of Ontarians everywhere took action with the Ontario Federation of Labour to tell this government that enough is enough.

Speaker, if the Premier is truly for the people, will he actually listen to the people?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Dedicated off-load nursing programs that allow hospitals to have dedicated staff who are able to take those patients as the paramedics come in and allow the paramedics to go back out into community and do what they want to do, which is continue to respond to 911 calls; 911 models of care that ensure that instead of the paramedic's only choice—to be able to take that patient to a palliative care facility, to a long-term care facility, instead of exclusively and only to an emergency department. These are the changes that we have been making that we are seeing, on the ground, make a difference. The number of paramedics who have spoken to me saying, "These programs are literally life-changing in our community. Please keep them coming," tells me that the programs are working. And I continue to remind them that, unfortunately, the NDP continue to vote against them.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, I can tell the minister that it's time she put the partisanship aside and did the work it takes to fix people's health care, because this is not the reality out there across this province—code blacks, code reds. Speaker, Ontarians are speaking out because they know this government is heading down the wrong path. They saw what happened in Quebec, where carpal tunnel surgeries at private clinics cost taxpayers 84% more than if they had been done in the public system. They hear experts when they say that further privatization of health care will lead to even more emergency room closures and worse outcomes for patients.

Real leadership is listening and changing your behaviour when you have made a mistake. Back to the Premier: Will he start listening to ordinary Ontarians and stop wasting public money on privatizing care?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I talk about the suite of services and programs that are available to hospitals across Ontario, I'm going to highlight one in particular, led by the Minister of Colleges and Universities: The Learn and Stay program that ensures that paramedics, lab techs and nurses in the province of Ontario who choose to study and stay in those underserved communities has had an impressive 4,000 students registered for that one program alone.

You talk about why you're opposed to the expansion of surgical and diagnostic centres in the province of Ontario—centres that have operated for decades but have not had the investment of previous governments. We made that investment in January in Windsor, in Kitchener-Waterloo and in Ottawa, and we now have people getting those cataract surgeries and getting back into community.

The status quo doesn't work. We're making the investments.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Minister of Transportation. People in Toronto are waiting and waiting and waiting for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT to finally go into service. Small businesses have been affected badly by the project, which has gone completely off the rails. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says they're "fed up with the project's frequent delays, constantly shifting timelines, ballooning costs, and now a legal challenge that could halt construction."

Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation: When will the Eglinton Crosstown finally open?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As I've said before, I want to assure Ontarians that the Eglinton Crosstown construction continues to make progress. Currently, the project is 98% complete. But, as I have said before, Mr. Speaker, politicians should not interfere in the timing and the opening of transit projects. When that happens, we see that transit riders are left stranded. The Ottawa LRT is a prime example of that, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stands in this House and asks about why we can't get the Eglinton Crosstown built when her own party, when it had the chance to vote in support of it 10 years ago, declined to do so.

The NDP continues to vote against transit. They vote against subway expansion, they vote against new LRTs for the city of Hamilton and they vote against building transit faster.

Our government will continue to deliver for the people of Ontario despite the NDP and their opposition to everything we do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Delay after delay after delay, all while people are left waiting for transit—transit that feels like it's never going to arrive. Local businesses are taking financial hits—or worse, even closing up shop.

These delays have been caused by the utter mismanagement of this project. Instead of taking responsibility, this minister is embroiled in a finger-pointing battle between the private contractors, Metrolinx, the TTC and even her own ministry. The Toronto Sun reported this morning that they can't even get answers on just how bad things are.

Speaker, instead of blaming everybody else, can the minister specify what direct actions she has taken to fix this mess?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: You know, Mr. Speaker, last week in this House, the Leader of the Opposition said to all of us that she will continue to vote against public transit. She says that she will not support things that are bad for Ontario. So let's talk about what the Leader of the Opposition thinks is bad for Ontario.

She thinks that the Ontario Line, which will take 28,000 cars off the road every single day, is bad for Ontario. She says that the largest transit expansion anywhere in North America, which will deliver a new three-stop subway extension for the people of Scarborough, an Eglinton Crosstown West extension and a Yonge North subway extension as well as a new LRT for the city of Hamilton—according to the Leader of the Opposition, that's bad for Ontario, and she will do everything she can to stop it. She votes against it every single time.

Mr. Speaker, a transit plan that united, for the first time in Canadian history, four levels of government—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, she has been the Minister of Transportation for four years, and all she can do is play the blame game. Over 400 businesses have closed because of this. Ontarians need public transit, Speaker. We need affordable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles:—quality public transit to connect us between work and home, to loved ones, to opportunity. Ontario used to be able—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles:—to build transit projects on time and on budget, but not under the Conservatives' watch and especially not under this minister's watch.

Back to the minister: With rumours swirling around a potential cabinet shuffle, does this Minister of Transportation still think she's the best person for the job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I hesitate to insert myself in this interesting discussion. However, I'm going to start calling members who are repeatedly interjecting to order.

The member for Ottawa Centre, come to order. The member for Waterloo, come to order. The Minister of Education, come to order. The member for Brampton North, come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order.

Start the clock. The response? Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: To the Leader of the Opposition: We have learned a lot of the lessons from the Eglinton Crosstown, which is why we brought in the Building Transit Faster Act, because we know that businesses and residents across Eglinton were deeply affected by the impacts of the construction. Mr. Speaker, this was supported by people across Ontario, to introduce this legislation so that we can get shovels in the ground faster so that we can deliver on our priority transit projects—which, of course, she voted against—faster than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, if she wants transit, then she should vote in favour of it. What the Leader of the Opposition needs to do is pick a lane.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Ontarians pay some of the highest cell phone and Internet bills on earth. Places around the world spend 10 times less for what we're getting. If they can do it, why can't we?

This morning, I joined our Ontario NDP leader and NDP MPP colleagues to discuss a consultation plan and a set of hearings across the province to hear from consumers, telecom experts, consumer protection advocates and the industry itself to discuss a way forward and a plan to deliver more accessible telecom, and at better prices.

Does this government agree that telecom companies are gouging Ontarians? And what are they willing to do about it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, we're putting more money into Ontarians' pockets. They voted against every single item we put forward. They voted against the 10-cents-per-litre gas tax. They voted against when we scrapped the licence plate stickers for eight million people,

an average of \$240 per family. We dropped the tolls on the 412 and 418, saving the folks millions of dollars; they voted against that. We increased ODSP by 5%, tied to inflation; they voted against that. We cut the income tax to 1.1 million low-income workers; they voted against that. We increased minimum wage; they voted against that. We extended a 10% tuition cut; they voted against that. And we're doubling the payments for low-income seniors, which will provide a maximum increase of \$1,000 per person.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP campaign on making gas more expensive. We have the carbon tax king over there from Ottawa Centre who wants the highest carbon tax in the entire world, and you're proud of it. It's absolutely unbelievable. You're proud of that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Restart the clock. The supplementary question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My God, it seems like the Premier sure hates Monday morning. Someone give him a hug.

If there is one thing that this government is great at, it's over-promising and under-delivering. What we've seen is that this government has held back nearly 90% of their budgeted investment on broadband infrastructure, going back years.

So my question is simple: Why won't they make broadband access a priority, and why are they under-spending on bringing access to Ontarians? Because access to Internet and cell phones and telecom isn't just a luxury anymore; it is a necessity for all of us.

Interjections.

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

The response: the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how a \$4-billion investment, the largest in our provincial history, is not making access to high-speed Internet a priority.

Prior to COVID, there were 700,000 premises that did not have connections to high-speed Internet. We are now working on making sure that we connect the remaining 40,000 to 60,000 premises. Now, I would say that that is very good progress, Mr. Speaker, but we have not seen any support from the members opposite.

We will continue to make sure that we make those investments, but we pay our Internet service providers when they fulfill their project timelines and when they meet their milestones for construction. The \$4 billion is there; we will continue to make sure that everyone is connected and no one is left behind.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Much like the rest of the world, Ontario continues to face economic challenges. Individuals, families, workers and businesses are all troubled by the rising cost of living. As prices go up on everything from groceries to gas, their household and business budgets are feeling ongoing financial pressure.

That is why our government must implement a responsible plan that supports businesses, families and workers across the province. Speaker, can the minister explain how our government is continuing to support people and businesses during these uncertain economic times?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member from Cambridge for that very insightful question. Mr. Speaker, our government has a responsible plan to ensure that all of Ontario remains on a strong and steady economic growth channel. Our plan is a commitment to support families, to support individuals, to support workers in this great province, as well as our business partners. We've laid a strong fiscal foundation which will continue to build Ontario into the future.

As inflation was rising, as the Premier said, we took action early to help the hard-working families of Ontario. We eliminated licence plate renewal fees as well as stickers and refunded two years of past fees for eligible vehicle owners. We extended the current gas tax until December 31, Mr. Speaker.

That is what the people of Ontario expect and deserve from this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Brian Riddell: It is encouraging to hear that our government is continuing to move forward with measures that will support people and businesses in Ontario. This Legislature recently passed Bill 85, Building a Stronger Ontario Act, which will advance our government's economic plans to help build a stronger and more resilient economy for today and in the future.

However, the people of Ontario expect that our government will continue to follow through on our commitments to lower costs, build key infrastructure, build projects faster and attract more jobs and investments. But, most of all, the people of Ontario want our government to focus on issues that will help make everyday life more affordable, and they deserve nothing less.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on actions that our government is taking to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the member for that question. We're making transit more affordable by eliminating double fares for most local transit services in the greater Golden Horseshoe area when commuters use GO Transit services. As the Premier mentioned, we took off the tolls, off the 412 and 418. But it doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker: freezing tuition across the province, after already lowering tuition by 10%; and negotiating the best child care deal in Canada, saving families an average of \$12,000 per year.

For low-income seniors, uncertain times are even more challenging. That's why we temporarily doubled the Guaranteed Annual Income System payments for eligible

seniors until December 2023, expanding the GAINS program for up to a 50% increase in recipients, and adjusted, for the first time ever, the benefit to inflation.

Mr. Speaker, our track record speaks for itself. We're committed to keeping costs down for the people of this province.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, Lambton Kent District School Board wrote to the Minister of Education about the 63% cut to their Indigenous education funding. Speaker, it's wrong to cut funding during National Indigenous History Month. School boards across Ontario need resources for curriculum on residential schools, on treaties, on Indigenous history, as well as land-based learning. But I don't know: What's wrong with our history?

Speaker, how is the board supposed to implement their Indigenous education programming with a 63% cut in funding for next year?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are very committed to ensuring that Canadians learn about their Indigenous history, about Indigenous history in the province and country. It's why funding within the school board allocation is up overall. It's at \$120 million. It is the highest level of funding in Ontario history.

Now, beyond the money, I will note that the member opposite rightfully speaks about our curriculum, the mandatory learning so students could be better informed about our past. I'm proud that, this coming September, every child in grades 1 through 3 will finally learn about residential school knowledge, because we are mandating it in the curriculum effective this coming September. That's a positive step forward. We made that announcement with Indigenous leaders, who called on the former government to get it done; they didn't. We are.

We're committed to the cause and will continue to work with members opposite to get this right, so we strengthen Indigenous learning right across Ontario.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question: the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's amazing how the minister's record-breaking spending keeps translating into cuts on the ground. It's like the opposite of magic.

The Lambton Kent District School Board isn't just losing Indigenous funding. They're facing a cut of \$8 million, or 2.5% of their total budget. This is on top of the fact that the government is only funding one quarter of the actual cost of special education for Lambton Kent. In all parts of the province, kids need more support, not less.

Why is this government forcing school boards like Lambton Kent to implement cuts and take supports away?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government is increasing investments by \$590 million more for the coming September. Our Special Education Grant is up across the board—over \$3.2 billion. It is dramatically higher than when the former Liberals were in place. We've hired over

3,200 EAs. I appreciate the inconvenient truth associated with funding, staffing and support for school boards, but we are increasing the supports across the board in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and in every single region of Ontario. To suggest otherwise is frankly preposterous.

No one believes the NDP. This is the default. Every year, there's a narrative from the opposition of the sky is falling.

We are increasing supports to help kids get back on track. Look at the numbers, look at the investments: \$590 million more and roughly 8,000 additional staff even though we don't have additional kids in our schools. We will continue to be there for Ontario kids.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The sad reality, Speaker, is that everyone in our province, unfortunately, knows someone who has been negatively impacted by the ongoing opioid epidemic. It's a distressing fact that over 2,000 individuals died last year from opioid-related causes and about one third of those individuals worked in the vital construction sector.

That's why our government must take action and ensure that Ontario workers have access to life-saving equipment, like naloxone kits, when and where they need them. Our government must do more to protect Ontarians who are struggling with addictions in order to reduce preventable workplace deaths.

Speaker, will the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to protect our workers here in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington for this very important question. Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is working every day to save lives. That's why we are actively expanding the availability of naloxone kits throughout Ontario. Naloxone is a vital medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. As of last week, employers are now required to have a life-saving naloxone kit on hand and workers trained on how to use these naloxone kits.

Through our Ontario Workplace Naloxone Program, we have now distributed more than 1,000 free naloxone kits to workplaces across the province. This initiative enhances public awareness of opioid addiction, combats the stigma and, ultimately, saves lives.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister. It is very encouraging to hear that naloxone kits have been distributed to many workplaces. Let's face it, the seriousness of the opioid addiction and the risk of accidental overdoses simply cannot be understated.

For the Ontario Workplace Naloxone Program to be effective, naloxone kits must be available in workplaces where there's a risk of opioid overdose. Additionally, people must be trained to know how to administer naloxone

properly. That's why our government must implement requirements and directives for employers so that they can provide a safe workplace for their employees.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting worker safety and protection through the workplace naloxone program?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for this question. Speaker, one life lost to an overdose is one too many. Every one of these deaths is preventable. Our workplace naloxone program is the very first of its kind anywhere in North America. We are supporting at-risk businesses by providing them with free access to naloxone kits and comprehensive training for those workers to use those naloxone kits. Working with our Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, we have a strategy to give people the second chance that they deserve. We're taking an education-first approach that is focused on giving employers the tools they need to do their part.

Speaker, I encourage everyone to visit ontario.ca/workplacenaloxone to learn more.

HOUSING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is to the Premier. Another expert report has just been released, this time using advanced mapping technology, that shows yet again this government does not need to build on the greenbelt to achieve our housing goals. Yes, we are in a housing crisis. We need housing; we need affordable housing. But this study shows that Ontario could deliver the next 30 years of housing in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area using a portion of land already zoned for development.

My question: Given the mounting evidence that we already have the necessary land to build housing, why are you putting the greenbelt, our farms, our forests and our wetlands at risk?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

To reply, the Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

Speaker, we all know that Ontario is expected to grow by more than two million people by 2031, with approximately 1.5 million living just in the greater Golden Horseshoe alone. The federal government has also announced that Canada will increase immigration by another 500,000 newcomers by 2025. We know Ontario is expected to get a significant portion of new Canadians, and so we have to start planning now so the next generation of Ontarians have a place to live. The decision we made will result in the construction of at least 50,000 new homes and will expand the greenbelt by approximately 2,000 acres.

Speaker, Ontario's population reached a historic 15 million people last year, and it's expected that this growth is going to continue. We are going to get 1.5 million homes built by 2031 because we desperately need it, Speaker.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. The Conservatives want to open up an area of land as big as the size of Toronto on greenbelt land and farmland, even though experts have been telling you loud and clear—even your own experts have been telling you—that there is more than enough land already available in areas zoned for development.

Well, get this: Land speculators are reading the tea leaves and they are buying up protected farmland. Farm prices have gone up by 20% in the last year alone. New farmers and young farmers can't compete with these land speculators, and they're worried they're never going to get into the housing sector and the farming sector.

To strengthen our farming sector, can the Conservatives commit to not opening up any more greenbelt land to needless development?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll ask members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Look, we all know that we are in a housing supply crisis, contrary to what the member from Hamilton Centre remarked last week, who said that the housing crisis was manufactured.

Speaker, I am so proud to be part of a government that's taking a responsible, targeted approach to deliver on its plan to build a million and a half homes by 2031. This plan is just part of our larger commitment to make life easier and much more affordable for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, under this Premier and this infrastructure minister, we're investing more than \$159 billion over the next decade to support infrastructure projects including transit, highways, schools, hospitals, long-term-care projects. This transportation minister is building more municipalities while improving local transit. This labour minister—we're doubling our economic immigrants. And under this economic development minister, we're attracting \$7 billion in St. Thomas.

Speaker, our province is growing. We're welcoming newcomers. We need to build housing, and we're going to get it done.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Back in 2019, this government did a good thing by creating provincially significant employment zones and identifying areas of high economic output. The Nanticoke industrial park in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk includes both Stelco and Imperial Oil, and was included in this initiative—rightfully so.

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Fast-forward to last spring in Haldimand, when the mayor at the time dropped news on the county that he supported a proposed 15,000-home community on 4,200 acres surrounding the industrial park. Stelco maintains a provincial rezoning of the lands could imperil the future of

the company's Lake Erie works, and Imperial Oil has the same opinion.

Haldimand county needs these good-paying jobs, and an industrial park is where they should remain. Speaker, will the minister assure Haldimand county and the tenants of the industrial park that this government will protect the jobs at the steel mill and the refinery, as they said they would do in 2019?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for her question. Speaker, yes, it's very, very important that we have high-employment zones. We have many of them right across this province. But what we also heard from many of these employers is the desperately needed housing in and around those employment zones, so that their employees could get to work much faster, rather than sitting in commutes for hours.

And so, we're listening and we're making sure that the people of this province can get to work in a timely manner by still protecting those high-employment zones and getting that building, bringing in this investment, and everybody has a great place to live, to work and to raise their family.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: The idea of putting 40,000 people in Ontario's largest industrial park was supported by the former Haldimand county mayor, who unexpectedly ended up on the ballot for the party of this government last June. It appears something interesting developed between 2019 and last spring, because now we see this government doing away with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Surely we're not so desperate to build houses that we would subject newcomers to life in Ontario's largest industrial park.

Chaos across the Highway 6 corridor and the inability to meet the health care needs of the current population have many people concerned about adding 40,000 people to the area. Two elections have been fought on this issue, and voters feel an industrial park is not the place for a city.

As the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, it is my duty to bring forward the public's opinion, not form it for them. Speaker, if the consultation on the provincial planning statement concludes that the people of Ontario want to see these employment lands protected, will this government uphold that protection, including the employment lands at Nanticoke?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Speaker, I do want to thank the member opposite again for her question. But as I mentioned earlier, it is so important that (1) we have these employment zones, but (2) that people can actually get to and from work in a timely fashion. By allowing housing being built around those employment zones, we are making it easier for people to work, easier to raise their families, easier to stay within their own communities, and I think that's extremely important.

That is also why we're taking the provincial policy statement, putting it together with A Place to Grow and making it one provincial policy statement, to make the

wording so much easier, more easy to understand and easier to follow for all municipalities.

OIL AND GAS WELLS

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. In August 2021, my constituents in Wheatley experienced a terrifying and life-changing event when a gas explosion occurred at the site of an old, abandoned well. This explosion had a devastating impact on our people, our businesses and our community.

Thankfully there was no loss of life, but lasting economic damage remains, as well as legitimate concerns about the potential for similar occurrences throughout other communities.

No community in Ontario should ever have to experience such an event. That is why our government must take urgent action to address this serious issue. Speaker, can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to address the environmental impact that legacy oil and gas wells have in our province?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I just want to say to the good people of Wheatley that you're never far from our thoughts, and what happened in 2021 continues to shape our actions today.

