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25 octobre 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 October 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 octobre 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LESS RED TAPE, MORE
COMMON SENSE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023

POUR PLUS DE BON SENS ET MOINS
DE FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr. Gill moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Parm Gill: I am pleased to lead off debate today on our fall red tape reduction package, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023. I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

On this side of the House, we know that we need to continue our ongoing to work to reduce burdens that people and businesses face in their everyday lives in the province. Since 2018, we have reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden by 6%, eliminating more than 20,000 individual regulatory compliance requirements for people and businesses in the province of Ontario. The changes that we have put in place have saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector nearly \$950 million in gross annual regulatory compliance costs that they would otherwise have to face. When we combine those savings year over year, it adds up to nearly \$3 billion in compliance costs removed since we took office—proof of our government's ongoing commitment to reduce burdens and find savings. We have achieved these savings by making common-sense changes that save Ontarians time and money. That includes the 10 high-impact red tape reduction bills that this Legislature has passed since 2018 and more than 500 burden-reducing actions such as regulation and policy changes that our government has implemented.

But as we all know, this work is never complete. Without the ongoing effort to track down wasteful, outdated and burdensome regulations, the number of regulations—as well as the cost and time required to comply with them—will continue to go up over time. That's why we will never stop working to improve government services and reduce unnecessary burdens on people and businesses.

As part of our efforts to continue finding ways to streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government, we will soon be launching a mandatory regulatory review, which we're calling the 10-year review. The review is a cross-government initiative led by the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, with the intent to ensure Ontario's regulations remain modern and relevant, which in turn will make us more agile and competitive in today's changing global economy, Mr. Speaker.

Beginning in January of next year, ministries across government will be required to complete an annual review of any of their regulations that have been filed for 10 years or more. As you can imagine, Speaker, a lot can happen in a span of a decade. What tends to happen is that ministries will create a law or a regulation for a certain purpose or in response to a specific issue, but then a new issue comes along and before you know it, everyone has forgotten about the original issue or intent.

Still, as new issues come and new issues go, these new laws and regulations continue to get layered on top of those that already exist. I know ministries don't set out with the intention of making these laws or regulations expensive or difficult to comply with, but over time, and left unchecked, that's exactly what happens. Simply put, many of these rules and regulations remain on the books long after their original purpose has passed. That's why, as a government, we need to step back and see if what the ministry created is still relevant and necessary: adapted to evolving needs, technology advancements and other changing circumstances.

This is exactly the purpose of our 10-year mandatory regulatory review. Regularly assessing the province's regulations is crucial to ensuring they remain relevant in the current landscape, that the businesses and regulated entities here in Ontario can prosper in a competitive and innovative marketplace, and that individuals are provided with the best possible access to government services.

Through the review, we will continue to assess regulations through the lens of the seven regulatory modernization principles enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. This is our guiding legislation that was established to increase transparency and contain the cost of doing business in Ontario.

These seven principles are to:

- use recognized national or international standards wherever possible, instead of Ontario-specific rules;
- apply a small-business lens, recognizing that small businesses have fewer resources dedicated to compliance than larger businesses;
- go digital by delivering simple and straightforward digital services and products whenever possible;

—reward good actors by using risk-based inspections where possible, focusing on practices that pose the most risk or on organizations that haven't proven their ability to comply with the rules;

—create a “tell us once” culture where people and businesses don't have to tell us the same information over and over;

—focus on the user by writing rules and regulations in plain language and providing a single point of contact for any questions or concerns; and

—use outcome-based regulations that state the outcome we want achieved, instead of prescriptive regulations that outline how to achieve the outcome.

Our latest bill, the proposed Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, is focused on improving services for people, reducing costs for businesses and making it easier to work with the provincial government.

But make no mistake, reducing red tape is not just about counting the number of regulations and trying to reduce them. It's so much more than that. It's about the impact those changes are having on real people and businesses across our province, changes like improving government forms to reduce the paperwork demands on physicians and give them more time to deliver the best care for patients; changes like creating more pathways into the skilled trades and attracting more apprentices to in-demand trades, preparing Ontario's workforce for rewarding lifelong careers; and changes like enhancing consumer protection by ensuring consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions when buying or selling a vehicle.

0910

This package is the product of continued collaboration across government with our ministry partners and extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders and people across our great province to develop an unparalleled inventory of red tape reduction ideas. I'm proud to say the legislation we are debating today, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, is the 11th burden reduction bill we have introduced since 2018.