I was pleased to be joined by the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington—thank you for the question—and the member from Essex on Friday to make an announcement that's very important to southwest Ontario. Over the course of the next three years, our government will provide over \$26 million to develop a plan to address legacy oil and gas wells in the province. To start, eligible municipalities will be able to apply for funding for specific projects aimed at keeping their communities safe. In addition, this funding will help municipalities address risks and challenges of oil and gas wells, invest in plugging more abandoned oil and gas wells and conduct more science and research.

Speaker, this is the first step in a commitment to the people of southwest Ontario. We've heard their concerns, and we'll continue to provide resources to protect and build a stronger province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Trevor Jones: The investment our government is making is a positive first step toward developing a strategy to address the serious implications of abandoned oil and gas wells. It's clear the explosion in Wheatley emphasized the seriousness of these issues and the need for urgent and customized action.

The potential for the release of dangerous gases presents a number of genuine safety risks and concerns. This is why it's essential our government gains a deeper understanding of the extent of the challenges associated with legacy oil and gas wells throughout southwestern Ontario. Speaker, could the minister please elaborate on the scope and design of the strategy to address these risks posed by legacy oil and gas wells?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks again for the member's question. Speaker, Friday's announcement really marks a historic first step in the development of a comprehensive action plan to help tackle the complex challenges of legacy oil and gas wells in Ontario. Our government is building on our strategy, building on lessons learned and feedback from mayors, fire chiefs, Indigenous communities, industry experts and members of the public.

As I mentioned on June 2, in addition to the funding, our government has also announced an action plan that will have three main principles: increasing our understanding of the risks of plugging oil and gas wells, taking actions to reduce and mitigate these risks, and implementing measures that are focused on preventing petroleum-related emergencies and enhancing our emergency preparedness.

We understand our job is not done, which is why we'll be holding additional consultations as we look toward the next steps. Speaker, we're just getting started. This side of the House will not rest until we have delivered on our commitment to the great people of southwest Ontario.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: Last week, we learned that the urgent cares in Port Colborne and Fort Erie are having their hours reduced by half, permanently. This follows the recent closure of after-hours emergency surgeries at Welland hospital. Welland is where Port Colborne patients go if they cannot access service in Port Colborne.

Does the minister understand that real people don't plan to need emergency surgery prior to 10 p.m.? That's why it's called an emergency. Will the minister stop blaming volunteers on hospital boards for this crisis and finally take responsibility?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I have said many times, when hospital leaderships make decisions about how to best serve their communities, it is not in our interest, as local members or government members, to second-guess those locally decided upon decisions.

Having said that, the investments that we are making to ensure that we have, as an example, last August, directed the College of Nurses of Ontario to quickly assess, review and expedite licences for internationally educated nurses, mean that in last year alone we had over 12,000 new nurses licensed in the province of Ontario; over half were internationally trained nurses. We've done the same with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

We will continue to make sure that pathways for licensing in the province of Ontario—the red tape is removed so that we can have as many people—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, after the closure announcement, the minister released the following statement: "We have received assurances from Niagara Health that they have consistently promoted alternatives to (emergency department) presentation through the 'know your options' campaign."

Through you, Speaker, what is the alternative to emergency care when you need life-saving emergency surgery and there is no emergency care available at the urgent care or the emergency department? Will this minister act before one of my constituents dies because they cannot get emergency service?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member is doing exactly the opposite of what he should be doing as a local representative in that community. Instead of standing behind their local hospital decisions, he's second-guessing the hospital leadership and suggesting that they do not know their jobs. I will never do that, as a minister—or as a government.

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We will continue to invest. We have done that through surgical recovery programs. Hospitals have been able to expand and widen the number of surgeries that they can do with funds from the province of Ontario. We've done it to make sure that we have options, in the province of Ontario, including 24/7 health services provided with registered nurses, so individuals can have that conversation and make sure that they are going to the most appropriate level of care in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Since being re-elected, our government must remain focused on growing the economy and unlocking new opportunities for businesses in every corner of our province. Our government needs to understand that Ontario's economic prosperity relies on the success of our local businesses and the strength of our local communities.

The President of the Treasury Board recently announced changes to our government's procurement directives in order to leverage Ontario's purchasing power and to strengthen our province's immense economic potential.

Our government must continue to take the necessary actions in order to ensure that businesses in Ontario can remain competitive.

Speaker, through you: Can the president please explain how these changes to our government's procurement directives will support Ontario businesses?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member from Carleton for her question.

For far too long, the previous Liberal government drove up the cost of doing business in this province and drove out good-paying jobs. We are taking a better approach. Through the Building Ontario Business initiative, our government is leveraging Ontario's buying power to drive demand for made-in-Ontario goods and services.

The recently announced updates to Ontario's procurement directives will provide Ontario businesses with greater access to public procurement opportunities. For example, a business in Carleton that invests in Ontario and that uses local supply chains and creates good-paying jobs right here in our province will no longer be put at a disadvantage when bidding for government contracts.

Speaker, our government is proud to buy Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: The residents and businesses in my riding of Carleton will be reassured to hear that the Building Ontario Business initiative will only further enhance our government's support for made-in-Ontario goods and services.

However, the Building Ontario Business initiative is just one measure our government must take in order to support Ontario businesses and leverage Ontario's purchasing power. There is more work that needs to be done to reduce the administrative burden of the procurement process and more ways to support the adoption of Ontario-made innovations.

Speaker, through you: Can the minister please elaborate on what additional steps our government is taking to modernize the procurement system and make it easier to buy from Ontario businesses?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to enhancing support for Ontario-made innovation and will continue to deliver better value for Ontario's taxpayers as we move forward in modernizing Ontario's procurement process.

Through Supply Ontario, our government is taking meaningful steps to reduce red tape faced by small businesses in the procurement process by centralizing our government's supply chain and delivering better value for taxpayers by harmonizing contracts across the Ontario public sector.

Additionally, our government is developing an innovation pathway that, in collaboration with Supply Ontario, will make it easier for health services providers to procure from Ontario's medtech innovators and will remove barriers to the adoption of promised technologies that improve outcomes for Ontarians.

We will continue to move forward with our plan that buys—

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

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sarah Jama: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Later this afternoon, the grassroots organization TTCriders will be hosting a press conference at Queen's Park, in the press gallery, about the failures of the Family of Services program. With the unveiling of this program, the TTC's Wheel-Trans 10-year strategy set a diversion target to restrict 50% of Wheel-Trans users from full door-to-door service by 2025. This essentially means that disabled people will be kicked off of the service.

This government has already made it impossible for disabled people to travel safely in the GTA, with AODA targets that have not been and will not be met by 2025. Kicking disabled people off Wheel-Trans to cut costs is a shame. Will this government repeal this family of services model and get back to meeting AODA targets?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I thank the member opposite for raising this important question. I strongly

believe that all Ontarians should have equal opportunity, regardless of ability.

Ontario follows the AODA and when it comes to local issues, we know that local organizations are the ones that understand the needs of their community. That is why the AODA has, for almost 20 years, ensured communities have accessibility plans. Community by community, they are making sure that project by project the AODA is being followed.

We encourage all local organizations to work with advocates to support the unique needs of their community, and to live up to what the AODA meant for us to do.

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

Ms. Sarah Jama: Again, my question is to the Premier. To quote disability rights activist Maayan Ziv, "Until we live in an equitable society where I can hail an accessible cab or cross a snowplowed street without barriers, Wheel-Trans clawing back services that support people with disabilities is not acceptable."

She's right. Kicking 50% of the folks who use Wheel-Trans off the para-transit system is an unfair attack on disabled people who deserve the right to travel safely just like everyone else, but who won't be able to use the public transit system.

This government keeps talking about getting disabled people to go to work, but is making it impossible to get to work. It seems like a contradiction.

So I'm asking again: Will this government repeal this Family of Services model and get back to meeting AODA targets, including transit targets?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: When it comes to supporting the 444 municipalities, there is no stronger advocate than this Premier.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing continues to ensure ongoing support for local governments. The Minister of Transportation has made sure that all municipalities get what they need and are getting more than their fair share when it comes to transit. This past year alone, Toronto received \$185 million in gas tax. Since 2018, this government has provided close to \$1 billion in gas taxes supporting municipal transit.

When it comes to public transit infrastructure, this government is making transit more accessible every day.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Under the leadership of our government and the Premier, Ontario is once again a destination for opportunity, investment and growth. In this competitive economic climate, it is important that we continue to take bold action to continuously drive productivity and innovation. This means eliminating burdensome red tape on people and businesses across our province. While our government has brought forward 11 red tape reduction packages, the people of Ontario are looking to our government to continue to focus on solutions that will make life easier for people and businesses.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is strengthening our economy by reducing red tape?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for the important question. The people of Ontario gave our government a historic mandate to continue the work that we started in 2018 to reduce red tape, improve access to government and make it easier to invest and build in Ontario. With the passage of our latest red tape bill, that's exactly what we are doing. It builds on our government's strong record of ending the frustrations and delays from unnecessary red tape.

1140

The results speak for themselves. We've eliminated 16,000 different kinds of pieces of red tape, which has now helped Ontario businesses save over \$800 million in annual costs. It has also helped create over 600,000 new jobs. Last year alone, there were 85,000 new businesses that—

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: The people of Ontario strongly support the reduction of duplicative, confusing and burdensome regulations that slow down our province's long-term economic prosperity. While the previous Liberal government operated under the assumption that more red tape is better for everyone, this is not a reality. Unfortunately for many businesses and entrepreneurs, that meant major difficulties, frustration and unnecessary delays while trying to access government services when starting their operations. Sadly, the opposition Liberals and NDP still hold this mindset of saying no to measures that will improve our government services and make it easier to invest and build in Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on the benefits that have been achieved through the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague for the question once again. The 42 different actions being taken in the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act are game changers for Ontario. The member is correct; the Liberals and the NDP have said no to all of them, unfortunately.

They said no to saving businesses \$800 million each and every year, Mr. Speaker. They said no to delivering broadband to every community in our province, Mr. Speaker. They said no to improving road safety. They said no to helping farmers, Mr. Speaker.

While the opposition wants people and businesses to pay more and be dependent on governments, we will never let that happen on this side of the House.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has identified London as a child care desert with only enough licensed spaces for 12% of eligible infants. Brenda Feeney told me that her grandson is 150th on the list at one London centre and 60th on the list at another. His family was hopeful about the place where he was 20th on the list, but two

infant rooms were just forced to close there because of a shortage of qualified staff.

Speaker, without a child care workforce, you can't have a child care system. When will this government start paying early childhood educators fairly so that we can attract and retain the workforce we need to provide London families with the child care they deserve?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'm very pleased to confirm to the member opposite that the city of London is going to be receiving an allocation of an additional 2,000 spaces in the first round and an additional 809 in the second round. That would not have been achieved if we followed the New Democratic advice, which would have omitted a third of childcare operators in London. The for-profit centres in your own riding would have been denied participation.

Decouple the ECE issue—you would have removed the capacity of one in three parents from having the choice of lower fees. You've ideologically opposed options for parents because you know better, bureaucrats and politicians, instead of the people who pay the bills and raise their kids. It's absolutely unconscionable that you would have denied that many participants from enrolling. Some 92% said yes to our offer.

We have a reduction of fees by 50%: \$46 to \$23 today. Yes, we're going to help support the creation of 86,000 more spaces in London and right across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

The supplementary question: the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: As Niagara families confront the summer child care squeeze, with providers barely running at 60% due to staff shortages, I am troubled and so should you be. Remarkably, two thirds of our Niagara ECE graduates are international students. The minister should be deeply concerned about retaining these graduates in Ontario.

Minister, how can we expect to keep our trained ECEs with a base salary of \$19, \$6 less than any other province's? Fourteen months post our federal child care agreement, through you, Speaker, I ask, will the minister present a clear timeline for a workforce strategy to secure essential child care for our families here in Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I agree, we do need quality ECEs. We need to retain them; we need to recruit them. That's why we have a plan to hire thousands of them across Ontario.

With respect to wages, in the federal deal we did accept that we're going to create a wage floor for the first time in the sector's history. We've increased the wages by \$1 per hour every year over the course of this agreement, and we've committed to going even further.

Mr. Speaker, in the member's community in the Niagara region, there's an additional roughly 3,000 more spaces which we are going to fund to support expanded access, to reduce wait-lists and make life affordable for families in Ontario. We are going to invest in a quality child care program that's going to reduce fees. One of the great legacies, I think, when it comes to affordability during this time of rising inflation federally is that this

government has slashed child care fees by 50% for non-profits and for-profits—for everyone, Mr. Speaker. That’s a good thing for people in Ontario.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Ma question s’adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. Notre gouvernement doit se tenir derrière notre population franco-ontarienne. La francophonie ontarienne est un atout inestimable pour notre province, et nous devons continuer à soutenir la communauté francophone avec des initiatives qui contribueront à assurer son succès pour les années à venir.

La semaine dernière, notre gouvernement a rendu public le deuxième rapport annuel sur les affaires francophones. Le rapport souligne les réalisations que nous avons accomplies pour soutenir la francophonie ontarienne et favoriser son développement économique, culturel et social.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle expliquer l’importance de déposer ce rapport annuel?

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour son excellente question. Les services en français sont fondamentaux pour la communauté francophone de l’Ontario et constituent une priorité pour notre gouvernement. Le deuxième rapport annuel, que j’ai déposé la semaine dernière, s’inscrit dans le cadre de la stratégie sur les services en français, qui vise notamment à accroître la planification au sein des ministères afin d’améliorer l’accès à des services de qualité en français.

Ce rapport démontre clairement l’engagement de notre gouvernement à accroître la transparence et aussi la reddition des comptes. Je suis fière des réalisations de notre gouvernement et de la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français, contrairement aux députés de l’opposition, monsieur le Président, qui n’ont rien fait pendant 15 ans. Lorsqu’il s’agit d’agir dans les dossiers importants pour la communauté francophone de l’Ontario, seul le gouvernement Ford agit de façon significative.

Le Président (L’hon. Ted Arnott): Merci. La députée de Carleton.

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Merci à la ministre pour sa réponse. C’est formidable d’entendre parler des réalisations de notre gouvernement en matière de soutien à la communauté francophone de la province. Avoir accès à des services de qualité en français dans divers secteurs est d’une importance vitale. Non seulement cela permet à la population francophone de l’Ontario de recevoir du soutien dans la langue de leur choix, mais cela assure un meilleur accès aux services qui peuvent contribuer à une meilleure éducation, à la santé et au bien-être général.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle nous en dire davantage sur la façon dont notre gouvernement réalise une approche pangouvernementale afin de mieux servir la population francophone de notre province?

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: Le ministère des Affaires francophones joue un rôle central pour offrir aux francophones un meilleur accès aux services en français des ministères de première ligne.

L’objectif général du rapport est de démontrer comment nos ministères travaillent ensemble pour fournir

des services en français accessibles et de qualité aux Ontariens et aux Ontariennes. Les progrès réalisés dans les domaines de la santé de l’éducation et de l’enseignement postsecondaire, ainsi que de la formation et de l’employabilité, témoignent de l’engagement de l’ensemble du gouvernement en faveur de la vitalité de la communauté francophone de l’Ontario.

Je vais continuer à travailler en étroite collaboration avec mes collègues au sein du gouvernement pour faire avancer les dossiers francophones et m’assurer que les voix des francophones et de leur communauté sont entendues.

Le Président (L’hon. Ted Arnott): Merci, c’est tout. That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

HELPING HOMEBUYERS, PROTECTING TENANTS ACT, 2023

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1155.

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

On May 31, 2023, Mr. Clark moved third reading of Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development.

On June 1, 2023, Mr. Flack moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Flack’s motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Holland, Kevin	Rickford, Greg
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Romano, Ross
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sabawy, Sheref
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Saunderson, Brian
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Dave
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, David
Downey, Doug	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Flack, Rob	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Ford, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina

Ford, Michael D.	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.	Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafyllopoulos, Effie J.	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pierre, Natalie	Yakubuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy			
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.			
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pierre, Natalie	Yakubuski, John			
Hardeman, Ernie	Quinn, Nolan				
Harris, Mike	Rae, Matthew				

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Those opposed to Mr. Flack's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Jama, Sarah	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 70; the nays are 30.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Clark has moved third reading of Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is another five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1200.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On May 31, 2023, Mr. Clark moved third reading of Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Blais, Stephen	Holland, Kevin	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Romano, Ross
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Coe, Lorne	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Collard, Lucille	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Saunderson, Brian
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Dave
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, David
Downey, Doug	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Flack, Rob	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Ford, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Ford, Michael D.	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafyllopoulos, Effie J.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Jama, Sarah	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy	
Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 72; the nays are 28.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SERVICES IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 55.

Call in the members. This is another five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1204.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Oosterhoff has moved private member's notice of motion number 55.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Harden, Joel	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Bell, Jessica	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Blais, Stephen	Jama, Sarah	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sattler, Peggy
Burch, Jeff	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Karpoche, Bhutla	Schreiner, Mike
Calandra, Paul	Kernaghan, Terence	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Shamji, Adil
Coe, Lorne	Khanjin, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Collard, Lucille	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	Mamakwa, Sol	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Dunlop, Jill	Mantha, Michael	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Flack, Rob	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tabuns, Peter
Ford, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina

Ford, Michael D.	McNaughton, Monte	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gates, Wayne	Pang, Billy	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Parsa, Michael	Vaugeois, Lise
Ghamari, Goldie	Pasma, Chandra	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Pierre, Natalie	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Quinn, Nolan	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gretzky, Lisa	Rae, Matthew	Yakabuski, John
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 101; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1207 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome my childhood friend Bikram Cheema, who is visiting all the way from India. With him is his cousin Sahib Dhaliwal.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to welcome a great leader in our community, Mr. Guidy Mamann, who is with us in the gallery today. I want to congratulate him for the wonderful work he does to keep York Centre great.

Ms. Laura Smith: It is with great pleasure that I would like to introduce a number of individuals: Kyle Fitzgerald, director of government relations with the Alzheimer Society; Catherine Barrick, chief executive officer; Sanah Manickam, policy coordinator, government relations; and Kari Quinn-Humphrey, chief executive officer of ASO York region.

Also, with RetiSpec, it is my great pleasure to introduce Eliav Shaked, co-founder and CEO of RetiSpec, and Catherine Bornbaum, head of clinical operations and partnerships.

And, with the Ontario Brain Institute, I would like to introduce Christa Studzinski, manager, partnerships; and Jordan Antflick, director of integrated discovery at OBI.

It is also my great pleasure to introduce Michael O'Leary, dean of the faculty of applied health and community studies at Sheridan College.

And it is also my great pleasure that I introduce from ORCA, the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, Mr. Grant Gonzales, senior manager of government relations and corporate affairs.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It's my pleasure to welcome Thomas Soliman, a new member of our team in the constituency. He's here at Queen's Park for the first time. Welcome.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It is my pleasure to welcome Grant Gonzales, who is a co-chair of Pride Toronto.

It's wonderful to see you here.

I also recognize Guidy Mamann, someone I have a long history with, going back to the time I was in my twenties. I actually worked in his law firm.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IMPROVING DEMENTIA CARE IN ONTARIO ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SOINS AUX PERSONNES ATTEINTES DE DÉMENCE EN ONTARIO

Ms. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to enact the Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 121, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur l'amélioration des soins aux personnes atteintes de démence en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: The bill enacts the Improving Dementia Care in Ontario Act, 2023, which would require the following:

(1) The Minister of Health must develop a provincial framework designed to support improved access to dementia care. The minister must table a report setting out the provincial framework in the Legislative Assembly and, afterwards, must prepare and table a report on the state of dementia care in Ontario. Each report must be published on a government of Ontario website.

(2) The Ministry of Colleges and Universities must review its Personal Support Worker Standard to determine if certain changes should be made, including whether to require in-depth learning about person-centred dementia care.

PETITIONS

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is my first time presenting this petition in the Legislature. It's entitled "Weekend GO Trains for Waterloo Region."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Waterloo region is home to three post-secondary institutions, the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College, whose students and staff require weekend train options; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is responsible for investing in building, maintaining and upgrading GO Transit trains and rail routes throughout the province; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has repeatedly made commitments to invest in and improve GO Transit

trains for the purposes of improving connectivity, increasing transit ridership, decreasing traffic congestion, connecting people to jobs, and improving the economy; and

“Whereas dependable, efficient public transit on weekends is as critical as weekday service to achieving these goals;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the immediate expansion of GO service to Kitchener-Waterloo, including weekend two-way rail service along the full length of the vital Kitchener GO corridor.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give this to page Silas.

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Graham McGregor: Speaker, I’ve got a petition here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

“The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

“The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the ‘defund the police’ position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.”

I wholeheartedly endorse the petition. I’ll be putting my name to it and giving it to Ameer.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s an honour for me to present the following petitions on behalf of Peri Ren, Samantha Bolger, Ayma Aqib and the class of 2025 medical students from the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University. The petition is entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live” their life “to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

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

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) identifies intimate-partner violence as a major global public health concern, as it affects millions of people and can result in immediate and long-lasting health, social and economic consequences; and

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“Whereas other Canadian provinces including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador have passed legislation on the disclosure of intimate-partner violence history, to protect its citizens from domestic violence; and

“Whereas the disclosure mechanisms outlined in Clare’s Law would be an additional tool for police services to prevent intimate-partner violence; and

“Whereas over 43,786 people, as of April 19, 2023, have signed the petition ‘Justice for Bobbi: Adopt Clare’s Law in Ontario’ on change.org; and

“Whereas people at risk of potential harm have the right to be informed of their intimate partner’s violent past—if the partner was a repeat offender of domestic violence;

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

“To urge the government of Ontario to adopt mechanisms for disclosure outlined in Clare’s Law—whereby information relating to intimate-partner-violence convictions can be used to assess the risk of and prevent harm from intimate-partner violence.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition—I look forward to the debate tomorrow—and I will sign my name to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is signed by residents and members of Jean Lumb school, Bishop Macdonell school, Harbord Collegiate, the Waterfront School, Market Lane, and St. Mary school in my riding.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Fund Ontario Public Schools.

“Whereas the TDSB has a deficit of \$63.2 million for the 2023-24 school year, due to continuous underfunding by the Ministry of Education;

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has not reimbursed the \$70.1-million TDSB reserve used to cover pandemic expenditures;

“Whereas the deficit and pandemic costs combined result in forcing schools to reduce special-needs assistants, educational assistants, clerical staff, teachers and vice-principal positions at TDSB schools;

“Whereas continued underfunding disproportionately affects the marginalized, the vulnerable, and those with special needs;

“Whereas continued underfunding results in larger, more crowded, and unsafe schools;

“Whereas continued underfunding means that students receive less one-on-one time with educators;

“We, the undersigned parents, guardians, caregivers, students, staff and community members, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) To adequately fund and strengthen public education in Ontario so students and education workers get the support they need;

“(2) To reimburse schools and the TDSB for the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

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

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I have a petition here.

“Ontario Should Say No to Federal Gun Confiscation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal government is banning a large number of firearms legally owned by private citizens; and

“Whereas the federal government has introduced legislation for a buyback/confiscation of the banned firearms and wants provincial law enforcement agencies to execute said confiscation; and

“Whereas participating in this buyback/confiscation will take law enforcement personnel off the streets; and

“Whereas the governments of provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick and the Yukon territory have said they won’t allow provincial resources to be used for the federal gun confiscation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to inform the federal government that Ontario won’t provide funding for police agencies to execute the gun buyback/confiscation and take police off the streets to execute ... gun control measures.”

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

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

“The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

“The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the ‘defund the police’ mentality, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.”

Speaker, I’m going to affix my signature to this and provide it to page Pierre.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’d like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

“The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

“The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the ‘defund the police’ position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.”

I fully support the petition. I will affix my signature and pass it to the table through page Halle.

LAND USE PLANNING

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

“Stop the 413 GTA West Highway.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is pushing ahead with plans to build Highway 413, a redundant and wasteful 400-series highway through the greenbelt that would cost taxpayers an estimated \$10 billion or more; and

“Whereas according to a TorStar/National Observer investigation entitled ‘Friends with Benefits?’ powerful developers and land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario own thousands of acres along the proposed highway corridor and would profit from its construction, suggesting that this \$10-billion taxpayer-funded highway is about serving the private interests of the Premier’s friends and donors, not the public interest; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s expert panel concluded in 2017 that Highway 413 would be a waste of taxpayer money that would only save drivers 30 to 60 seconds on their commutes; and

“Whereas that expert panel identified less costly and less destructive alternatives to new highway construction, such as making better use of the underused Highway 407, just 15 kilometres away; and

“Whereas Highway 413 would pave over 400 acres of greenbelt and 2,000 acres of farmland, destroy the habitats of at-risk and endangered species, and pollute rivers and streams; and

“Whereas building more highways encourages more vehicle use and increases traffic and congestion; and

“Whereas the highway would cause significant harm to historic Indigenous sites;

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

“Stop the plans for building Highway 413.”

Of course, I support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it with Ameer.

POLICE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to table the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

“The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

“The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the ‘defund the police’ position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.”

I support this petition. I will affix my signature, and I’m going to be passing it on to our page.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to thank the folks from Guelph, Kitchener and Kitchener–Conestoga for collecting these signatures. It reads as follows:

“Petition to the province of Ontario Premier and members of provincial Parliament:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop ordering sprawl via urban boundary expansion and development on farmland and natural spaces.”

I fully support the intent of this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Arisa.

1320

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present the following petition on behalf of Samantha Bolger, Peri Ren, Ayma Aqib and the class of 2025 medical students from the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University. It reads:

“Repeal Bill 124.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 124 removes the right of public employees to negotiate fair contracts;

“Whereas Bill 124 limits the wage increase in the broader public sector to a maximum of 1% per year at a time of unprecedented inflation;

“Whereas Ontario’s public servants have dealt with two years of unheralded difficulties in performing their duties to our province;

“Whereas those affected by Bill 124 are the people who teach us, care for us, make our hospitals and health care system work and protect the most vulnerable among us;

“Whereas the current provincial government is showing disrespect to public servants to keep taxes low for some of our country’s most profitable corporations;

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

“Immediately repeal Bill 124 and show respect for the public sector workers.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING SAFETY AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE ACT, 2023

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

Mr. Kerzner moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off third reading debate? I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m delighted to speak and to share my time with my colleagues the member from Simcoe–Grey, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and the Attorney General of Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je suis fier de soutenir nos policiers et nos premiers intervenants et tous ceux qui assurent la sécurité de l’Ontario tous les jours. Ce sont des gens formidables qui nous protègent au quotidien.

Je prends mon rôle sérieusement. C’est un honneur d’assurer la sécurité de notre province, parce que tous ont le droit de se sentir en sécurité chez eux et dans leur collectivité. Chaque personne mérite d’être traitée avec dignité et respect.

Mr. Speaker, it’s a great honour to rise here today and to also acknowledge the president of the PAO, the Police

Association of Ontario, my friend Mark Baxter. The associations in Ontario know—Mark and his colleagues—that our government is with you every step of the way.

The safety of our communities is everything. Our growth and prosperity depends on peace and stability. As I've said before in this House, and I'll say it again, public safety means having a place to raise our children, to wake them up from their bedrooms in the morning, to take them to school—it means a place that we can work; it means a place that we can take them to the parks at the end of their school day, and to be with our wives and our partners when we take walks on the street; it means to have a place to play and a place to pray.

Our communities are growing faster than ever before. We know that because we spoke about the need to build houses in Ontario and to build infrastructure in Ontario. As we build our housing and our hospitals and our schools across Ontario, and as we expand our communities, we need to make sure that their policing needs are met. Because the unfortunate truth is, the selfish actions of criminals continue to undermine what we believe is ours: a right to live safely in our communities. Our government recognizes that, now more than ever, public safety matters. That is why, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have made public safety our top priority.

The reason we introduced Bill 102 is because we have to acknowledge that the sizes of our communities have changed. Technology has changed. There are a lot of things that change. Nothing remains stagnant. This bill, Bill 102, takes us current to where we need to be today. It includes elements, as I will speak to in my remarks, to address the police recruitment, to move us that step closer to getting the Community Safety and Policing Act, the CSPA, in place—an act that will replace a piece of legislation that is over 30 years old, the PSA.

That is why it is my pleasure to rise and to participate in third reading, together with my colleagues, of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. It is a critical piece of legislation. It's a major step in advancing public safety, and it delivers on our promise that we always said to Ontarians, that public safety matters. It helps address challenges and police recruitment by presenting a clear path for more people to consider a career in policing. I have to say, this was one pillar of a great announcement that we made a couple of months back, where we're waiving the obstacles and the barriers for people to go to the Ontario Police College. This is important. We believe that we will have, next year, about 2,000 new recruits graduating each year from the Ontario Police College. It's an amazing place. I have seen for myself. The member from Chatham-Kent—Leamington is a graduate and served in the Ontario Provincial Police. He was with me, actually, at one of the marches past. You see the promise in a person's eyes when they graduate and they go to serve their communities, their First Nations communities, the Franco-Ontarian communities, the municipal police services. It's absolutely unbelievable.

These amendments in our legislation will also help strengthen the protection for animals and modernize different parts of our public safety.

I want to give a shout-out to our incredible animal welfare inspectors. Why? Because I went to see for myself, just a couple of weeks ago, when they were doing part of their training in Brantford—I saw 37 new animal welfare inspectors who looked like Ontario.

I'm so proud of our diversity, whether it's in policing, whether it's in firefighting, whether it's in corrections, whether it's in probation and parole, whether it's in animal welfare, or whether it's in the telecommunicators, who are having a conference today. I always want to shout out to those amazing 911 call operators. I want to shout out to the support staff who keep everything else functioning.

This is important because this piece of legislation, in so many ways, catches the regulations that we need to catch up with. The amendments focus on oversight and governance and labour arbitration and police recognition and education.

At the same time, we want to make public safety an attractive career choice for a new generation of civic-minded Ontarians. Police services across Canada specifically had struggled to hire new recruits, and there were different reasons for it, but our government stepped up to the plate. I remember a conversation I had with the Premier himself and we talked about what we can do to plan for the future. As our province grows by over a million people in the next number of years—we know that because we know how many homes we need for them to live in—we need so many more people in public safety to keep us safe. This is exactly why this bill will help, amongst other things, address the need to find more recruits so that they can come and protect Ontario and have a career like Mark Baxter—a career of meaning, a career of satisfaction.

1330

Our government treats the care of our animal welfare services with enormous concern. That's why—and I know my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore shares in this even more, perhaps, than any one of us—the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, which came into force in January 2020, has set a standard of care for animals and prohibitions against causing or permitting distress to animals. I want to thank her for her leadership in this. What Bill 102 does is take it to the next level. It sends a message to people that if anybody is thinking about causing harm to their animals, they had better think twice. The proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act will improve cost recovery and close the gaps specifically on animal welfare—and this is important.

I mentioned in my kick-off speech in second reading that under regulation 180 of the existing Coroners Act, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service—by the way, proudly located their head offices in my riding of York Centre. They have the authority to retain and store tissue samples and body fluid obtained during a post-mortem examination. The regulation identifies the types of specimens that can be stored and the length of time that they can be retained. But the act did not contemplate the retention of materials for purposes beyond the needs of a coroner's investigation, like DNA,

something that is part of—to understand DNA today is understanding it in a whole new world. I understand this just a little bit, because in my previous business iteration, before I got elected, I started a company that helped people identify drug interactions that may occur over the course of their lives. DNA provides us with a glimpse into the future, and it solves mysteries that were never before able to be solved. I look back on the announcements just from genetic genealogy, on what that has done, just as of recently, in Moosonee and in other cities—in the province of Quebec, in other jurisdictions where they're solving 40- and 50-year-old murder crimes as a result of the DNA technology today. So the proposed amendments will deliver this added tool to prevent further deaths now and into the future by the use of it.

Finally, there is the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. This act established the legislative framework for the delivery of fire protection, but there were gaps in this old piece of legislation, and there were inefficiencies. Bill 102 will close those gaps and streamline decision-making at both the Office of the Fire Marshal and the Fire Safety Commission.

Making the Community Safety and Policing Act a reality, attracting new recruits, and strengthening and modernizing Ontario's public safety framework is why this is important. This brings us one step closer. Our government is eager to move forward and to proclaim and set the date for enactment.

Again, I want to thank the associations and all of our stakeholders who have worked with us every step of the way. Their concerns matter, and we have listened, and I am encouraged that in the months ahead as we complete the final regulations that need to be done in order for us to move to move forward, we will see that this is something that will be a reality.

Nothing has been as impactful to me as travelling throughout Ontario and visiting the fire and the correction and the police and the communications services in people's ridings. It has been an honour of a lifetime.

One of the first tours I went to last summer was visiting the member's riding in Sarnia-Lambton—my great friend—and I saw for myself something that we take for granted: that if we don't treat our security by having this 360 perspective on it, we don't know. In many respects, it's not our fault because we live our lives, as I've said before, in a narrow focus of wanting to be safe but not understanding the roles that people do to keep us safe.

When I went with the member from Sarnia-Lambton to the St. Clair River, it was the first time in my tenure as Solicitor General that I saw just how close the other side is, and I became fascinated by the need to learn more. My great friend from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore helped educate me on the needs of public safety not only in their communities, but in their roles as parliamentary assistants to the Solicitor General. They knew, and I knew, that by saying to the public in Ontario that our safety matters, the public will respond by saying, "We agree with you."

We always have to have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe. Last week, I think it was the 91st AGM of the Police Association of Ontario, and the Premier and I were there. It was important for us to be there, because it also was a time that we had to reflect on the times that find us, on the people we lost just last week—a beautiful constable in Ontario; we lost Steven. Before Steven, we lost Eric, Andrew, Morgan, Devon, and Greg, and the list unfortunately has kept growing. But it won't define who we are. It won't take away from the resolve we have to say that our communities mean everything; our public safety means everything. Never before in my generation have we had such a vocal government that has raised public safety to the forefront, that can look somebody in the eye and say, "We will always have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe"—because we need to have public safety, because the rule of law must matter and our public safety must matter.

And for those who wish us ill, as I like to say, who can't agree that we have a right to live in our communities, however we choose and whoever we want to be with, we have a message for them: We will call you out.

That's why, as we debate third reading of Bill 102, change is needed. This bill takes us one step closer. It addresses the changes and regulations we need to do to bring us forward, and it acknowledges what everybody knows: that when we have a safe community, we have absolutely everything.

I said at the funeral of Sergeant Eric Mueller of the OPP: « En tant que solliciteur général, je continuerai à travailler chaque jour pour assurer le bien-être de nos policiers et nos premiers intervenants. Pour le premier ministre de l'Ontario et pour moi, c'est personnel. » It really is. It's an honour of a lifetime to work as hard as I can, day and night, for Ontario's safety, and we won't stop. Our commitment to public safety is absolute and constant.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm honoured to stand here in the House today for the third reading of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. If passed, as you may know, this bill will make necessary legislative changes to strengthen public safety and continue our work providing accessible and responsive justice services for everyone in Ontario.

Before I get into my other remarks, I want to thank the Solicitor General for his passion and dedication to the people of Ontario, along with his entire team and ministry staff—his passion is infectious as we move forward to help those who help us—and for the work they've done to make this bill, in particular, a reality.

And I want to acknowledge the stakeholders and justice partners for their valuable input, which has brought us to where we are today.

Madam Speaker, we just heard the Solicitor General speak about the changing nature of public safety and crime in the province. Now, more than ever, people want to see a justice system that works for them and that addresses

their needs. So the services we provide must remain responsive, adaptive and dynamic. This includes working towards a legal system with fewer barriers, fewer delays, fewer obstacles.

Today, we're proposing changes that align with our ongoing work to drive transformation across the justice sector and ensure people feel safe in their own communities. One way we're doing this is by proposing a change that will, if passed, make the court system more efficient.

1340

Madam Speaker, as part of the act, we're proposing changes to how low-dollar-value civil claims are handled in our courts. People may remember that a few years ago, we made changes to increase the maximum claim limit in Small Claims Court from \$25,000 to \$35,000. This change gave people options. Now most claims for money or personal property under the \$35,000 mark can be heard in the Small Claims Court, but they can also be heard in the Superior Court of Justice. To ensure court resources are used appropriately and on the right scale, the change we're proposing in this bill would prevent claimants from starting claims in the Superior Court if instead they should be in the Small Claims Court. If passed, this bill will allow resources to be redirected towards other, more urgent priorities, and it will assist in freeing up judicial time and staff.

Madam Speaker, let me speak for a moment about the legal landscape that's driving this particular change and the work that we've done so far. This House has heard me say this many times, but recent years have shown that our justice system has fallen far behind the expectations of how people expect their services will be delivered. And yet, it has also been an exciting period for collaboration, innovation and opportunity to address these challenges head-on and make the justice system work better for the people of Ontario.

In 2021, we launched Ontario's Justice Accelerated Strategy to break down the long-standing barriers in our system, overhaul processes and move more services online, closer to Ontarians. Since its inception, and together with our justice partners, we've delivered many game-changing initiatives to help create a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system. For example, we've implemented a new digital case management system at Tribunals Ontario. We've expanded to a new digital document-sharing platform. We've transformed the court's capacity for virtual and hybrid hearings. These are just a few examples of the many ways that we've made things easier, better, more accessible and responsive for the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to explore every possible avenue to improve systems and the way people interact with their courts.

Madam Speaker, a major component of our work also includes addressing the criminal courts backlog through the implementation of a criminal backlog reduction strategy. As part of this multi-year initiative, we invested \$72 million—money that will be used for additional crowns, court services and victim support staff to support prosecutions, the judiciary and, importantly, victims of crime. This will alleviate some of the long-standing pressures. As

part of this strategy, we've adopted other measures too. As one example, my ministry created virtual resolution teams of experienced prosecutors who conducted an intensive review and resolution blitz of low- and mid-level backlogged criminal cases in 2022. And it worked. As a result, thousands of appropriate cases were resolved, reducing backlog and freeing up court time.

Madam Speaker, in my work as Attorney General, I've met victims and survivors and heard their stories. On a more personal level, as I've mentioned before, my mother was an abuse counsellor and one of the founding directors of the York Region Abuse Program. Through her work, I saw the strength and courage her clients needed to confront intimate partner violence and the many challenges victims and survivors face as they seek justice. This includes people like Dr. Jennifer Kagan-Viater, who was here in the House through second reading and first reading. We speak about her daughter Keira. And in the wake of Keira's death, her mother has worked tirelessly to advocate for changes in the way courts address domestic violence. I'm so pleased to say that her efforts have resulted in lasting legislative change. Keira's Law, the private member's bill spearheaded by Dr. Kagan-Viater, was passed by the House of Commons federally and the Senate and received royal assent at the end of April. The new law supports judicial education on domestic violence and coercive control. This builds upon legislation passed by the federal government in 2021. That legislation enhanced the judicial education provisions under the federal Judges Act to encourage training on sexual assault for federally appointed judges.

It's important that we continue to take action on this front here in Ontario. That's why today, as part of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, we are proposing changes to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act that will support education and training on gender-based and intimate partner violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace. If passed, these amendments will support judicial education on these important issues. I want to underscore here: The type of education we are proposing as part of this legislation will fall within the purview of the judiciary. They will maintain their independence, but they will develop appropriate training—and this must be the case.

We've struck a good balance with these changes. We strongly believe that education and awareness are key to addressing these issues and their root causes.