The bill sets out measures to build a stronger economy, improve services and save Ontarians their most valuable resource: time. And it's an important part of our larger fall 2023 red tape reduction package, which contains additional regulatory amendments and policy changes that contribute to a common goal of reducing red tape. This bill, if passed, would streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across several areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy and continue to save the hard-working businesses within our province millions of dollars each year in compliance cost savings.

Speaker, we continue to find ourselves in uncertain economic times. While Ontario has remained resilient, we cannot take anything for granted. That's why it's so important that we continue our efforts to streamline Ontario's regulatory climate to make it easier than ever to invest and do business in our province.

A wide-reaching red tape reduction bill like this one simply isn't possible without the assistance of our partner ministries across government, who best understand the

issues that their sectors are facing and how we can implement solutions to solve them. I want to take a moment to thank our partner ministries for working together with us on this and helping us continue our journey forward of becoming a modern and efficient province. How we work together to address regulatory burden will affect us now and for generations to come.

But when I talk about burden reduction, Speaker, know that our government acknowledges the importance of having robust rules and regulations in place. They help protect public health, safety and the environment. They keep our children safe when they're at school. They protect our workers so they come home to their families each and every day. And they ensure our environmental protections remain among the best and strongest in the world.

Our goal with the burden reduction initiatives we are putting forward today is to ensure that we no longer rely on rules and regulations that are burdensome, inefficient or outdated and that the ones we do rely on are current and enforced properly, predictably and consistently.

With those principles in mind, I would like to talk a little bit more about some of the items within the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act and how they will make life better for people across our province. The bill we are debating today includes 20 different schedules, and our complete fall 2023 red tape reduction package has 32 individual items, including regulatory and policy changes that complement the legislative changes found in the bill. Rather than reading every single item in the package, I'm going to spend some time highlighting a few of the items that I believe will have the most impact for Ontarians.

When it comes to improving services for people, I'd like to start by highlighting a very important initiative that the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction has been working closely on with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health and with many other partner ministries across our government. In their 2023 Red Tape Report Card, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business challenged every province to take action on reducing burden for physicians and across the health care system. Here in Ontario, we accepted that challenge. We have heard loud and clear that physicians are spending too much time filling out unnecessary, duplicative paperwork, something that has gone on for far too long and been identified as a contributing factor for some of the clogs within the health care system.

That's why, Speaker, we are working across government and in collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association to review some of the forms, to streamline and simplify them, minimize any duplication, and identify opportunities for digital solutions while exploring even more forms and processes to improve moving forward. With these updates, we estimate that the new and improved government forms and process could free up as much as 95,000 hours per year for physicians. That's 95,000 hours we're giving back to physicians to help them manage their practices better, to deliver the best care for their patients.

Interjection.

Hon. Parm Gill: Thank you.

By improving government forms, we are not only maintaining the integrity of our health care system but we're also getting physicians back to the reasons they chose this profession: taking care of people. Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it. Dr. Andrew Park, president of the Ontario Medical Association, had this to say:

"Reducing and streamlining forms can help ease the significant amount of non-clinical work physicians perform each day. We recommended a review of unnecessary and cumbersome forms in our Prescription for Ontario: Doctors' Solutions for Immediate Action. We have been pleased with the collaboration between the OMA and the government on this and we look forward to continued momentum to address administrative burden. Our members are spending up to 20 hours of their work week completing administrative work and we hope these efforts will free up time to provide patient care and improve the quality of life for Ontario's doctors."

And Ryan Mallough, vice-president of legislative affairs for the CFIB, also had this to say:

"Really happy to see the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Ontario government focus on reducing physician red tape in their latest bill! Improving government forms to free up to 95,000 hours each year equates to roughly 285,000 patient visits. Great to see follow-through on a key CFIB and Red Tape Awareness Week recommendation!" Well said.

Next, I would like to share a proposal from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, which is preparing Ontario's workforce for rewarding lifelong careers. Speaker, Ontario is currently facing a labour shortage in the skilled trades due to job growth and retirements. We need to act and we need to act now. That's why we are proposing regulatory amendments under the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, to enable Skilled Trades Ontario to officially collect and share certain data with the ministry. This data will be used to monitor trends in apprentice registration, exam success rates, and help us develop the best possible service delivery and attract more apprentices to in-demand trades, because attracting people to in-demand trades is essential to addressing labour shortages, fostering economic growth, and ensuring a skilled workforce for the future.

As part of our broader fall package, Speaker, we are also doing a review of joint health and safety committee certification training standards. The review seeks opportunities to streamline certification requirements, eliminate duplication with other mandatory training, and identify opportunities to reduce administrative barriers and costs. This will ensure the training remains relevant and practical, which will improve workplace safety and help to prevent workplace shortages due to injuries.

0920

In addition to this, we are also improving our database of almost three million records for workers who have taken mandatory safety training, as part of our strategy to make Ontario one of the safest places to work. The database is a key tool used by the ministry to foster safe workplaces. The new system will be a custom-built, cloud-

based database using government platforms to improve system and process efficiencies. The new system will be used by over 700,000 workers, employers and ministry personnel to verify that workers have taken training for working at heights or joint health and safety committee certification. It will offer training providers, workers and employers a better user experience by providing quick, easy, one-stop-shop access to thousands of training records.

Next, we have a proposal from the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, which is proposing amendments to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. Back in 2021, the ministry consulted on potential changes to the MVDA and its regulations. Shortly after the consultation was completed, the Auditor General released her 2021 annual report, which included a value-for-money audit of the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council.

We are proposing legislative changes that would address the Auditor General's 2021 audit recommendations along with the proposals that were part of the summer 2021 consultation and emerging issues in the sector that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mostly, these are house-keeping changes to remove outdated transitional provisions that allow for fines for convictions under the previous MVDA to be payable under the current act, to allow for those who were registered under the previous MVDA to remain registered under the current act until the time of their next registration or renewal, and to increase the minimum fines for acting as a motor vehicle dealer or a salesperson without being registered from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

Overall, the proposed amendments would enhance consumer protection by ensuring consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions when buying and selling a vehicle.

Frank Notte, director of government relations for the Motor Vehicles Retailers of Ontario, shares our concern about unregistered dealers and had this to say:

"Over the past decade, the MVRO has advocated for tougher penalties on curbsiders. We appreciate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction putting our advice into action. The minimum fine for curbsiding has not been increased since the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act was passed in 2002. Bill 139 is another example of the Premier and the Minister of Red Tape Reduction showcasing common sense and getting it done." I couldn't agree more with that statement.

Now, I would like to talk about a proposal that comes from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. We're proposing legislative and regulatory changes to the Ontario Heritage Act which would make it easier and faster for faith groups to alter their places of worship to meet their unique needs. As it stands now, there are a number of requirements and wait times associated with making this type of change to a heritage building. The changes we're proposing will mean application requirements would be significantly streamlined, and municipalities would provide their acknowledgement of receipt within a shorter time frame. The proposal would also eliminate the potential that a faith group would need to appeal a denial or conditions on their request. This means that members of faith groups can continue to practise their

worship or spiritual practices with limited interruptions or complications.

Next, I'd like to share a proposal from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to streamline approvals of St. Lawrence Parks' easements. As it stands, routine easements—that is, providing cable, natural gas, telephone, hydro, water or sewer access—require approval from the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And the current time for granting a routine easement can take upwards of six to 12 months—or even longer, in some cases. As you can imagine, this greatly impedes agency operations and increases compliance costs. It also delays the construction of critical infrastructure, like much-needed upgrades to outdated waste and waste water infrastructure. That's why our proposed changes will streamline the process by removing the requirement for Lieutenant Governor in Council approval, and improve project delivery.

In addition to streamlining the approval processes, the proposed amendments are anticipated to save time and costs, which would enable the agency to better deliver on its mandate. What's more is that these changes will bring the requirements for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission in line with many similar provincial agencies, including nearly identical changes that were made in the spring red tape reduction package for the Niagara Parks Commission.

Speaking of the great outdoors, I'd love to share a proposal coming from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. We're proposing amendments to the overburdened and outdated permitting process of the Niagara Escarpment Program that has been in place since the 1970s. Many of these changes align with recent recommendations made by the Auditor General and would truly modernize the outdated program. The aim of these changes is to streamline the permit and approval processes to reduce burden, find efficiencies to better serve client needs, and increase, of course, compliance tools while enhancing, maintaining and prioritizing protection policies.

The proposed changes include exempting additional low-risk activities from requiring a development permit—if rules are followed—such as building small decks and sheds, or accessibility ramps for existing structures and ecological restoration projects for conservation organizations.

The changes also include broadening the range of Niagara Escarpment Commission compliance tools to improve its ability to inspect and/or address non-compliant development activities.

Many existing permit requirements under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act are duplicated by municipal permit requirements. Several of these proposed changes would provide clarity and fix known issues that municipalities have previously raised with our government.