A couple of weeks ago, we had the opportunity to honour Dr. Jennifer Kagan-Viater and 18 other individuals and organizations for their work in supporting people who have faced victimization due to crime. A very special event held each year by my ministry, the Victim Services Awards of Distinction is an annual award ceremony organized by my ministry and a number of partners. It honours those who work tirelessly to support victims and survivors of crime and their families. I'm proud that so many members of this House took time to be present, to send words of congratulations, and to engage with the award winners from their ridings. It's so wonderful to see such a wide variety of recipients from across the province,

from social workers, counsellors, even support animals, to various organizations. As many of you know, this award is dear to my heart, and it's one of my favourite parts of my job—to thank those who made this year's awards ceremony a reality, but to thank those and recognize the good work done in the province reminds us how much we, as a province, value each other and our shared communities. This year, I was so proud to present this award to 19 recipients who have done so much for victims and their families throughout Ontario. The award is an expression of the gratitude that our government feels for the people of Ontario, for the lasting impacts an individual can have on the lives of victims and loved ones. It's more important than ever in this current social landscape that we honour individuals and organizations like these.

As I've mentioned, if passed, today's bill is one of many important steps in helping victims feel heard and safe as they seek access to justice. By supporting judicial education, in partnership with the judiciary, we can truly make an impactful difference.

Although it's critical the judiciary have access to good, up-to-date education on intimate partner violence, this education and training is needed across the justice sector, including for crown attorneys. I'm happy to tell the members of this House today that my ministry's criminal law division currently offers several courses for crowns, including a week-long intimate partner and family violence course. Staff working in my ministry's victim services receive training, as well. The court-based Victim/Witness Assistance Program, or VWAP as many will know it by, provides orientation and ongoing staff training related to providing services and support to victims and survivors of intimate partner violence.

My ministry also funds Indigenous-specific and culturally relevant intimate partner violence prevention programs across the province.

But we know there's always more that we can do to address the immediate needs for support and services.

We've also made recent investments in the Partner Assault Response Program, or the PAR Program, which is necessary to tackle the epidemic of intimate partner violence. In December 2022, in addition to our previous investments of almost \$11 million, our government announced another \$2 million in one-time finding for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

All of these efforts, combined with the proposed changes we're bringing forward today, are intended to support victims, survivors and families, and strengthen their trust in our justice system.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss some of the compelling reasons for these proposed changes—changes that will help us to continue to create a more accessible justice system and provide more support for victims, survivors and families as they seek access to justice and pathways to heal.

I want to thank the Solicitor General and his team for his continued collaboration to make our province a safer place to live.

I encourage all members here in this House to support this legislation. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's great to join in on this debate today. It's my pleasure to rise and provide added details about Bill 102, the government's proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023.

As the Solicitor General shared with us, the government of Ontario is taking strong action to improve public safety across the province by transforming police legislation and making it easier for police services to recruit.

Once brought into force, the Community Safety and Policing Act will be the main vehicle for policing modernization in the province of Ontario. It will replace the current Police Services Act and make a significant change to Ontario's legislative framework for policing.

There are still a number of operational and other changes for the policing sector, municipalities, First Nations and oversight bodies to be considered before the CSPA can come into force in order to support a smooth implementation. We are getting close to that day. The proposed amendments in the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, bring us a significant step closer. The proposed amendments that are part of Bill 102 are focused on clearer roles, stronger governance, and improved systems.

1350

One key area is related to a proposed amendment to enable the potential expansion of the Ontario Civilian Police Commission's—which is also known as the OCPC—authority after the CSPA comes into force. The OCPC will continue to act after the CSPA is enforced in relation to its adjudicative functions, such as the completion of hearings and appeals. The proposed amendment will allow the OCPC to continue to act in relation to its other functions, if prescribed in regulation. It is important work and must be part of a seamless transition to the CSPA.

The CSPA also broadens the scope of the current Ontario Police Arbitration Commission to include responsibilities related to police discipline after the CSPA is in force.

Under the CSPA, the OPAC—there are lots of acronyms in this ministry—will be continued and renamed the Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission, also known as the OPAAC, with additional responsibilities related to the adjudication of police discipline matters. With this new function, the OPAAC will play a critical role in administering independent discipline adjudication, where required under the act, to support the government's goal to improve police accountability and oversight and strengthen public trust in the police disciplinary process.

A function of the OPAAC will also be to continue to assist police associations and police services boards in resolution of labour relations disputes arriving out of negotiations and administration of their collective agreements. To support the effectiveness of the OPAAC's labour arbitration function, there are also amendments

related to removing police services as a party to arbitrations regarding the police association's duty to fairly represent its members; providing flexibility to the arbitration decision time frame; clarifying the process for a dispute arising from an arbitrator's award or decision; improving efficiency in the process for appointing an arbitrator for budget and First Nations funding disputes; and amending who is responsible for arbitrator fees in municipal budget disputes. Part of the adjustment needed, and it is included in this proposed bill, is to alter the composition of the future OPAAC by adding the role of one or more vice-chairs. This change is intended to improve good governance of the agency and to support the integrity of its arbitration and adjudication functions.

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

The CSPA was supposed to establish an Ontario Provincial Police governance advisory council to advise the Solicitor General regarding the use of OPP-related powers. It has been determined that such an advisory council is no longer necessary as a permanent body. The proposed amendments revoke the provisions for the governance advisory council. Additionally, there are proposed amendments to the governance provisions related to OPP detachment boards.

To be responsive to what we have heard from municipalities and First Nations, changes include allowing for no detachment boards in a detachment or having one detachment board responsible for municipal detachments. Also, most, but not all, regulation-making powers with respect to detachment boards will be transferred from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the Solicitor General. This proposed amendment would include board composition as the ministry anticipates changes in composition from time to time and as decisions on participation or detachment boundaries change.

Lastly, we are proposing changes that would provide further clarity in the statute and improve alignment with other government statutes.

This government is modernizing the province's police and community safety framework so that it is fair, so that it is equitable, and so that it is safe, transparent and effective. The proposed amendments to the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, are necessary to establish a modern and robust policing legislative framework that appropriately addresses the evolving nature of crime and meets the community safety expectations of Ontarians.

I just want to make sure I give a shout-out to Mark Baxter, and I want to thank all our police officers for the work they do. I want to thank our firefighters—all our

servicemen and servicewomen in uniform—for the work they do every day. Especially, I would like to give a shout-out to 22 division in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Thank you for you service.

I encourage all honourable members in this House to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Brian Sanderson: It's certainly a pleasure this afternoon to rise in this House to speak to third reading of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. I'd like to start off by acknowledging and thanking the Attorney General and the Solicitor General for their tireless work and dedication to bring this bill forward.

As we all know, crime is on the rise in Ontario and across Canada. That is why our government is taking action to train and attract new recruits, break down financial barriers, and get more front-line officers on our streets.

I'm happy to speak to what Bill 102 will do, if passed, to make Ontario a safer place to live, and I will pick up on some of the comments of the Attorney General in his speech.

We're looking at new ways to harness thinking about Internet technology to make justice accessible for all. We're looking to provide increased access to critical services in northern and remote communities.

The members of the House may recall that, at the start of the pandemic, fly-in court proceedings—necessary in many First Nations communities—were suspended. This system, as many of you know, brings judges, lawyers, courts and victim support staff to remote communities, sometimes for single day at a time, to hear a wide range of issues. Unfortunately, access to reliable high-speed Internet had previously been unavailable in most fly-in communities. Something had to be done.

I'm proud to say that this government has invested in reliable, high-speed satellite Internet access and video conferencing equipment to enable virtual proceedings in 29 fly-in communities. This work has been flying ahead. I'm proud to stand here and report that, as of today, 24 of the 29 fly-in communities have Starlink units installed, and the remaining units will be fully installed and working in all 29 communities by the end of the summer. This is a great achievement. It is important and one of the cornerstones of our vision to deliver a justice system that is accessible and works in a timely manner, no matter where you live.

But we are not done making improvements and implementing changes there.

In the bill before the House today, we're also proposing a housekeeping change to the Provincial Offences Act. This change will clarify an existing process in the courts, indicating that it is court staff, and not judicial officers, who file judicial review applications and materials with the courts. This change will ensure efficiency by bringing clarity to the process and eliminating duplication.

In keeping with our commitment to harness digital transformation, the Ministry of the Attorney General has

unveiled the Courts Digital Transformation initiative as part of our justice accelerated strategy in 2021. This is a new digital justice solution that will transform the way people resolve their legal matters by providing on-demand digital access to court services. This end-to-end digital system will feature online self-service, integrated case tracking and more efficient court operations.

We have also introduced electronic filing, as well as a new online court case search tool so that people can access select court information with ease.

We've also made other changes that include the authority for provincial offences officers to serve part III summonses on individuals within the province by registered mail, courier or email, thereby updating the current system. Service of a summons on a recipient's lawyer or paralegal, with their advance consent, is also now permitted in order to streamline processes.

1400

We've also continued to support municipal partners in their efforts to enforce and collect outstanding POA fines. We have implemented numerous initiatives to help assist in the collection of outstanding fines, including improving the "Notice of Fine and Due Date" form, to encourage defendants to pay their fines on time to avoid additional fees and other penalties, such as a licence suspension.

Speaker, the Ministry of the Attorney General is also continuing our collaboration with the Bill 177 municipal working group to implement other reforms to further modernize the Provincial Offences Act processes, including implementing additional fine enforcement initiatives.

These are just some of the more recent initiatives we've been working on to ensure that the municipal court system works swiftly and efficiently to hear so many matters that affect Ontarians daily.

I'd also like to speak about how digital and Internet access has improved our criminal justice system and tell members about an ongoing transformation project that we are currently working on in collaboration with partners across the justice system, from police to the courts.

For several years, we've been working with the Solicitor General to implement the Criminal Justice Digital Design initiative, to transform Ontario's criminal justice system and enhance public safety in the process. This system involves digitizing the criminal case record and connecting IT systems so that data can flow seamlessly from the police to the prosecution to the courts and then to corrections. Already, we have implemented a number of processes to help share digital information in an organized and timely way.

Since June 2022, criminal eIntake has been available province-wide, which allows police and other investigative agencies to electronically send and receive documents and data so that a justice of the peace can consider the information and allow charges to be laid, where process is issued. This has greatly reduced the time and effort it takes to put information before the courts.

We've also introduced a Digital Evidence Management System, which makes it possible for police and other agencies to manage, store and share digital investigative

or evidentiary files using a consistent set of tools and standards. As of this January, more than 60% of police agencies have onboarded to this digital system.

There is much more to be done, but we have made great strides here. The safety and well-being of our communities requires an agile and properly functioning criminal justice system that works efficiently for all Ontarians, wherever they are.

Madam Speaker, through this work, we have also learned that enforcement and prosecution efforts are more effective at reducing violence and increasing public safety when combined with meaningful intervention initiatives. We also know that the traditional criminal justice system can, in certain circumstances, be limited in how it responds to the complex needs of communities, victims and offenders across our province.

That is why we have taken steps to introduce justice centres that take a transformative approach to community safety, by moving certain criminal cases out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting. They help provide wraparound supports for accused persons through coordination with on-site social, health, mental health, addictions, employment education, and housing providers.

That is why, since September 2020, our ministry has launched four justice centre locations: in London, Ontario; Toronto downtown east; Toronto northwest; and, most recently, in Kenora.

The Kenora justice centre was launched earlier this year, in February. It is a groundbreaking initiative—the first of its kind in northern Ontario—and it was developed, designed and delivered in collaboration with local organizations, Indigenous leadership and the courts. It is an initiative that is truly born from a collective partnership, and it represents a meaningful path forward towards creating safer and healthier communities in our north.

Speaker, all of the changes I've spoken about today are essential in improving the lives of the people of Ontario, no matter where they live—whether that is through support and safety for victims of crime, effective and appropriate responses to perpetrators of crime, or reducing the complexity of our justice system while increasing its efficiency and its accessibility for all Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to talk about this very important piece of legislation. I look forward to the vote and encourage all colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege and a pleasure to stand in the House today, as it always is, and address the House, especially on this important Bill 102, Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act.

The minister mentioned his trip to Sarnia–Lambton about six months ago, actually in June or July of last year—about a year ago now. Anyway, he wanted to come down to Sarnia–Lambton, so I arranged a trip for him. We had a great day in Sarnia–Lambton. Among a number of important things, one of them was, we went out to the St. Clair River and we saw where the actual drone had been

caught up in a tree. Some American ne'er-do-wells were smuggling guns across the river with drones and they got caught up in a tree, so they were caught. So, focused on that, the Solicitor General brought that back, and I know I've heard him speak about it a number of times. He has included it in legislation that's still to come, where we're going to crack down on these people who are doing these things. Most of the crime that's committed in this country, in this province, is with these illegal guns that are brought in from the States—not just at Sarnia or Sarnia-Lambton, but in other points in Ontario, which I won't go into at this time.

Ontarians want to feel safe and protected in their communities. As the Solicitor General said—and I want to applaud both the Attorney General and the Solicitor General for introducing this act jointly. Policing is a large piece of that, but it's not the only piece of this act. The mechanics of other public safety legislation must also be modernized to respond to change and meet public expectations of what a safe and healthy community is all about.

As the Solicitor General noted in his remarks, the primary driver of the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, is to introduce the legislative amendments necessary to bring the CSPA into force. The government has also prioritized other areas of community safety in this proposed legislation, including better protection for animals, modernizing the Coroners Act to strengthen the death investigation system, and streamlining decision-making in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to make it more effective and efficient.

I will highlight these amendments.

The Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, otherwise known as PAWS—really championed by my PA colleague Christine Hogarth, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore—would improve recovery for costs incurred to provide care for animals in distress that have been removed by the animal welfare services; clarify Animal Care Review Board processes; and narrow the gaps related to animal welfare inspector authorities and strengthen those protections for animals. I will highlight a few of those amendments. Animal owners or custodians are issued a statement of account when animals are removed by animal welfare services and cost of care for the animal are incurred. The proposed amendments include providing greater specificity on the types of costs incurred by animal welfare services that are recoverable through a statement of account.

An additional proposed amendment would permit the immediate removal of an animal by an animal welfare inspector if it is in critical distress. This would address a gap in the current legislation to allow animals in need of immediate intervention to prevent serious injury or death to be removed immediately from an owner's or custodian's care.

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

outstanding. This will help ensure that animal welfare issues have been addressed.

The ministry has consulted with a few key stakeholders on these proposed amendments. The other key stakeholders and the public had the opportunity to comment on the proposals through the Ontario Regulatory Registry.

The Coroners Act: Coroners and pathologists already have the authority under regulation 180 of the Coroners Act to retain and store tissue samples and body fluids obtained during a post-mortem examination undertaken by a pathologist or other examinations undertaken by coroners. The act did not contemplate the retention of materials for purposes beyond the needs of a coroner's investigation; nor did it anticipate medical advances that could lead to the need to retain tissue samples for other purposes, like DNA testing, in the future.

Madam Speaker, just last night, I was watching a show on CTV about two infamous murders that took place in Toronto. Ms. Susan Tice and another lady, Erin—I can't remember her last name right now. Those two murders are almost 40 years old, and they used—I think it's called gen-gen for short. It's an American program. They can trace ancestors, like great-great-grandfathers and great-great-grandmothers, and bring it forward. They have identified a suspect. So those two families, because of that DNA that was retained at that time, even though they had no idea it could be used in the manner it has been—so think of the advances that are still to come here in this world of the future. Those two families, at least—and maybe more, because I don't think that individual just killed twice; I'm sure there were a lot more, unfortunately.

1410

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

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, otherwise known as the FPPA, creates the framework for fire protection in Ontario, including municipal responsibilities for fire protection services and cost recovery. Currently, gaps exist within the FPPA's cost recovery provisions, and these relate to immediate authorizations to close. In addition, language in the current FPPA allows for only one deputy fire marshal when demands of the Office of the Fire Marshal call for multiple deputies. This proposed amendment, if passed, would support municipal and provincial cost recovery along with the appointment of multiple deputy fire marshals, and support efficient tribunal operations. Specifically, a proposed amendment would close gaps in the FPPA's cost recovery provisions by allowing municipalities and the province to use property liens and the Provincial Land Tax Act, 2006, respectively, in order to recover costs in immediate authorization to close cases. The amendments would also allow the Fire Safety Commission, the FSC, to consider

whether costs were associated with the immediate authorization-to-close-related actions when considering those appeals to orders to pay costs.

A second proposed amendment would allow for more than one deputy fire marshal so that the duties of the fire marshal can continue to be executed when the fire marshal and another deputy fire marshal are unavailable.

In addition, a third proposed amendment would strengthen the efficiencies of the Fire Safety Commission. This is an independent quasi-judicial agency that resolves disputes and conducts hearings regarding fire safety matters, including orders made by inspectors or the fire marshal for repairs, alterations or installations to a building, structure or premises. The proposed amendment would strengthen those designations and extend the time to appeal an order beyond the current 30-day period due to exceptional circumstances and eliminate the three-member quorum requirement so that appeals before the commission can be heard by a single member.

Madam Speaker, the Solicitor General, in his remarks, spoke about his extensive tours around the province of Ontario. I also had the opportunity either to accompany the minister and/or on my own—and I toured a number—anywhere from Stratford to Goderich; to Chatham; LaSalle; Essex; Stratford; and down to Aylmer, to the police college. I've seen a couple of the graduations there, and as the minister said, you see the impetus and the integrity and the opportunity on some of those young faces—and some middle-aged faces, as well, who chose to join the force in later life. And I know there will be a tribute—our friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex can speak to that. I know, as well, he attended a number of those years ago.

Also in my travels, I had the opportunity just recently to meet the new deputy chief in Sarnia-Lambton, the city of Sarnia, Deputy Chief Julie Craddock. She's the first woman deputy chief in Sarnia police history. It's a long time coming. I know she's going to do a great job. She's originally from the Halton force, so she's got some great ideas that she has brought to the city of Sarnia. We also have a new chief—about two years in the running now—Chief Derek Davis. I know that team is going to make a great impact on the city of Sarnia and on that force. I had a chance the other day to talk with Deputy Chief Craddock about a number of ideas she's got, which I've had a chance to discuss in further detail with the Solicitor General. She has some great ideas that she has brought from Halton. She has been on a number of courses. She has had the advantage of a larger force—to be able to tour and work on her degree, MBA etc. I know she's going to be a great role model for a lot of young women in the city of Sarnia and the county of Lambton in that force.

In the meantime, I also had the chance to go to Chatham. I met the chief in Chatham—also in LaSalle, the OPP detachment, and the Essex one as well. These opportunities to go around the province are a great opportunity to go out and meet the people who are actually doing the work on the ground every day.

In some places, I had a chance to meet with some of the police service board members, as well, and we also took in some fire halls when we were doing that tour. The city

of Sarnia—of course, I know those fire halls; I've spent a lot of time there. In Stratford, I got a chance to go up in the bucket, the truck—not too high. The firemen are very proud of the work that they do each and every day to keep our people safe in this province.

EMS drivers—I had a great chance to interact with EMS operators and the work that they do. I have a couple of neighbours just around the corner from back home in Petrolia who are EMS operators and work every day to keep people safe in our county, as well.

I know a lot of the OPP officers back home. I want to give a shout-out, as the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore did to her force. I also have—well, I've talked about the city force with Chief Derek Davis and Deputy Chief Craddock, but also out in Lambton at the Petrolia detachment, Inspector Chris Avery—actually, I knew his father; we go back a long ways. Inspector Avery is doing a great job. He's got a detachment of over 100 officers. The Solicitor General had an opportunity to travel there when we were down a year ago—about a year ago now, in June, we toured the Petrolia detachment.