In addition, the commission receives hundreds of permit applications each year that can take several months to complete from submission to decision date. By streamlining processes and ultimately improving service delivery, the commission can focus on more complex applications and protection measures for the area.

Next, I'd like to share some proposals from the Ministry of Mines on modernizing the critical minerals sector. In Ontario, mining claim holders must actively explore the lands for minerals to keep their mining claims in good standing, and provide a report summarizing the exploration work—called assessment work—or make payments in place of this work. Assessment work provides value to the province by adding to Ontario's geoscience knowledge database and ensuring mining lands are actively being used for mineral exploration, including to explore for critical minerals. We are consulting on proposed changes to modernize the assessment regime, including expanding ways businesses can obtain assessment work credit, reviewing ministry requirements and making technological improvements to the mining lands administration system.

0930

We are also seeking to modernize the exploration permitting process and are consulting on ways to streamline the process, making it easier to obtain mining exploration permits. The changes ensure Ontario remains competitive and attractive for investment, and support strong supply chains through mineral exploration.

On the topic of mining, Speaker, we also previously amended the Mining Act to make it easier for mining companies to recover minerals from tailings and waste at closed or abandoned mines. Now, we are moving forward with consultations on the proposed regulations to reduce burden and support previous amendments that make it easier for mining companies to recover critical minerals from mine tailings and waste at closed mine sites. Enabling companies to recover and reprocess minerals from mine waste will not only help minimize the impact of mineral development on health, safety and the environment, but would also ensure these projects move forward by removing existing costs and time barriers, including the current requirements for submitting closure plans, land tenure and financial assurance to the government.

Speaker, I want to thank you, obviously, for the opportunity to tell you about how some of the items included in the proposed red tape reduction package, including the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023, will benefit people right across the province, and continue our government's work to reduce burden and cut red tape.

We have made tremendous progress so far and are well on our way to saving businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector nearly \$1 billion in annual regulatory compliance costs. But let me be clear, Speaker: Even when we reach that goal, we will never stop working to improve government services and reduce unnecessary burdens on people and businesses.

We know that red tape causes frustration, expenses and needless delays and complications for everyone, from individuals to businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector. We also know that regulatory burdens are a barrier to our productivity, innovation, economic competitiveness and development. And we know we can continue this important work while maintaining and strengthening those important rules and regulations

that are necessary to keep people safe and happy and protect the environment at the same time.

Madam Speaker, I will now hand over to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to expand on even more items in the proposed act and in our fall 2023 red tape reduction package.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for introducing this important legislation and giving me the opportunity to speak to it this morning.

In a few moments, I'm just going to pick up where the minister left off and speak about a few more items in the fall red tape package and how they will make a real impact on the lives of people across Ontario. But before I do that, I want to take a few moments to remind everyone again about why this work is so important.

We all know that red tape causes frustration, expenses and needless delays and complications for everyone—the minister was just talking about that—from individuals to businesses, non-profit organizations and the broader public sector. Regulatory burdens are a barrier to our productivity, our innovation, our economic competitiveness and development, and there are significant costs associated with failing to act.

Last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that red tape costs small businesses in Canada approximately \$11 billion each year—\$11 billion, Madam Speaker. That's why we're doing everything in our power to reduce red tape and create the conditions that enable people and businesses to thrive, and we are committed to doing this while maintaining and strengthening the important rules and regulations that are necessary to keep people safe and happy and protect the environment, because our initiatives to reduce burden should never jeopardize public health, safety or the environment—and we're committing to making sure that they never will.

Speaker, Ontario used to be the most heavily regulated province in the country. When we formed government in 2018, we knew that urgently had to change. We set out to make that happen, to remove the unnecessary and outdated regulations holding this province back—and we did, thanks to all the hard work from the minister and his team. Since July 1, 2018, this government has reduced the number of regulatory compliance requirements affecting businesses and other regulated entities by 6%.

Our government also made a commitment to increase jobs and investment in Ontario by making it less expensive, faster and easier to do business and to set one of the best regulatory service standards in North America. Today, we continue delivering on that commitment. To date, our government has taken more than 500 burden-reducing actions, while continuing to look for ways to improve.

Our red tape reduction measures have so far saved business, not-for-profit organization, municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities and hospitals over \$939 million in gross annual compliance costs that they would otherwise have had to pay. Combined, year over

year, that adds up to nearly \$2.8 billion in costs removed since we took office; that's \$2.8 billion in costs that Ontario businesses and public-serving organizations can put to better use. Our newest red tape reduction bill, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, will save Ontario businesses even more once fully implemented.

We have come a long way, and we are very proud of what we have accomplished so far. But we're also grateful for the ideas that our government has received from stakeholders, from people across the province and from people in every ministry, too, who have worked diligently to streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government. This has allowed us to continue delivering on our commitment to support economic competitiveness and create high-quality jobs and an attractive investment climate.

But let me tell you a little bit more about how we do the work that we do. Every time the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction considers a new idea, they draw on seven guiding principles that consistently direct efforts to reduce red tape as enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. I'd love to just share a few examples of how those principles have been applied with the items from our latest package.

The first principle is that recognized national and international standards should be adopted when possible. That's because harmonizing requirements across jurisdictions reduces costs and makes it easier to do business across borders. We live in a very global world. A great example of this is our Ministry of Energy's proposal to streamline the energy and water reporting and benchmarking exemption process. The previous process for submitting an exemption notice was burdensome for stakeholders. It required reporters to file an online exemption notice and submit supporting documentation for each exemption criteria selected. The proposed changes would reduce the burden on building owners by eliminating the need to gather and submit additional supporting documentation for each applicable exemption criteria. The proposed updates are user-focused and would relieve regulatory burden, eliminate unnecessary red tape by reducing interaction points with government as well as align Ontario with other jurisdictions across North America.

The second principle is that small businesses should have less onerous compliance requirements when compared to larger businesses. I think that makes sense to everybody. This recognizes that they don't have the same resources or expertise as their counterparts to focus on compliance. The Ministry of the Attorney General, in this case, has proposed a change to the Charities Accounting Act that would eliminate a reporting requirement for charities, who already need to report to the provincial and federal governments. This change would remove red tape for smaller businesses like charities, who must report twice, and for the Ontario Public Guardian and Trustee, who needs to receive and store the information that is readily available.

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The third principle is that any entity subject to regulations should be provided accessible digital services

whenever possible, because in 2023 we really shouldn't be asking people or businesses to fill out long paper forms anymore. The Ministry of the Attorney General has another great example for this with their proposal for amendments to the Professional Engineers Act. These amendments support the modernization of Professional Engineers Ontario operations and bring them into the 21st century by allowing certain notices and documents to now be delivered electronically.

The fourth principle is that regulated entities—like businesses, services, and broader public sector organizations—that demonstrate excellent compliance should be recognized. The Ministry of Health's proposal for streamlining submission requirements for well-established drugs is a great example for this one. I'll share more about that one in a moment.

The fifth principle is that unnecessary reporting should be reduced, and steps should be taken to avoid requiring regulated entities to provide the same information to government repeatedly, because nothing is more frustrating than filling out the same form over and over again or having to repeat the same story to multiple ministries or different levels of government. When you think about red tape, this is a perfect example of how it can be burdensome to businesses. The Ministry of Finance has proposed amendments to reduce the burden on credit unions by removing the requirement for investor documents to include two financial statements, one of which has already been shared. I'm going to share more about that one in a moment as well.

The sixth principle is that instruments should prioritize the user by using clear communication, setting reasonable response times, and establishing a centralized point of contact. Like I said, these are all common-sense things. It's straightforward. People and businesses should be able to understand the requirements imposed on them by government. That's why our Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is proposing amendments to the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act and the Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act to reduce confusion, provide greater clarity and reduce red tape for stakeholder organizations.

And the seventh principle is that an instrument should specify the desired result that regulated entities must meet, rather than the specific methods used to attain that result, because good outcomes are what we are concerned about, and we recognize that there may be many ways to get to that same outcome. A great example of this is the Ministry of Energy's proposed regulatory amendments to remove unnecessary administrative burden and clarify regulatory requirements specific to community net metering and third-party ownership net metering arrangements. These changes will make it easier for consumers to use renewable generation systems, like rooftop solar, to help lower the cost of their electricity bills—a perfect representation of the name of this bill: less red tape, more common sense.

As the minister mentioned in his remarks earlier, this year's fall red tape reduction package focuses on three key themes: improving services for people, reducing costs for

businesses, and making it easier to work with government. I'd like to just spend a few minutes speaking to some of the initiatives from the fall package that help us to realize these commitments.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, it's only natural that I want to begin with a few items that our ministry has been working on in this package. When it comes to improving services for people, a great example is our proposal to streamline the submission requirements for generic drugs to improve treatment options for Ontarians who rely on life-saving drugs. As it stands, when a company wants to get funding or have their product designated as interchangeable, they need to complete clinical studies for the drugs. But there are some drugs that have been sold in Canada for a while, sometimes for decades, and that have been proven to be safe and effective. The process right now is that these companies still need to do clinical studies for these drugs before they're able to receive funding or be available as alternative options.