Inspector Avery is doing a great job. He has been working on a case—talking about cold cases: It goes back to 1971 or 1972, when a young lady unfortunately came to a sad end, and her body was found out in the county on a side road. I remember it very well. It has been so long, that case. Inspector Avery told the Solicitor General, “I intend to solve that case before I retire. We feel we know who did it. We just don't have enough”—maybe through some of these DNA friends, these new ideas for DNA, maybe that will be solved. That family—unfortunately, the mother and father are gone. But the sisters and brothers of that young lady are still alive; they keep her memory alive each and every day back in Lambton.

So those advances in DNA and these opportunities that we have in this bill, if this bill is passed, will help those families in the future. Unfortunately, there are still going to be those kinds of cases, as we go forward, but if and when they do happen, we'll know that we have the proper events here, legislation, to help in that. I think I've pretty well summed her up here.

I want to go on to talk about protecting animals in distress. I would really defer that to PA Hogarth, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore; I know this is her specialty.

Speaker, protecting animals in distress, leveraging emerging science to improve the death investigation system, and improving the administrative essentials of fire safety and fire prevention are critical components of Ontario's public safety framework. Taken together, the proposed amendments in Bill 102 are the basis to drive forward modernization of community safety, make operational improvements where needed, and continue to be responsive to the safety concerns of a broad range of stakeholders.

I know when they go to that famous AMO—Association of Municipalities of Ontario—the minister and the two PAs as well the as the Attorney General meet with a number of people from all across Ontario. They come to AMO. They want to talk about their concerns, their

issues—it's everywhere from Red Lake down to the Halton region, to some of the smaller communities like Petrolia, Sarnia, London. They all bring their concerns to AMO, and the minister has an opportunity at that time to ask a lot of questions—and he asks lots of questions—about what could be made better. What do they need in the way of funding? What do they need in the way of program changes that could improve that? So I'm looking forward to AMO. I think AMO is in London this year. I'm sure the minister is going to be there, as he likes to say, with bells on. He'll be there, and we'll be meeting with people again. I'm sure the member from Kitchener-Waterloo is going to be there. She's shaking her head yes, she's going to be there. Maybe she'll come and meet with us, with some people.

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As the minister said, it has been a great honour to serve as the PA to the Solicitor General. I've had the opportunity to meet a number of people, and like the minister said, we have some great staff you never see in the offices, both over at 18 Grosvenor and with the OPP and with the coroner, Dr. Huyer. The work that he does and his staff, and the minister's backroom staff—they do a lot of the work that you never see. They help draft a lot of the speeches and the research that we have here in the House. We get to answer all those great questions from the opposition and the third party. It has been a great experience here working with the minister. He keeps us hopping, and PA Hogarth keeps us on our toes, keeps us challenged each and every day.

With that, Madam Speaker, I think I'll relinquish the floor and we'll move on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Please refer to members by their riding names. Thank you.

Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the government members for their presentation.

When looking at Bill 102, section 6 grants new discretionary powers to inspectors. Last week, this very government threw the door open for new dog training and trialling areas with Bill 91. Training and trialling is a so-called sport where defenceless animals such as rabbits, coyotes and foxes are tracked and likely ripped apart in a fenced enclosure.

My question is for the member from Etobicoke–Lake-shore. I want to ask the parliamentary assistant in charge of animal welfare in Ontario: Do they not think that rabbits, foxes and coyotes will be in distress as they run for their lives?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I am extremely proud that it was our government that implemented what is now recognized as the most comprehensive animal welfare legislation anywhere across Canada. If you see an animal in distress, you call the number 1-833-9-ANIMAL. We have inspectors; the minister saw some of the inspectors—37 of them—being trained. We're very proud of our inspectors and the work they do.

Once again, if you see an animal in distress, please call 1-833-9-ANIMAL.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the entire team from the Solicitor General's office to the team from the Minister of the Attorney General's office for a great bill. I've been getting excellent feedback for it in my riding. As you know, Minister Kerzner was in Barrie twice for unfortunate occasions of officers we lost in our local municipality.

With everything that's going on in the news—and we need more police officers on the ground, we need more boots on the ground—how are bills like this and the work that he's doing across the province with his whole team and the Ministry of the Attorney General going to help recruit more people into our forces so we have more boots on the ground, so we can inspire the next generation of people and we can have safer and better communities?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: It's very interesting; I'll just say that when we graduated over 110 OPP cadets to constables just a couple of weeks ago, they said to me that when people step forward to say that their community safety matters, the interest in enrolment picks up immediately. So what we all have to do from all sides of this House is simple: We have to say that our public safety matters and that we have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have a very good working relationship with the Waterloo Regional Police Service, and they've been here for 11 years, lobbying. They've always asked for increased mental health supports, because as we all know, these issues end up in the back of a cruiser or they end up in conflict. They've also acknowledged that oversight of police services is actually necessary.

So my question is: Why is this government removing the Ontario Provincial Police Governance Advisory Council? They were advocating for mental health supports for police officers and for community. Are you not concerned that by removing this level of accountability, trust will be further compromised in some of our communities?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to say, again, there has never been a government in my generation that's more concerned with our public safety but also with the well-being of those who keep us safe. That's why we've made an unprecedented announcement of an over-\$45-million investment over three years.

I'll tell you something that's even more important. I want to, by the way, give a shout-out to Chief Crowell, the great chief at Waterloo region. I said to him that we're committed to building the Runnymede centre for first responders, a respite for first responders who will be able to go to Caledon—the location will be Caledon. That's an example where we view the actions—what are we doing? We're building the Runnymede centre. We're going to build a centre where people can go and get the help that they need. This is what's important, what we're doing. The actions speak louder than the words.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As I mentioned in my previous comments, just talking to folks in my little part of Ontario, Barrie–Innisfil, there was a lot of applause for what this bill is doing—both for getting boots on the ground and also for protecting our friends, the animals.

Just a few weekends ago, I was at Thee Place for Paws. They do a fundraiser every year. They really applauded the previous work of this government for the PAWS legislation. They also noticed that in this very bill too, we're strengthening and modernizing the justice act to help enforce animal welfare.

I want to ask my esteemed colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who is a really big champion on this file, what parts of this bill she has heard about that help animals and how this will strengthen animal protection.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil for that question. Back when we first were looking at PAWS, we went to a round table in her riding and we met with farmers, we met with animal advocates—a little mixture of everybody—because PAWS is about protecting not just companion animals; it's about protecting all animals, and that includes our farm animals as well.

One of the important things in this bill is that we talk about the increased fines for those, if you are abusing an animal—and also make sure that we know who is going to pay for what.

One thing I'm extremely proud of is that we have one of the strongest penalties in animal welfare legislation of any Canadian province. Bill 102 will go even further by improving the existing legislation to help enhance the inspection powers.

As I mentioned earlier, the minister saw some of these inspectors getting trained. We want to continue to make sure we have the best robust force and make sure that they understand what animals they are looking for—because it may not just be a dog or a cat; it could be a cow or it could be a pig. There are lots of animals out there, and we want to make sure that they are trained for all.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the government members for their presentation. Several of the members talked about schedules 3 and 5 of this bill, which enact Keira's Law, the federal legislation that was passed recently. Certainly, that is something that we in the official opposition strongly support.

My question to the government is, when gender-based-violence advocates were calling for stand-alone legislation to implement training for justices and justices of the peace, why did the government decide to bundle those provisions in this bill? And why did they ignore many of the recommendations—most of the recommendations, if not all of the recommendations—that were made by the Mass Casualty Commission, a broad examination of policing in Canada, and also the 86 recommendations of the Renfrew county inquest? Implementing some of those measures would have really made a difference for victims of intimate partner violence.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Gender-based violence has been an issue that is increasingly guiding our spotlight. The justice system understands the impacts that it has, not only for the victim but for the families, and the need to make sure that the judiciary has access to the training that will allow them to weigh these situations in a way that is balanced and even-handed and that addresses the root causes and protects the family. That is the main thrust behind these training initiatives—but you have to appreciate that the judiciary is independent, so offering these systems and training for them is something that they will take.

1430

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: My question is for the Solicitor General.

I want to read an article that came out about nine days ago in my community, in Brampton. The title says, "Brampton Shooting Sends 17-Year-Old Girl to Hospital, Schools Lift Hold-and-Secure as Police Look for Suspect."

"Nine schools in Brampton were under hold-and-secure protocols Friday as Peel police responded to a daylight shooting that sent a teen girl to hospital."

Unfortunately, these stories are all the more common in my community of Brampton and communities across Ontario.

We hear from some members of the House that their proposed solution on public safety is to defund the police. We hear that from members, particularly, in the NDP. I'm just wondering: Does the minister think that's the right way to approach the problem, or is there another approach our government can take?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Just also to the member from Waterloo, who asked a question before: We rely on all the stakeholders to be consulted, to make the best decisions.

To the member from Brampton, a great member: He's 100% right. We have to have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe. We can't have people going through Ontario who say our public safety doesn't matter and that's why it's okay not to say we will do everything we can to keep Ontario safe. At the end of the day, it is true—our government will do everything we can to have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of my community in Toronto Centre. Specifically, today we're discussing the government's Bill 102, Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. There are some parts of the bill that are supportable, and I'd be happy to speak about these parts, but I do find that there are other parts of the bill that are very concerning, and so I'm glad that the government is here today to listen to those concerns, as well.

We know that the safest communities are not the most policed communities; they are the ones with the most

resources. Much of crime is committed by people in desperate situations today, and they could be prevented. Obviously, we want to be able to get to a place where we have zero crime. Poverty creates crime. Addiction, without supports and treatment, can create crime. Loneliness, disconnection and a lack of community cohesion create crime. Police officers are dealing with the most downstream effects of these issues. We would not need so many police officers if we were not pursuing this lack of new recruits today as hard as we were, if the government actually stepped up and actually invested in communities to mitigate crime. It is proven—studying upstream avenues and solutions there is how we keep communities safe. Affordable housing is crime prevention. After-school programs are crime prevention. Doubling ODSP and OW is crime prevention. Funding addiction treatment beds is crime prevention. Anti-racism and gender-equity policies are crime prevention. Properly funding and resourcing our public schools is crime prevention. Increasing the minimum wage is crime prevention. I could go on; the list is actually endless, but the thesis here is exactly the same: When people have economic opportunity and social resources, they can live well and be part of the community. That's when crime is prevented.

Affordable and, yes, government-subsidized housing is a cornerstone of happy, healthy, thriving communities. Just ask the neighbours. In my community, I speak to BIA members, and we are talking to mental health workers, we are speaking to street-involved people here in Toronto Centre, and they all absolutely agree—it's a consensus—that mental health and addictions resources and actual affordable housing mean that we will have safer streets and that communities will then welcome everybody.

Every time I meet with a business improvement area, the number one issue that they bring up is community safety, but unlike the government, they are proposing a different solution. They are proposing supportive housing, deeply affordable housing. It's not a radical idea. It's coming from the business leaders in my community, and I'm hearing it from them more and more. Even more than the activists and even more than service providers, it's the business community in this case, in Toronto Centre and the downtown financial district, that is actually leading that conversation by saying that the government needs to get back into the business of building deeply affordable, government-subsidized housing.

The government loves to tout itself as being supportive of police, and I would ask them to take a look at their policies a little bit closer. Many choices they have made over the last five years have actually eroded public services and the social safety net. Their lack of investments has made the jobs of police officers more difficult—it's now more complex, and essentially it has made more work for the officers. The police should be the last resort. You should not have to call them when someone is homeless. You should not have to call them when someone is having a mental health disorder. When upstream services are eroded, the layers of help between the first line of assistance and the police get thinner and thinner, meaning

that more calls fall to the police. This is bad for communities because issues escalate and become crisis situations more frequently. It is also bad for the police because they're run off their feet, jumping from crisis to crisis, when they may not even be equipped to deal with a problem they're faced with.

One of the programs that I'm most proud to speak about from my time at Toronto city council was the Toronto Community Crisis Service. This was a pilot project that I helped champion during my time at city council. It was introduced to four areas in the city. The downtown east pilot project covers almost all of my riding of Toronto Centre. It was done in partnership with the Gerstein Crisis Centre and other local organizations. We were able to successfully divert 78% of the 1,530 calls that we received from 911 with zero police involvement. The TCCS, as we call it, received a total of 2,489 calls for service from 911, as well as 211, and it was directly connected to community anchor partners. Out of those calls, 84% resulted in mobile teams being dispatched. Programs like this are a win-win solution. Our biggest champions are Toronto police themselves, who understand that they are not mental health workers; they understand that they are not social workers. When we're able to divert those calls to the organizations and service providers that can actually provide supports, the police are then freed up to do real policing work, and they are more trained to handle those very complicated and violent situations.

This is why we need to have non-police options when a non-violent crisis occurs. If someone is in crisis and can benefit from the TCCS team and there's a weapon, then we call the police, and then the TCCS will work with the police to go and be dispatched together. That's how effective community safety works.

I have heard from constituents who have been overjoyed with how the TCCS team has assisted community members in crisis with compassion and professionalism. My constituent Chris emailed me to tell me about a situation he witnessed several months ago, right here on Parliament Street in Toronto Centre. There was a community member who was in crisis, yelling and approaching other pedestrians on the street outside of a grocery store. Shoppers were understandably distressed and concerned for the individual. Chris, who was on the other side of the street on a patio, saw the Toronto Community Crisis Service team approach the individual, provide compassionate support to de-escalate him and connect him with community resources to support him. Chris told me that he was blown away by how professional, how kind and how respectful the TCCS team was, and that they were able to help this person in crisis and that everybody was able to see community action in effect. He says that the compassionate community response to mental health crisis is what we should be amplifying and expanding in the city of Toronto, and I couldn't be more agreeable.

I would even put forth that this government could actually take the model that we've developed right here in Toronto and export that to other urban centres to ensure that those communities are just as supported as we are.

This pilot project is not as well funded as it can be, but certainly, with the right resources, you can scale it up.

I would love to see such a program expanded to answer the school discipline calls, as well. The presence of police during a disciplinary action can be stressful for many students, especially racialized ones. It would be great if all involved when a student is in crisis had access to outside mental health professionals who could assess the situation and provide options in a non-judgmental way that help us de-escalate the situation. Not every conflict has to lead to arrest. In all but a few outlier situations, a child in crisis needs support and strategies, not law enforcement.

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That being said, I want to talk about another area where policing has worked incredibly well in my communities—I continually get positive feedback from constituents of many backgrounds—and that is in dedicated neighbourhood community policing models. Through community policing, four neighbourhoods in my riding have originally received neighbourhood community officers: Regent Park, Moss Park, Church and Wellesley, and North St. James Town. After years of advocating for neighbourhood community officers—and I was at the forefront of pushing forward a model of reformed community policing—in my riding of Toronto Centre, every single one of my neighbourhoods now is covered by neighbourhood community officers.

Interjections.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes.

Our Toronto police have this to say about the model: “The neighbourhood community policing models consist of small teams of officers who are dedicated to serving one particular neighbourhood.” They’re embedded in those neighbourhoods for a period of four years. They’re able to build those relationships with community members. They participate fully in all our events and festivals, and when they do that, they are welcome. They are part of our community, and we do the work together by ensuring that people are taken care of and that there is mental health and well-being for all.

Once again, this project that was first introduced in 2013—and it came across the city in small quantities—quickly became a favourite of our communities. I’m so proud that my riding is the only riding in Toronto—and I suspect it’s probably the only one in Canada—that has neighbourhood community officers covering every single one of our neighbourhoods. That was because we, as a local community, working together, said, “Yes, this model works. Let’s expand it and export it.” I have colleagues, when I left city council, who are asking how we did it. We did it because the 51 division officers were listening to our community and we worked hand in hand in making sure that those lobbying efforts, those advocacy efforts could go forward together. I’m so proud of that work. It’s one of the biggest legacies we have in ensuring that we can scale up community safety efforts in the city of Toronto. Acting as ambassadors, the Toronto Police Service work collaboratively with residents, and they do so in partnership with

community agencies. That’s how they build sustainable solutions.

I’ve seen this program expand significantly—and yet, every single year, we’re always asking for that program, but we get something different. It’s not just about more officers; it’s about making sure that we have the right type of community safety policing model. Speaker, I want to be able to share with you how important it is, especially in my patch of the city. I represent Regent Park, Moss Park and St. James Town, some of the poorest neighbourhoods in all of Toronto. And yet, I know that in our neighbourhoods that don’t have a heck of a lot, what we do have is community, heart and resilience. I’m so incredibly proud that we’re able to come together to take care of each other despite the fact that we don’t have all the resources in the world. But if you gave us more, if more was available—not just around policing, but around mental health supports, around affordable housing—I guarantee you, our communities would be even safer.

A neighbourhood officer undergoes special training, and they work with other officers who have already done the job. That’s why Bill 102, which actually reduces training, is of such concern. I understand that there are some people who feel that the current requirements have nothing to do with policing. I’ve heard this from the Solicitor General—that you don’t need to have an arts degree to become a police officer. Yes, that may be the case, but we want to have more training and, I would even argue, more education. I think it’s absolutely critical that people who go into policing as a career first should somehow be pursuing higher, higher levels of training. I’ll just give you an example. Not everybody goes into policing as their first career option out of high school; we know that, but reducing those requirements means that you’re inviting more young people into policing, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But listen to this: For most people entering policing, it happens to be their second career choice and sometimes third; what they’ve done first is generally some education. What we have in the city of Toronto—and I’m very proud of this, because I know I’ve spoken to various police chiefs who have talked about this next generation of policing that is oftentimes who we want to recruit in Toronto Police Service. This is what they do: They pursue post-secondary, in criminology, psychology, social work, community organizing, pre-law, mental health and addictions treatment, child and youth care, and so many other disciplines that then prepare them to be even better police officers. That’s how we know they are going to be ready to do the deeply emotional, complex work of dealing with people who are in crisis or having psychosis—not necessarily recruiting someone right out of high school who is then being asked to attend to a very complicated situation that could be very deeply steeped in trauma. I don’t know about you, Speaker, but I certainly know that is difficult work, and you don’t necessarily want just 18-year-olds to do that.

These programs that our graduates that we recruit from the Toronto police—we seriously want these graduates.

They are more thoughtful, more curious, more understanding of people's struggles because they have some of those skills based on the programs and the education that they came up through that explicitly teach it to them. That's why the next generation of officers is going to be better than the previous generation of officers, and that's why the Toronto police chiefs in the past have always championed more education and more training.

Even if future officers entering training have some post-secondary experience—it's still vastly different than some of the skills that a high-quality police officer may need. So we want to be able to mash it up, and I think that this is where we start to look for skills such as communication, problem-solving, social skills, which are things that colleges and universities teach right in their classroom. That's why through formal instruction and through life experience these students gain through their studies, they become better at their job, regardless of what it is. And I would say that if it's good for nursing and if it's good for education workers, it's probably good for policing as well. These are skills that take them time to build. Some of the most recent high school graduates have them, for sure, but imagine if they had more time getting more education, getting more training; imagine how much better equipped they would be to enter policing as a career.

I am just as concerned that we are not setting up young people for success. We want the officers to be able to build those skills. We have yet to hear a single community advocate—I have not heard one—who says, "We want the police officers to have less education and less training." Even police officers on the front lines have been saying they need more training. Rarely do I go into a community meeting that we don't talk about training—and it's not just training for a day or two, but it's about training and education, making sure that the comprehensive learning environment is there, even in formal classroom environments.

Community organizations in my riding, as well as constituents, are calling for more training. I don't know about you, but I know for sure that when I go into a community four months from now as a police officer—if I was going into the college, I'd want to make sure I have as much training as possible. The job is incredibly difficult, and I talked about why it has become more difficult: the lack of resources, the lack of government investment, the breaking down of the social safety net. All of that makes the policing work more complicated, more emotional. In some ways, we're setting them up for failure—asking them to be everything to everyone, when we need to invest in the social determinants of health, which happen to be exactly the same as the social determinants of safety. If you want to build safer communities, you've got to invest in those things.

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I understand that there's a considerable degree of mentorship that a young officer receives from senior officers when they begin their career, and I'm still concerned that what we see from policing culture coming up over and over again sometimes is the fact that—we may have conversations or it's alluded to that it's simply just a few bad

apples. But inherently, if the culture does not put community first—is not steeped in proper training and education—then they're not putting community first. They're barely putting themselves first because they're just not equipped to do that job.

I know for sure that each and every single one of us would benefit from more training.

Think about what it would take for them to address unconscious bias and understand how systemic oppression actually impacts communities. You're not going to be able to do that just out of high school; I don't think so. This takes time, and it takes proper review and skill development.

We can interrogate ourselves and ask ourselves honestly—you don't have to answer it here, but ask yourselves honestly: How much do you know about policing, mental health and the judicial system? How much do you really know about unpacking colonial concepts and anti-Black racism? How much do you really know about gender oppression and all the facts that bring about situations that create unsafe conditions? How much do you really know if you don't have a little bit of life experience? Bring yourself back to age 18. How much did you know then—based on how much you know now? It takes time. There is no shortcut to it. There are no Coles Notes to it.

In 2021, it was widely reported that white supremacists and other organizations are actively recruiting within the police and military ranks. It's hard to hear; I get that. I certainly don't want to hear that. But it's horrifyingly true. The report also talks about how members of groups are emboldened—groups that are supposed to keep us safe sometimes don't, especially when they're being targeted. We've all heard about the radicalization of young men. It also can happen when they aren't properly educated or trained. That's why we want to be able to train and adequately provide people the resources so they can deal with those challenges. I recognize that this bill is lowering the barriers for entry, and that means that you're also putting less-educated and less-trained people into a pool of individuals where there is active, targeted recruitment. We have to be able to connect the dots.

I am very aware that we want to do everything we can to combat radicalization; we have to. We're seeing it. We hear the government talking about giving religious organizations a few thousand dollars to put locks on doors, get more CCTV cameras, and hire a private security guard while the religious ceremony is on, when worshippers are in the house. That's not going to address hate crimes—not structurally or systematically. That's not going to reduce hate incidents and violence in Ontario. No way. You're kidding yourselves if you think simply putting a lock on a door is going to address the rising, rampant hate and Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-2SLGBT hate in Ontario.

We have to invest to make sure that we are able to bring people together and to talk about how we prevent radicalization. We do this by giving them information that's real; by countering it with a strategy that's specifically dealing with anti-hate. Then you fund it, and then you benchmark

it with annual reports. You work with law enforcement, you work with community organizations that are affected, and you continue to keep your foot on the gas—it cannot be eased up.

More and more recruits are talking about the need for training because they have gone into a situation where they felt untrained, not ready. We cannot expect 18-year-olds to graduate from high school, go through police college and then be given the uniform and then throw them into some of the most complicated situations. It's not fair to them. You're setting them up for failure.

If we're going to build the modern policing outfits that we deserve in Ontario, then we're going to need to properly train, educate and resource them. Currently, 33% of OPP vacancies—it's a number that is real. It's very expensive keeping a position open while somebody is on PTSD leave. These vacancies are due to officers being on long-term leave, so they're still on the payroll. Then, you have to go bring in new officers, and then you're going to not equip them for the complications of that work. Guess what's going to happen? You're probably going to have additional vacancies that will then eventually go on leave because you haven't dealt with the issues structurally.

If we have a new generation of young officers who have not had the life experience or have not been given the training or tools to handle very challenging jobs that we are seeing, then there's probably a very good chance that you're going to have higher vacancies due to additional PTSD leave. This is devastating for the individual officers, for their families and their teams that can be more overstretched. The communities that they serve will not be well served.

Robust mental health training as well as investments to make the job safer stand to benefit everyone. Ontarians interacting with police have better experiences with police officers with higher developed communication skills, problem solving skills and social skills if they have more training. Those officers are the ones who are most likely to be stepping up in a challenging situation when called upon. They will be the ones we want to dispatch to schools when called upon. They are less likely to face internal disciplinary action with more training, more support.

I want to share with this House the story of Constable Ken Lam, the Toronto police constable who very skillfully de-escalated and apprehended the Toronto van attacker without any violence. This is a story that really made us proud in the city, despite the fact that it was a very challenging day where hearts were broken. I remember where I was when we saw what happened on the screen.

“Experts say the powerful video of Alek Minassian's arrest reveals a textbook case of an officer diffusing danger through a series of life-and-death choices based on training and a calm mind.

“The footage shows an officer who police sources identified as Constable Ken Lam standing up, turning off his siren and talking clearly to the suspect even as the dead and injured lay along Yonge Street after being struck down by a white rental van.

“This is exactly the type of de-escalation ... and response to these types of confrontations that we hope to see,” said Ontario ombudsman Paul Dubé.

“Lam calmly holstered his service weapon, held up his baton and handcuffed Minassian as he lay on the sidewalk.

“He gave himself the space and time. He assessed the threat and realized he had options other than firing his weapon.”

“Dubé published a June 2016 report calling for increased police training on defusing dangerous situations after several high-profile deaths of people with mental illnesses who confronted officers.

“He said the constable's actions are a sign that police are gaining from training that includes simulations of tense standoffs with people who are emotionally unstable.

“Sammy Yatim's death in July 2013 in Toronto—where the mentally ill man was shot multiple times as officers surrounded an empty streetcar he was on—helped prompt reforms.

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“In recent years at least one day has been added to Toronto police in-service training on de-escalation and ‘dealing with people in crisis,’ said Mike McCormack, president of the police union in Toronto.

“The program is part of a mandatory three-day training for all officers that incorporates crisis communication, de-escalation and containment measures.

“A major component of this training includes a variety of scenarios that are designed to evaluate” an “officer's skills in effectively communicating with people in crisis and those who are suffering from a possible mental disorder,” said an email from the union.

“Meanwhile, recruits at the Ontario Police College are now receiving more training, as are a number of police forces around” Ontario who are doing so, but it is not a province-wide standard.

“Mike Federico, a retired deputy chief of the Toronto police, said changes were brought in as part of a response in 2015 to the report by former Supreme Court judge Frank Iacobucci on the Yatim incident.

“There's a lot of emphasis now on communications and techniques that calm things down. The Toronto police has recognized there are techniques to be learned and opportunities to practise,” he said in a telephone interview.

“I was proud to see the officer demonstrated ... a non-violent outcome.”

“Christian Leuprecht, a professor at Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, who studies policing and security issues, said Lam's actions were ‘textbook’ examples of the latest approaches.

“The result is a suspect who is now in custody”—obviously, this is past tense, but it helps shed light on why the devastating incident occurred.

“Lam spoke loudly and calmly, even as the suspect encouraged the officer to shoot him. When he claimed to have a gun in his pocket, Lam replied, ‘I don't care,’ and repeatedly instructed him to ‘Get down.’

“Leuprecht said Lam seemed to go further than some others might have when he decided to approach and arrest the suspect, rather than wait for backup.”

“There’s an impressive moment when he”—this is Constable Lam—“takes his firearm, puts it in his holster, he goes over with his baton, and he handcuffs the individual,” he said.

“I think that goes above and beyond the call of duty.”

Interjections.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, yes.

“He could have had a knife. He could have had a suicide belt.”

“However,” Professor Leuprecht “says if the constable had waited for backup, the situation might have escalated and had a different outcome.”

This is an opportunity for an individual who no longer poses a chance of harm to himself or to others, and that’s when the officer jumped in.

“Federico said what the public saw in the video was something officers are trained to do, which is switch from a deadly weapon to a less dangerous option—the baton—as the officer determines there is a lower threat.”

Additional training is a factor, and Constable Lam made the city of Toronto proud, despite it being a very challenging day.

It was so difficult to process all that happened, but the tragedy of the van attack on Yonge Street could have been significantly worse if it was not for the quick thinking of this young officer who is highly skilled and highly trained. Only in his thirties, this officer, but this officer positioned himself well by utilizing and deploying his training so he knew that he could de-escalate without using his firearm.

Aren’t these the type of officers we want in our community, officers who are encouraged to become community members that we move through high-quality policing training right here in Ontario? If you want to set a standard to have a modern, effective police service, this is how you do it.

That’s why I know that in my conversations with previous police chiefs, whether it’s Bill Blair or, previously, Mark Saunders, they were really proud, and they would boast about how proud they were about the next generation of officers. I heard that repeatedly during my 12 years at city council, about the next generation of officers, who were going to be better educated and better trained than the previous generation.

I wish to be seeing these programs and resources, so we can get more officers like Constable Lam. But in this bill, Bill 102, the government’s bill, entitled Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, this bill doesn’t seem to value those skills, that level of training and education that officers have received.

I want to share with you an email that I received from a constituent named Stacey. I did not know Stacey, to be quite honest, but Stacey took some time to write an email to me. Stacey said this about Bill 102:

“My name is Stacey, and I live in Toronto. I am writing today because I am concerned about the proposed amendment to the CSPA, to eliminate the post-secondary education requirement to become a police officer in Ontario.

“I live and work directly in the community, as a clerk at a restaurant. It means I have a different perspective than the ones” you’ve probably heard, whether it’s “from elite right- or left-leaning voters. The majority of my co-

workers simply do not vote, nor do they read about, or pay attention to the passing of new legislation.

“They do not believe it concerns them. They” believe that they are “powerless to change the system that has made rents high, wages low, and groceries more expensive than anyone can ever afford.

“However ... everyone I know is at least somewhat aware about the Conservatives’ plan to amend the CSPA to allow a secondary school diploma to be sufficient for admission to police college. Few, if any, of my peers feel good about this change.

“My personal feelings on the matter aside, one thing seems clear: The only reason to vote in favour of amending the CSPA on such short notice, with little to no research into the public opinion on this issue, is that those voting yes are extremely confident in the belief that they will never find themselves on the wrong end of an undertrained police officer’s gun.

“This might even be true for most of the sitting MPPs who will hear this. But it won’t be true for all of them, and” it’s certainly not true “for their constituents.

“How sure are you that your child will never be in the wrong place at the wrong time? That you yourself will never be walking down a dimly lit street at night, with a whisper of a resemblance to a violent suspect in the eyes of a young trainee? How sure are you that a child with a disability will not be mistaken for a public threat due to an outburst?

“Are you 100% sure?” Or “75%? Would you bet your life on it? Maybe.

“But what you are doing by passing this legislation is betting the lives of people you set out to represent. You are gambling on the belief that those who pass through the Ontario Police College will be able to distinguish when and when not to use their firearm after only 12 weeks of training.

“In Canada, at least, many of us believe that for the most part, police officers are brave, hard-working, intelligent individuals, whose concern is about keeping the peace. But I worry that” by “loosening the requirements to apply to the police college,” you are unravelling that belief, “not just in the police as a governing force, but in the provincial Conservative Party itself, and especially in the Premier’s leadership.

“I urge those voting to, at the very least, delay the passing of this legislation until more research has been done into how communities ... feel about it. I guarantee the answers will surprise you. To do anything less (to pass this bill with so little public consultation) is to gamble, yet again, on the hope that the people who have reservations will still be too disempowered to change the system.”

Wow. I am so impressed with this constituent, whom I haven’t even met, to take the time to write me such a thoughtful email, and I’m so honoured that I was able to share Stacey’s letter and her words into this House today. I want to thank her for taking that time to write to me.

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I hear Stacey’s concern for her community through her words. I, too, worry that this bill has been rushed through, without adequate public consultation to determine and to

ensure that the fears—and the efforts to amend the bill is to put people’s minds and to put their hearts at ease. Because what we know is that we want more trust in the police. We want the police to be able to work collaboratively with the community to keep them safe. It can’t be a polarizing effect.

I want to offer something into this House. In an editorial from the *Toronto Star*, they shared that in the summer of 2020, Finnish newspapers reported that in Finland they were seeing a disturbing trend. According to a survey conducted by Finland’s Police University College, trust in the police was slipping. Only 91% of Finns trusted their police. This is a significant amount that fell from 95% in 2018.

“In contrast, Statistics Canada reports that in 2019, only 41 per cent of Canadians had ‘a great deal’ of confidence in the” police, “though another 49 per cent of Canadians had ‘some’ confidence” in the police. That number significantly falls when it’s a visible minority group or people living with physical or mental disabilities. Victims of crime all expressed a lower confidence in the police.

What is the big difference here? Well, Canada doesn’t fare as well as Finland, probably because in Finland the police officers complete a three-year research-intensive university degree in policing before going on patrol, “while most Canadian cops spend only a few months at police college.” This is why Ontario’s recently suggested bill is “a short-sighted effort to forestall dropping recruitment numbers,” when they are no longer required to pursue a post-secondary education as a prerequisite to policing.

What’s also missing is that, based on Nova Scotia’s Mass Casualty Commission—which actually endorsed the Finnish model, largely because it is the proven model to be the most effective—this bill does everything contrary to what just came out of the largest national investigation on policing.

I want to offer you, Speaker, comments by Deepa Mattoo, who is the executive director of the Barbra Schlifer Clinic. She shared with me this feedback: Reducing the educational requirement could result in a greater diversity of individuals entering a police force. It could. While that may be true and we would all be thrilled with that outcome—if that is the government’s goal, and it would be a commendable one, I do hope that this government would be proactive in encouraging diversity in newly hired officers in more overt and specific ways, in addition to this mechanism. Building trust within marginalized communities and with individuals who are marginalized youth as well is something that could be achieved through the neighbourhood officer program’s expansion—once again, the NCO program being referenced by a legal clinic that specifically supports women fleeing violent situations.

By investing in Toronto Community Crisis Service—that’s how you would do it. That’s how you build relationships with a community. That’s how you build better, effective, community-based policing.

I’d like to share the feedback with you, based on the comments of the director of Policing-Free Schools, Andrea Vásquez Jiménez, who submitted a deputation to the committee:

“I am writing to you under my capacity as director and principal consultant of Policing-Free Schools and the focus of this letter is on Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare, particularly schedule 1, Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, schedule 4.

“Currently, the clause requiring post-secondary schooling to become a police officer in Ontario has yet to come into force—yet your government”—the PC government—“is seeking to cancel this pending change and solidify the removal of the post-secondary schooling requirement for police officers.”

Then, the letter continues that they are here to remind you that this decision is not evidence-based. It will not contribute to healthier or safer communities, and it goes against the recommendation once again—this expert cites—for more education and more training set out by the Mass Casualty Commission in Nova Scotia.

“Community safety does not equal more police, and policing community safety equals healthy communities.

“At Policing-Free Schools, we know that creating conditions for healthy communities supports the co-creation of healthy schools and vice versa, particularly because schools exist within and are part of our communities and as an extension are microcosms of communities and society in which they exist. Community safety is about co-creating with bold, courageous actions, transformative, healthy, equitable, life-affirming and healing community spaces. Thriving and healthy community spaces—which in and of themselves are safe, have ample support and resources and not more police presence, policing, punitive and carceral measures and there is more than enough data, reports, research and evidence indicating this.

“The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the lack of evidence-based action by governments, both created new inequities and exasperated already existing ones. This within the context of the federal government continuing to place profit over people. Our provincial Ontario government for decades underfunded and underresourced our education system, the push for privatization of our education and the health care system, ongoing policy decisions to uphold poverty, meanwhile prioritizing funds into prisons and policing, to name a few.

“The current government has chosen to continue not addressing the root causes and not addressing social and structural determinants of health and equity. What your government”—the PC government—“is doing is further increasing a pipeline of police officers contributing to a heightened policing-carceral state. It is no coincidence that this government is seeking to cancel this pending change to require post-secondary schooling, meanwhile \$267.6 million into policing, billions more into the expansion of prisons and, most recently, more into announcing free tuition to the Ontario Police College for new police trainees while simultaneously choosing to not fund or

underfund those community-based support systems that actually support creating the conditions for the well-being of communities.”

It's a long letter; I'm going to bring it to a stop there.

I want to be able to thank Andrea for the feedback because I think it's absolutely important that we hear from all sectors of society, and yet at the consultation of the committee I think we heard from mostly police, to be quite honest. So if the government talks about hearing positive consultation, sure, we heard positive 20-minute deputations from various different chiefs and perhaps association heads about how this was going to help them, but I know that in the past, before the PC government took office, it's the same officers who were talking about how proud they were about the next generation of officers. It's the same officers who talked about the need for more training and not less.

The Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission is something I want to spend just a few minutes on. It's a heart-breaking report, an inquest about the community tragedy that we all have learned about stemming from central Nova Scotia. I've got family out there. It was very, deeply personal. My family is located in Truro, Nova Scotia, right where the incidents all took place, so this is deeply personal in so many ways.

I read those recommendations. I read the report. There's too many for us to list here today. There are just simply too many, but that report had an executive summary. That executive summary mentioned training at least 100 times, and it's clear from that very well-documented raw report which looked at the modernization of policing and the effect of failures and what we need to do to improve policing—that report laid it all out for us. That report came out roughly the same time—that this government was putting forward Bill 102, and it runs contrary to what the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission talked about.

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I know that that federal report, produced in partnership with the province of Nova Scotia, is going to be travelling, and the federal government is going to be approaching the provincial government right here in Ontario—and the territories; they're crossing the country—and tabling that report. It's going to say, “How are you going to do your part in the province of Ontario to make sure that the recommendations out of the Mass Casualty Commission's report are going to be implemented provincially?” And you know what you're going to tell them? “We're not doing it.” Instead, we're going to adopt Bill 102, which actually reduces education—completely contrary to what the Mass Casualty Commission is recommending.

So many different incidents and violent situations can be diverted with more education and training. I want to recognize that there was—and I want to be able to say this properly—an external, independent review of the RCMP, including a review of the contract system under which the RCMP provided police services to rural communities. And this is what happens: Sometimes you contract out policing, so you have it set up in one community, and you send them elsewhere—and I know there's been times here, right here in Ontario, where we have sent our officers out because there was another incident that required boots on the

ground from our community. That happened during the convoy in Ottawa. We were moving officers here and there, and then they had to move some officers here when we thought the convoy was going to land here. I know the city of Toronto got involved; we put up waste trucks, garbage trucks, to barricade the road so that we could keep Queen's Park safe. We did that work. We did that work with the Toronto police. We also did that work with other police associations that were lending us a hand, just like we've lent others a hand. Whether it's firefighting or sending paramedics outside of our city, when we need each other, that's how it works.

But we can't have some officers better trained and better educated than other communities. That's just not right. We want to have the very best, most-educated and best-trained officers right here in Ontario. So therefore it doesn't matter if you're from the north or from the south, if you're from rural and urban communities, officers are consistently trained so that they can all do the hard work of de-escalation and building relationships with the community so that they can be better effective in delivering and ensuring public safety.

There was a closing of the RCMP training depot in Regina and the establishment of a Canadian police college: “The RCMP should phase out the depot model ... by 2032” and create “a three-year degree-based model of police education for all police services in Canada.” That is recommendation 3 that is coming out of the mass casualty report. They note “all police services in Canada,” and this is what it also speaks to.

The RCMP's training depot in Regina trains and recruits for 26 weeks. The report says that the training is far from adequate—far from adequate: therefore, inadequate. This government should take note because this 26-week training is more than twice as long as the Ontario Police College training, which is about 12 weeks. What are we doing here? What are we doing? You want to build better officers? Then build a better system, a better pipeline; invest. This fact is not just doable, but it's actually two more years of training that is required in order for us to meet the call to ensure that our officers are better trained.

We need officers to learn the soft skills, not just how to discharge a weapon. They need to have some of those “soft skills” that actually enable them to be a successful, high-calibre officer. This includes anti-racism training, understanding domestic violence, de-escalation, assisting people with mental health challenges, non-violent communication and helping people dealing with PTSD, trauma and stress and so much more.

Now, I understand that this might slow down the number of recruits—I get that—and I know that there are some communities that are well underserved. They have no officers. But I want them to have well-trained officers—not just any officer but well-trained officers so that the situations that I just described—it's not just putting anyone out there, because I did mention that the police chiefs were talking about the next generation of officers being better than the last generation of officers. I can't stress that more, because it left an impression on me when they said that.

I want to offer you a couple of more thoughts, Speaker. The mass casualty report also identified that gender-based violence is a national “epidemic” and that a public health approach needs to be taken to address violence against women, “stable, core funding” for groups that serve women survivors along with the creation of a national commissioner on gender-based violence.

This was also reinforced by the Renfrew inquest, the 86 recommendations. Their number one recommendation is to declare intimate-partner violence an epidemic. It costs you nothing—absolutely nothing—and from there, if you declare that, you can build a strategy, and then you can move to recommendation number 4, which is to implement the framework to ensure that the 86 recommendations are rolled out and operationalized. This government hasn't done that. You talk about safety. How are you keeping women safe? How are you keeping women and girls and children safe?

Violence-against-women organizations have been asking, protesting, pleading. They're exhausted. The pandemic has beaten everyone down so badly. They want a partner in this government. They want you to work with them. They're begging you to work with them, but instead, who is going to get more money? Not them, and yet they're the ones who are receiving those crisis calls. They're the ones who are struggling to provide support for women who are fleeing violence.

In the Toronto police 2017 report, *The Way Forward*—and this was touted as the modernization report. I have to say, I know this report extremely well, because I was on council at that time. I had several briefings with the Toronto police, including the chief at that time. We were told that this was how we're going to build a modern police force, one that was going to be community-minded, one that was going to remove \$100 million from the police services and then repurpose that back into the city of Toronto—because that's what the modernization task force was about: to strip away inefficiencies and to make it a streamlined, modernized service that met the needs of the community.

In that report, training was mentioned 44 times in 55 pages, and it emphasized community-based policing, which I've already spoken about. In that report, the modernization of Toronto Police Service report, calls for more comprehensive training and an increased emphasis during employment screening for evidence of bias, racism and discriminatory beliefs. They believe that this type of training was absolutely critical because there was no place for racism, white supremacy, homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and any other kinds of bias in policing.

The report emphasized de-escalation training as critical to ensuring that force is only used when absolutely necessary.

The report reads, “As citizens, we need to know that police officers will follow their training to put themselves in extremely dangerous and potentially violent situations without question or hesitation. We also need to know that police service members will follow procedures to the letter without overt or implicit bias, to ensure fair and effective prosecutions and protect the rights of individuals under the law. To be successful, the culture needs to promote and

ensure a disciplined adherence to legislated requirements, training, and procedures.”

This report goes on to say: “Our intent won't be achieved if procedures and training do not empower officers to be facilitators, partners and problem-solvers.”

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The report also recommends “a partnership with an Ontario university and/or college of applied arts and technology to work with the TPS on its training model for a modernized police service. The goal will be further professionalization and active accountability by leveraging the partner organization's ability to bring more academic rigour, additional training mechanisms, and research to create new and relevant learning opportunities.”

Mark Saunders was the police chief at that time. This was the report that he shopped around and brought to every single councillor and said, “This is how we're going to modernize the Toronto Police Service.”

The Toronto Police Service recently had a meeting in April. The word “training” appeared 331 times in one meeting. Clearly, it is the responsibility and clearly it is the priority for both the public as well as the members of the police service. I want to make sure that this government understands that Bill 102 undermines all of that.

So yes, there are some good things in the bill, and I want to be able to separate that, but that's not how this place works. You get to vote for the whole darn thing. I did move a motion at committee that specifically tried to undo one thing that I thought needed to be done, and that was to make sure that Ontario no longer is the province that doesn't give the police chiefs authority to suspend officers without pay. I wanted to make sure we could finally reverse that, but this government and the committee voted against it. So that's why this bill is so challenging and problematic for us. We want to do more with it, and we want the police to do better, and right now, the bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much. It's time for questions.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My colleague from Toronto Centre talked about the police, and I think you tried to stay in the grey area. You are trying to avoid talking about defunding police and saying, “We don't say ‘defunding police,’ but we say that we need to divert the resources,” and do this and do that. Again, I don't know why we don't come straight about that. This is downloaded from your site, “End police violence,” and on the first page—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): You cannot use props.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: The first page is saying, “We cannot and should not simply dismiss the call to defund police.”

My question for you is, with this bill trying to add more flexibility for chief officers to control and train, can you justify defunding police?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member across for the question. In Bill 102, there is language in there about actually creating a police outfit that is going to be less educated and less trained. What I have been advocating for and what I keep speaking about

is neighbourhood community policing—community policing that works in partnership with the community and partners to deliver better, more effective community policing and that creates safer communities. We do that by also investing in public services and investing in community supports.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I really appreciated the thoughtful comments from the member who talked about the social determinants of health, but also pointed out that the social determinants of safety are related, if not the same. Working with folks in the community and different agencies supporting those who are human trafficking survivors—who are the first to say that a shelter is not an appropriate place for them, that there are layers to the needs. Transitional housing or supportive housing or whatever we want to call it needs to be appropriate for the need, and that just doesn't exist in my community and in most.

When we don't have the housing that's needed, when we are forcing people back into harm—when I had heard from the interim police chief a while back, he said “We can move people that are in the parks, but we can't give them housing.” When there's such a need in our community for safety, why don't we see that in this bill, and why don't we hear that from this government?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much for that question. Interestingly, I've actually done a number of police ride-outs. This is where you get into the cruisers with them, and they take you to different places. The number of times that they've been asked and deployed to take on work that's not their core policing work—it's oftentimes mental health related and social service related and housing related.

You're wasting their time. This government is absolutely wasting their time by not investing in the social determinants of health, which are exactly the same as the social determinants of safety. You want to make it easier on the police? You actually invest in housing and social services.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I listened to the member, and I know she loves her city very much. But I have to say, this is an opportunity where we had the president of the police association here, the PAO. I believe that if a member doesn't support this bill, they don't support our police officers, they don't support our firefighters, they don't support our animal welfare inspectors and they don't support the coroner's office.

The question I want to ask the member, who loves Toronto, is, will she support this bill?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I want to thank the Solicitor General for his question. I think he may have not heard some of my deputation. I had talked about and I actually boasted about the fact that every single one of my neighbourhoods is covered with neighbourhood community officers. That's because of the advocacy I did in

my community with my local division to make sure that we got the right type of community-based policing. So absolutely, my support is there.

But this bill actually is going to erode the type of officers, the high calibre of officers that we need by asking less of them. At the same time, you're offering them and you're making them do more work that's not core policing work. That's why I am so passionate about supporting the investments in social services so we can actually build safer communities in partnership with the police.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: You know what? I want to continue on that theme. I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre for her remarks today. You mentioned the social determinants of safety. Statistics show that in societies where you have a lesser gap between rich and poor, you have lower levels of crime; you have lower homicide rates. Part of it is really obvious.

Under this government, we've got an opioid crisis, an epidemic that is exploding. We've got a homelessness epidemic that is exploding. We've got food bank lines that are around the block. The statistics show that 80% of homeless youth are victims of at least two crimes per year; 32% reported being victims of sexual assault. So when this government refuses to address those social determinants of safety, they're actually increasing the amount of work that the police have to do.

What would you recommend to this government, and how would you change this bill to address the social determinants of safety?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I really value the member's question because I want to share a story with you. It's very quick. In my conversations with local police from 51 division, we talk a lot about the encampments and what's happening in the encampments. The police are repeatedly telling constituents, “Don't call us about the encampments, please. Call your city councillor. Call your MPP. Call your MP. Because they have the responsibility for housing, not the police.”

But guess what? Because those orders of government, including this one, are colossally failing in investing in deeply affordable housing with social supports, we see that the police are picking up the pieces. You're not giving them the resources to do their job. The resources to do their job are more housing and more supports.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Frankly, I'm actually quite surprised, as a member of the justice policy committee, where the member opposite also sits, that you missed it. We talked about training; we're talking about education. The proposed approach maintains the existing requirements to become a police officer, which are completion of secondary school or its equivalent. Nothing is changing. The member opposite keeps going on and on: “We're going to have less training.” It's the same now. We applauded the police officer from the van attack on

Danforth. You applauded him. That person, when they applied for the job, did not need a post-secondary degree.

Stacey, whoever you are, thank you for calling in to your councillor. I'm sorry your MPP did not share that information with you, but there are no changes to the education requirement. It is the same across Canada.

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What I also want to mention is that when you mention the—through you, Speaker, when they mention the Mass Casualty Commission, we heard during that committee that there is going to be more training once you become a police officer. So to the member opposite: Voting no is voting against public safety. Will you support this bill?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member across. I think this is where you get to sort of play with words, but let me share with you what some of these words are.

In Finland, they have seen their trust in police fall from 95% to 91%. In Canada, Canadians have a great deal less confidence in police, by 41%, and the major difference is that in Finland, their Police University College completes a three-year, research-intensive university degree in policing before they even get into a uniform and get into a cruiser. That's what's going to give us more trust in our police. That's what's going to build us a modernized, effective policing force, and I really want to get there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): We don't have time for further questions.

Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join in debate on Bill 102.

Supporting education of judges and justices of the peace: The Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act—these amendments would support judicial education related to gender-based violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace. I think we would all agree that professionals in our legal system must be trained to understand all of the signs of abuse, including coercive control, because we know that abuse can be more than physical or sexual. Coercive control is part of the definition of family violence contained in both the federal Divorce Act and in the update our government made to the Children's Law Reform Act in 2020.

Speaker, I need to interrupt my presentation, because I forgot to say that I'm going to share my time with the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

To the aspect that I just referred to in terms of the Children's Law Reform Act in 2020—the member from Oakville North—Burlington introduced the Keira's Law motion in the Legislature, aimed at protecting children, supporting women who are fleeing abusive relationships, and those who are victims of intimate partner violence and coercive control.

In courts in Canada and other countries, one of the strategies used by abusers is victimizing themselves or suggesting parental alienation. This is a tactic used by abusers whose interest is not in the best interests of the child or the ex-spouse, but in control. We must ensure that

decision-making professionals in our Family Court system receive education and training about intimate partner violence, including emotional violence and coercive control.

The proposed changes to the Courts of Justice Act and Justices of the Peace Act would, if passed, ensure a consistent approach to the way judges are educated about gender-based violence and its impacts on children, families and communities.

For this government, nothing is more important than our community safety, and we understand that our police services across our province are the front line that keep Ontario safe.

I recently met with the president of the Durham Regional Police Association and reminded him that we have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe today and every day, and we will do absolutely everything we need to do to help keep the region of Durham and other parts of Ontario safe. In turn, the membership of that association is supportive of this government as champions of community safety. They'll continue to work with me and our government on changes that mean the most to those members of the Durham Regional Police Association.

To support recruitment efforts at a time when local police officers have signalled challenges in doing so, Bill 102, if passed, would eliminate the post-secondary education requirement to become a police officer, as set out in the Community Safety and Policing Act, the CSPA. If passed, the act would amend the CSPA to provide that a secondary school diploma or equivalent is sufficient education for the purposes of being appointed as a police officer.

Many of us here in the Legislature will be familiar with Jon Reid. Mr. Reid is president of the Toronto Police Association. Mr. Reid had this to say about the proposed legislation:

"The Toronto Police Association welcomes the Ford government's investment in community safety and policing.

"The public has lived with the consequences of an inadequate bail system for far too long, and resources recently announced mean our members will be able to refocus their efforts on proactively monitoring violent offenders who wreak havoc on our sense of safety.

"We have long advocated for this support, and we will continue to work with the provincial government on the changes that will keep our communities and our members safe."

He went on to say that the announcement by the Ford government is another positive show of support for police officers in Toronto and across the province—standing with those men and women who keep our families safe.

"Everywhere, police services are struggling to hire police officers. Whether it's the years of anti-police rhetoric, the impact of the COVID pandemic or the recent increase in violence against police officers, we're not getting the numbers we need."

There is safety in numbers, and we know that a well-resourced police service, like the Durham Regional Police Service, improves public safety and enhances our ability to build positive community relationships.

Speaker, the government is taking action to keep Ontario safe today, tomorrow and for future generations—like my granddaughters, Annette and Sophia. This past weekend, they both walked with me in the Brooklin Spring Fair, but before we went to the fair, I spoke a little bit about what I was planning to do here at the Ontario Legislature. I spoke about this particular bill and why I saw this bill as generational, and the impacts it will have in the months ahead but also in the years ahead, going forward. They're now 11 and 13, and they understand the impacts in their community. They live in Bowmanville, just east of where I live in Whitby. They understand the impacts of this bill—they understand keeping their community safe also.

At the end of the day, we're providing those at the forefront of community safety with the legislative and administrative supports they need to deliver the highest-quality services to the province overall.

I quoted Mr. Jon Reid, president of the Toronto Police Association, but we also have a quote from John Cerasuolo, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association: "The grants will provide the necessary financial resources to support active engagement and monitoring of bail compliance. The ability of police services to utilize these financial resources will be limited by an ongoing staffing shortage and competing organizational priorities. The efficacy of this initiative will be tracked with a view to providing long-term, stable funding to engage in this important program that will enhance public safety, officer safety and confidence in the criminal justice system."

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Going forward, we do have the support of many policing associations, including mine in the Durham region.

Speaker, through you, I'll now cede my time to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I really am very delighted to discuss and support this bill. Why are we looking to the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act? Because we have some issues; we need to address them.

The problem is, crime is on the rise. Since 2014, crime rates in Ontario have risen by 9%. Violent crime rates have risen by 20%. According to data from Peel police, this May there were 304 reported cases of vehicle theft in Mississauga. On average, there have been 12 vehicle thefts per day in Mississauga this year. Less than 2% of those have been solved.

Violence against workers doing their job is on the rise: public transit—we see what's going on with the TTC—nurses, some violence in hospitals, pharmacy robberies. Every day, I get one of the pharmacists calling me in regard to a pharmacy robbery.

Police officers we lose—I think this is the highest rate maybe in decades, maybe ever; I'm not sure. I don't have any other statistics—older ones to compare. On average, we are losing one officer almost every month. This is a very high rate of violence. Over the past year, we have seen a tragic number of police officers die in the line of duty.

Violence in schools is on the rise. Schools should be a place for learning and community, not violence. The Minister of Education announced in April that the government is investing \$24 million to reduce the risk of violence and promote the safety of students and educators.

We did a motion calling for the federal government to implement bail reform. Earlier this year, the House passed an address calling on the federal government to implement meaningful bail reform. Finally, the government agreed, this May, to start the process of bail reform. We must continue working with the federal government to ensure repeat violent offenders stay off the streets.

This bill will allow meaningful changes to address Ontario's crime problem. We are implementing the 2019 Community Safety and Policing Act. This new legislation will replace the Police Services Act with a robust framework to advance safety, transparency and effectiveness of the community safety system. Amendments to oversight and governance and labour arbitration provisions will improve accountability for the police sector.

Clearing the backlog in the justice system: Slow justice is injustice; I always say that—if it takes years to get my right, this is injustice as well. So ensuring that claims are heard in the court of appropriate jurisdiction—low-volume claims should be held in Small Claims Court. The bill frees up time and resources for the Superior Court of Justice to address bigger cases.

Improving emergency services such as by implementing next-generation 911: Last year, Ontario announced a \$208-million investment towards 911 emergency response system improvements which will make the system faster, more responsive and more efficient. With this bill—some parts of it will allow some information-sharing, which will allow the police to act in a better way in creating cooperation between different areas of the police.

Training judges and justices to address gender-based violence: Again, the new judges need some training. This is similar to recent bipartisan federal legislation to provide training on sexual assault. That's one item, but our government has gone even further. We need to do training about intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships.

Social context, which includes systematic racism and systematic discrimination: The Chief Justice is now required to submit a report to the Attorney General on these topics. We need to monitor the improvement of this area.

Ontario's government is keeping people safe and secure. We need to work together. Again, the approach of any defunding of police or talking about stopping police violence—this is demoralizing our police forces. Those front-line officers work shifts, nights, weekends to make sure that we are safe. If I am a police officer and I hear this "defund the police" talk—it's rhetoric, and it's actually demoralizing police. It doesn't even get them enthusiastic to do a good job because they don't feel that anybody feels that they are doing good job. But they are doing a good job.

Another approach of that is—we need to promote neighbourhood watch. We need to get lots more information sources to the police to help them, because they can't be everywhere every time. As much as they have resources, as much as we put resources, there are still going to be gaps. We need to take the approach that public safety is everybody's responsibility—not only the police, not only the firemen.

Again, I have to emphasize that when somebody is looking for a house, searching for a house or preparing to get a house, they check the areas, and they seek to have a home in a safe neighbourhood. Business cannot act, cannot grow and cannot prosper when they, all the time, have holdups and guns pointing—and losing their revenues and losing their workers to mental issues or shock issues after an attack. They lose their workers because they can't function anymore because of the stress of what happened. If, God forbid, something happened—we lost one of the workers—the whole team gets really in a bad shape. Business cannot act and cannot grow unless there is a good safety environment to be able to function and do business.

We hear that some gas stations start closing at an early time of the evening because they don't want to have anybody inside the gas station overnight, because they cannot guarantee safety. This is alarming.

We need all of us to work together. Maybe this bill only is not the answer. We need more bills. We need to strengthen and modernize our ways of conducting police business to protect the people. We cannot allow the gangs—technology-wise and training-wise—to be beyond the police's capabilities or more advanced than the police. The police have to be on top of everything.

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Yesterday, I heard that a friend of mine's car got stolen. He asked some people, and they said that a reader that can decrypt the key's encryption is sold on Amazon for \$100. That's scary. We need to be ready for these kinds of activities.

We need to make sure that legislation is up to speed so we can protect properties, protect businesses, protect the life and safety of Ontarians.

Again, we are providing those at the forefront of community safety with the legislative and administrative support they need to deliver the highest-quality services to the province.

I refuse and reject any talk about violence of the police and defunding police.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the members for their contributions to the debate. My question is for either of the members across the way. I'm glad to see that there are courses being established for new judges and existing judges with respect to Keira's Law: domestic violence, partner violence, systemic racism and systemic discrimination when it comes to training in the justice system for judges and justices of the peace.

What we're hearing from police officers, front-line officers and community members is that they want more training for police officers, not less. How does this bill ensure that all police training will include much more substantial required training like in equity, human rights, mental health and de-escalation so that police have those tools to do their job even better?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Through the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, there are collaborations and partnerships. In my particular riding in the region of Durham, there are collaborations between the Durham Regional Police Service and Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, as an example, to address some of the challenges of policing and mental health, some of the calls that they go on.

Furthermore, there's a partnership with Victim Services of Durham Region and Luke's Place, as well, to support the police service in their day-to-day work going forward. This particular bill, yes, is modernizing the justice system, but I think key to effecting the implementation of this legislation, should it be passed, is the continuation of that level of collaboration, particularly in the area of mental health and victim services.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is to the member from Whitby. He sits on the justice policy committee and was part of the hearings leading up to this legislation. My question to the member: We heard from a number of police commissioners and police association leaders that you don't need a post-secondary degree to apply to the OPP in this province, but also, that they felt that having a university degree could pose a barrier for certain racialized communities that would prevent them from joining the police force. They also talked about how critical it is to make sure that individuals in the community see themselves reflected in their police force for community policing.

I'm wondering if the member could please comment on the importance of making sure that our community police forces reflect the communities they serve, and that a vote for this act is a vote for community safety.

Mr. Lorne Coe: That's a good question, it really is, and it ties into a recent meeting I had with the new police chief for the Durham Regional Police Service. We talked about the effect of this legislation because we talked about the importance of the Durham Regional Police Service reflecting the broader communities within the region of Durham. In my riding, in Ajax and Pickering, they're very diverse, Speaker. The new police chief and the president of the Durham Regional Police Association understand the importance that this bill will play in ensuring that the police service in Durham region does reflect the broader diverse community.

I say that because at the region of Durham, when I was a councillor for seven years, I chaired the partnership on diversity and immigration, and one of the key aspects coming out of our community reports each year—because we had the Durham regional police reflected—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Either the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills or the member from Whitby can answer this question. I paid attention to what they had to say very seriously because, like everyone, I care about community safety.

I want to bring to the floor of the House a matter we're dealing with in Ottawa Centre this week. We've had notice that people who do not like queer or transgender neighbours are coming to Broadview Avenue, the site of three public schools, and they're going to protest and attempt to harass children on their way to school. So we have been working proactively with the police in our community and neighbours who are disgusted with this kind of behaviour.

What I don't see in the bill proposed, and I hope to see it, are proactive resources that can make sure, as the member for Toronto Centre said, that our police are not responding a great deal to situations where mental health workers could help. They could respond to actual incidents of unsafety, and we could have them there in significant numbers.

Can the members enlighten me: How does this bill make sure people in a community like mine will be safe when they need to be safe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Through you, Speaker: I've said this before and I said it in my remarks, that this bill is designed to protect our communities—everyone who's living in our communities. I know that's an approach that our Durham Regional Police Service ascribes to and continues to do with the leadership of our brand new police chief, but it's also supported by the other members of the Durham Regional Police Service. Thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have members of my extended family who are in policing. I know many people who are in policing, and I have great respect for them. I know that we saw members of the opposition parties give their full-throated support to the defund-the-police movement. I remember hearing from those I know who are in policing about how demoralizing that was when they were putting their lives literally on the line to keep our communities safe and to be the first on scene in so many situations.

I wonder if this legislation, to the member from Whitby, will help us respond to that level of antagonism with support for those who are on the front lines and if this will hearten our brave men and women who serve on the front lines against that philosophy coming from the opposition parties?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to my colleague for the question. Again, yes, I hear—we all hear, together—the talk about defunding police in different versions. Talking about the case in Ottawa—maybe that bill is not to address this specific incident or this specific type of incidents.

I just have to say something: There was always a police officer in every school. Who removed the police from every school? It was the Liberals, with support of the

NDP. We had police inside the school to protect students, and you guys asked to remove them. Now we are asking for police to be proactive when they get a call and then move to act on the call. This is just for a reminder.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the members for their presentation. As the members know, the province is responsible for detention centres and for the safety of individuals, both corrections officers as well as inmates, within those centres. These are a part of our community.

At Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre—recently 9,000 inmates, both present and past, were awarded a \$33-million settlement by the province to settle out of a class action lawsuit. Many of the inmates were claiming that their charter rights were violated. There have been many stories about this, and this is well-known to this government and the government prior—about the violence, the overcrowding, the lack of supervision, the poor treatment and many other conditions. This building is far too small. It's not working for officers; it's not working for inmates.

1610

My question to this government is, when will this government build a new facility in London and care about community safety?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and through you to my colleague from the opposition: I don't think that this bill has anything to do with the correctional facility, the prison. What we need to address here is the continuous violence and protecting our communities from the crime rate, making sure of our Ontario people's safety. In regard to that, I definitely would encourage the member to address that with the finance minister to make sure that we have more budget for that.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have my opportunity today to speak to Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. I've been able to listen to the members who have spoken before me on both sides of this debate today. It takes me back to my community. That's where I decided where I wanted to go with this and how I wanted to address the changes that are happening within this bill, and to bring forward the concerns and the things that I have learned in my own community, where I see the cracks in the system, where I see the benefits in our system and where I see where the government could do better in our system, to not only protect our communities but to also ensure that our police force has what they need.

I've been an MPP for Hamilton Mountain for 12 years and had plenty of opportunity to meet with various chiefs that we've had in Hamilton. The number one thing that I always hear from them is, first of all, they need more police on our streets. I wish I would have gathered those numbers for that, but we definitely have a huge shortage of police on our streets.

That's of great concern, because we have officers who do not get the supports they need when they need it. We have things that happen in the city and police are not able to attend quick enough. I can tell you that when I see police driving on our streets, it's rare that I actually am driving down the street and see a police car, because our Hamilton area is quite large. They are responsible for the entire amalgamated area—just not enough of them to go around.

But they do the work. They keep their chin up and they keep going. They also, I have to say, under the leadership of our current chief, see the need of being there to support our community members, so showing up for—the Wayside program, for instance, is a rehab centre in the city. Our chief is always there, front and centre, with a message of need, a message of increased funding for mental health, increased funding for addictions, increased funding for housing, increased funding for ODSP, for Ontario Works.

All of those programs that are the social safety net in our communities are at risk. When they're at risk, it causes people to do things that they typically wouldn't do. Then what happens is, the police have to be called—we're already short on police, but they have to attend, and they have to be able to manage the situation that they're in.

Gratefully, in Hamilton, we have a program called COAST that supports police on mental health calls to be able to de-escalate, to be able to talk to the person in question and see if there's actually another route than that person being arrested and to be able to support that police officer. Many communities, I'm quite positive, don't have that COAST program. Their police officers don't have that mental health support to be able to attend, and as great as that program is, I'm quite sure COAST isn't able to attend every necessary call that the police may possibly walk into and not know that there's a mental health crisis happening. So ensuring that police officers have education to be able to de-escalate, to be able to work with someone with mental health issues is critical. It's absolutely critical to ensure that our police officers have those necessary supports and education.

There's an amazing program in our city called the social navigator program—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a fantastic program. I had the ability on our constit week to be able to go and join them in their duties of the day. I showed up at 8 o'clock in the morning at the paramedic station, and I teamed up with Naomi Henderson, who is a paramedic on the social navigator program. A big shout-out to Naomi because I spent the day with her and she's amazing. It was just such a pleasure to be able to join her in her duties and to see how she manages and how she supports people on the street. That's Naomi.

Then we went to the police station—and I think it's 8:30 every single morning. They gather and they talk about the clients whom they've been able to interact with, the people who are living rough on the streets or who need the extra supports. So the paramedics team up with the police. They have housing. They had someone from

Interval House, which is a women's shelter. They had someone from the Indigenous centre. They had a couple of social workers. There must have been 20 of them around the table that morning, which is every morning.

One programmer, Sue, went through the list of people who were on her list for that day to talk about who had a doctor's appointment, who had court, who needed something done with ODSP, who needed their meds increased, who needed their meds picked up. They had everybody on a database, from the relationships they built, and they knew how to support each and every one of those individuals. They talked about it amongst themselves. It was so inspiring.

This table is led by acting sergeant Pete Wiesner, who the Conservatives, I'm sure, would know well. He was their candidate in the Hamilton Centre by-election. So he's the acting sergeant of the crisis response unit. He's been there for 11 years, but I think he became the acting sergeant not so long ago. He leads this table, and it was honestly inspiring to watch the actions and the compassion that went into this. So this is police and paramedics that come together, and it's funded under the police.

Sol Gen—they need to listen to this. They need to ensure that programs like this are happening across our province, because as we know, we have a housing crisis across our province, we have an addictions problem across our province, and we have a poverty issue across our province, and these police and paramedics have created a program that supports folks. They support the tents. Instead of going in there and ripping down tents, they're there if they have to move because it's got to happen, then they're helping them pack. They're making sure that they have food and where they are going next. So it was quite something to spend the day with Naomi and to be able to visit the tents, to be able to visit some service providers that are helping.

Naomi knew everyone, and everyone knew Naomi. This is the case for all of the folks who are on the social navigator program. It was really inspiring to watch, and those people are better for it. They're better for Naomi. They will survive another day because of Naomi and the rest of the group.

1620

They're out there. They're providing very little paramedic services, let me tell you that. It's not being a paramedic anymore; it's actually getting to them before they need a paramedic. But they're handing out all of the drug paraphernalia that they need to ensure that it's safe. They're handing out naloxone kits to ensure that everyone has something to save their lives or save another one's life. They're providing Band-Aids and they're providing snacks and water and boots and coats and tents and clothing. Whatever they find that their folks need, somehow, they find a way to make that work.

So I wanted to give them a huge shout-out because we certainly can't talk about police and not talk about the social navigator program that's happening in the city of Hamilton, because it is top-notch. It should be followed and echoed everywhere across this province, because as

long as we're in crisis, these are the folks who are truly, truly, truly going to make a difference in people's lives. So, here's to them.

The other thing that I thought that I wanted to talk about, Speaker, was that folks get in trouble and they need the police when they don't have the supports that they need. The Banyan program in Hamilton: I was visiting them that constit week, also, and I had the opportunity to hear about a program called SURE. It's the Self-Understanding and Regulating Emotions program.

And so what this program does is it brings young folks at—shoot, I should have written down the number. I think it was nine years to 11 or 12 or 13 years—right in that critical—they're not a teenager yet, they're not little kids anymore. But they're struggling with their parents, and their parents are having a hard time and the kids are having a hard time. So it brings the parents and the young people together in a group setting to talk about self-regulation, to teach them how to talk to each other to stop the blowouts and to stop the breakdown in the families.

This is something that changes the direction of a young person's path. Instead of that young person skipping out on school and swearing at their parents and smoking drugs and smoking cigarettes, doing all kinds of stuff that young teenagers can get into and starts that path into possible criminal activity, then they're learning how to work together as a family network.

They are hoping to have funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services soon to be able to continue this program. They have great numbers, they have great success, and they have amazing families that are doing well because of the program that they're providing to our community. So a huge shout-out to the SURE program and all of the work that they're doing in Hamilton.

Speaker, I also met last week with VCAO, Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario. They came to meet with us because of the lack of funding that this government is providing and the crisis that they're finding themselves in. Now, let's say it again: When victims and people are in crisis, they find themselves sometimes in criminal activity. When people find themselves in criminal activity, we then have police who have to manage that situation. And it's unnecessary if we're providing services to people when they need it. Social safety nets are super important to be able to stop the necessary need of police.

So they were able to meet with the minister the same day as they met with us. Unfortunately, the minister only gave them 15 minutes. This is a provincially mandated program that has been enacted since 1987 and is critically underfunded. They're in complete crisis. They're not able to retain staff. They're not able to pay staff what they need. And they're responsible for any crisis that happens, whether it's a weather crisis that happens at somebody's house, a murder, to anything in between. If a family is in crisis, they can contact them and they are mandated to provide services. It's pretty hard to keep up with those mandates if you do not have the funding to do so. It's as bad as—they have to pay for someone to go in a hotel

room, and because they're very short on their money within the office, sometimes staff will take out their own credit cards to be able to pay for that, and then they have to hope and pray that the ministry is going to repay it. That's how that system works—they have to put it out, they submit it to the ministry, and the ministry then pays them back. That's no way to be able to manage these types of things and to be able to ensure that a mandated service is able to function in a respectable manner.

So when we're talking about strengthening safety and modernizing justice, we have to ensure that we're providing the funding and the safety nets right across the board. Our police need it. Our police will tell you they want housing, they want increased ODSP and OW, increased mental health supports. They want increased mental health supports in Hamilton. We continue to lose organizations—organizations that aren't able to keep up with the funding. So the same thing that police are asking the government for, they continue to cut; they continue to underfund.

Hamilton Mental Health Outreach, the first organization to announce their closure in January—closing June 30, 2023—has been serving people recovering from addiction and supporting those with mental illness for more than 30 years. They're closing their doors.

Catholic Family Services—I've talked about that before in this House—with so many services: They opened in 1949, closed April 30, 2023. Thank goodness some other providers were able to pick up some of their programs, but the continuity, the relationships that were built with so many people in the community have been lost.

Mental health statistics: In any given year, one in five Canadians experience a mental illness. About 4,000 Canadians per year die by suicide, an average of almost 11 suicides a day. It affects people of all ages and backgrounds. Individuals with a mental illness are much less likely to be employed. Unemployment rates are as high as 70% to 90% for people with the most severe illnesses.

I actually wrote a letter to Minister Tibollo not that long ago—I'm still waiting for my response; maybe I'll hand-deliver him this after I'm done—to talk about the number of constituents who have contacted my office who have adult children—their moms have contacted me—who have schizophrenia, and they're out on the streets and they don't have the supports. One was at the Barrett Centre; she tried to be there for a few days. They sent her out and they gave her a tent because they have nothing that they could do for her, so the very least—which I know was a good thing to do, on their behalf—was to make sure she had a roof over her head, even if it's just a tent. These are the things that are coming down to the organizations that are serving our community.

The last thing that I want to talk about—and I'm running out of time; it's actually going much faster than I thought it would—is Bill 74. In this bill, you have opened up the Missing Persons Act, so I tried to find details on that; I couldn't really find much. This would have been an ample opportunity to be able to bring Bill 74 forward, the

Missing Persons Amendment Act, to ensure that we had an alert system that could be regional for when a vulnerable person goes missing. Petition numbers are continuing to climb. As of today, the petition on my site has 2,067 signatures—Draven Alert signatures are 91,784; Love's Law is 6,222. That's a lot of people who have signed petitions begging for this alert to happen. This doesn't happen often, but I had a police officer reach out to my Instagram to tell me that he was an officer from Hamilton and to thank me for bringing Bill 74 to the floor and to not give up on it. It's a tool that the police need. They know they need it. My Hamilton police chief also has been very supportive of Bill 74, knowing that it's another tool in the tool box. It's not the be-all and end-all. It's not the first call. There are lots of things that can happen before the missing persons alert, but it is a tool. It could be the last tool, but it could be the most important tool, when necessary, to bring vulnerable loved ones home.

1630

Thanks for the opportunity to speak today. Boy, that 20 minutes went quick.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: To the member from Hamilton Mountain: You had spoken a little bit about the COAST program in your community. We have something that's very similar in Waterloo region—just by a different name: the IMPACT program. It does have a very substantial impact in our community. I know that there has been funding to our IMPACT program through the Ministry of Health and through the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

I know that Hamilton's program, as well, was able to receive funding that they applied for over the last few years. I'd just like to get her thoughts on that program and how she sees it working a little bit better in her community.

Miss Monique Taylor: I actually did a police night out, and I had the ability to see COAST in action. It's a fantastic program. It changes an outcome when someone is trained for mental health and is able to de-escalate or to decide: "Is this someone who's just lonely"—because that happens—"or is this someone who's really in danger of killing themselves or harming themselves? Is this person a danger and a threat to community and society?"

We need to ensure that these programs are fundable, but we can't just count on them either, because if a police officer shows up and doesn't have COAST with them, then they're on their own. We need to ensure that police officers have that same education and the ability to be able to perform their duties safely.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to thank my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain. You know your community so well, and you do such amazing work, so I want to congratulate you on being such a fantastic MPP for your constituents.

I know that the time went so quickly for you and that you wanted to talk a lot about Bill 74, the vulnerable persons alert act. So I'm going to just give you a few

minutes, if you'd like to say some things that you haven't said—how you hope that the government will implement this, the background to this, why it's such an important bill, and why it's a perfectly fit and corollary to this bill that we're debating today about keeping communities safe.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much. You're absolutely right; we had support. The government has received letters from different councils. We've got resolutions passed at councils—Brighton, Midland, Bonfield, Cobourg, Mississauga. We've got notes and support from the Ontario Autism Coalition, Emergency Management Ontario, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, law enforcement agencies, the Missing Children Society of Canada, the Alzheimer Society, and the Ontario Community Support Association. This bill is wanted and needed far and wide. This bill, Bill 102, would have been a prime example and opportunity to be able to bring it forward. The government says that it's coming forward to the justice committee this summer. I'm looking forward to being able to work on that bill and ensure that vulnerable people in the province of Ontario have an alert system that reflects their needs.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her remarks. I want to note a particular piece the member talked about: her own community in Hamilton and the need for more police officers in that community in Hamilton. I've shared with the member before that I've got family in Hamilton, some on the Hamilton Mountain—two wonderful nephews. I've got a niece in Stoney Creek. Personally, but also professionally, I think it's important that we stand up for the residents of Hamilton and make sure that the community is as safe as possible.

Some members of this House have, in the past, talked about defunding the police or diverting resources away from police and into other places.

I just want to give the member a chance to clarify her position. Does she think we should be defunding the police or putting more police officers on our streets?

Miss Monique Taylor: I wholeheartedly know we need more police officers on our streets. We need to ensure that police have the supports, services and education they need.

If they feel like they've got an "I gotcha"—because they're winking at each other across the hall—that's fine. You asked for my opinion.

I just finished telling you in my speech that we are short on police. We don't have the numbers that we should be able to have in Hamilton as per our population. If the government wants to support police, they should also ensure that we have the ability to have enough police on our streets to keep your niece and nephews safe.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her excellent presentation

about the COAST program. It is something that has also been implemented in the London area. It's a partnership of the CMHA, the London Police Service and the Elgin-Middlesex paramedic services. It's absolutely brilliant. It was something that was brought forward, as well, during the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs 2023 budget consultations. And yet, this government has chosen not to allocate the funding that has been requested for this program. There's no dedicated funding for this in the budget. Unfortunately, in the London area, this is a program that is not available at all hours of the day. My question to the member is, why is this government not listening to front-line officers who know the incredible value this program provides to our community?

Miss Monique Taylor: The member, unfortunately, is absolutely right. We have seen several times, time and time again, bills with fuzzy, wonderful names that really don't have any context to be able to provide what our communities need, and this is another example of that.

We know that we need more police on our streets. We know that the police have to be trained accordingly. We know that the police have been asking for these things, and yet this government refuses to provide—just like they're refusing to provide the funding necessary for victim services that the government has mandated them to be able to provide.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member opposite for her comments. I'm happy to see that she supports the initiative for recruiting more police.

My question to the member opposite goes to the training. During the justice policy hearings on Bill 102, we heard from a number of police associations and police chiefs that the average age for recruitment in Ontario is 29; in the city of Toronto, it's around 26. What they talked about was the fact that imposing a university or a post-secondary degree puts financial barriers in front of a number of applicants for a number of reasons. They want to make sure that they're recruiting from all aspects of our society so that the police force reflects the communities they're serving. My question to the member opposite is: Does she support removing—well, it's not in place, but the

removal of the post-secondary degree to make sure we have recruits from all segments of the population?

Miss Monique Taylor: Nurses go to school to be nurses. Teachers go to school to be teachers. So police should have to go to school to be police. I think that's critical because there is so much involved in being a police officer.

The police tell us they want training. They need to make sure that their police force is educated. There are incentives. There are ways to encourage more police to join the field to serve and protect—but making sure that they have the right education to be able to perform their duties so they're safe, their families have them come home to them at the end of every day, and they're able to serve and protect our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Final question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her remarks.

I have the pleasure of working with a great community police officer in the west end of Ottawa Centre. His name is Darren Joseph. He was a running back in the CFL. He's a fixture in the community. Members from Hamilton know of him because of who he played for. One of the things he tells me all the time is that good policing work is social work with the possibility of an armed response. The many layers of skills you need to try to reach someone in crisis are far more important. The member talked about those eloquently.

You mentioned that people are asking for more training, so I'm going to give you the opportunity to talk about what kind of training you've heard people ask for.

Miss Monique Taylor: We know that mental health and addictions is the number one crisis and issue in all of our communities. We know that we have a huge homeless population. So being able to work with those same folks, being able to de-escalate the situations, not cause the crisis unintentionally with actions, with body behaviour—there are so many things that could set somebody off that would be unintentional. And without that proper education—those are the things that are put at risk and put our police officers at risk also.

Report continues in volume B.

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Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

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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	