What we're proposing, Speaker, is that drug manufacturers won't have to do new clinical studies for drugs that have been sold in Canada for a while and that have proven already to be safe and effective, when applying for funding or for interchangeability. Instead, they would be able to rely on evidence and information submitted to Health Canada to be approved for sale in the country. This means that Ontarians would benefit from having access to a greater number of publicly funded drugs and lower-cost generic drugs for their treatment needs. I think it's common sense.

I'd also like to spend a few moments on our work to reduce physician burden, which the minister also touched on. Working across government and in collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association, we're going to review several key forms to streamline and simplify them, minimize any duplication and identify opportunities for digital solutions. We're going to be exploring even more forms and processes to improve moving forward. My colleague Dawn Gallagher Murphy, the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, and I did many round tables this summer about this issue.

Initial estimates are that modernizing just 12 forms, the ones we're focused on here today, could save doctors up to 95,000 hours of time per year, time that can be put back into their practices with patients. Reviewing forms is a recommendation of the Ontario Medical Association and a key factor that they have identified as contributing to physician burnout in Ontario. Working with our Ministry of Red Tape Reduction and other partners across government, we're going to make sure that we deliver on this very important priority.

Another way that we're improving services is by proposing the designation of transit corridor lands for Hamilton light rail transit. Accelerating transit delivery is part of our government's plan to build new transit faster, so people can get where they want to go, when they want to get there. Better transit also creates more local jobs, and it's good for businesses and the economy. Right now, the

Hamilton LRT is a priority transit project of Ontario under the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, but it doesn't have transit corridor lands designation. The designation will enable us to use all measures under the act to get shovels in the ground faster for this important project. Not only that, Speaker; the project will also play a key role in the revitalization of Hamilton's urban environment. The LRT will be a 14-kilometre transit line that offers frequent and reliable connections to institutions and transit hubs including McMaster University, city hall, Tim Hortons Field, Eastgate Square and downtown Hamilton. Truly, it's going to transform the way residents travel across the heart of that city.

When it comes to reducing costs for businesses, I'd also like to share an initiative coming from the Ministry of Education that will help shape the minds of our future generations. We're working to reduce process burden for school boards by adopting new digital practices and technologies that will deliver simpler, faster and better services to school boards across the province. These changes improve the process for accessing education applications, starting with the Ontario Education Number and Ontario School Information System applications, by implementing a few changes: first, a single sign-in for Ontario School Information System access through Azure AD that will provide an alternative to paper-based processes, and an expansion of application programming interface to facilitate system integration that significantly reduces the manual steps to facilitate submissions into the Ontario School Information System. Not only will the changes reduce administrative burden on schools and school board staff and allow staff to focus on other tasks and priorities, but it will also result in significant time and cost savings for school boards.

When it comes to making it easier to work with government, I'd like to share a proposal coming out of our Ministry of Colleges and Universities. We're proposing to streamline and improve processes related to the ministry's core research funding programs: the Ontario Research Fund—Research Excellence Program, the Ontario Research Fund—Research Infrastructure Program and the Early Researcher Award Program.

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The ministry manages several research funding programs that attract the world's very best researchers to the province and lead to the development of innovations that drive Ontario's economy. The ministry issues calls for proposals, coordinates a peer-review process to help assess applications and ultimately establishes multi-year funding agreements with colleges, universities, hospitals and research institutes that manage approved research projects. To help reduce red tape, the ministry is working to streamline and improve end-to-end program processes related to its core research funding programs. This will help to make it easier for organizations to apply for research funding and manage approved projects that will provide social and economic benefits to Ontarians.

Another example of one of the many ways that we are trying to make it easier to work with the government is

through our Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's—this is a mouthful—board governance requirements update. If you recall from the spring package, Speaker, the ministry proposed amendments to improve how tourism and culture agencies operated internally and, consequently, how they deliver services and work with businesses in Ontario. I'm proud to report that these changes, which have now come into effect, have resulted in administrative efficiencies while improving board recruitment, retention and management, and have allowed Ontario's tourism and culture agencies, which represent some of the most iconic tourist and cultural institutions here in Ontario, to run more efficiently and effectively. Changes like these not make it only easier to work with government, but they also play an important role in the government's plan to build a stronger Ontario.

To develop this important red-tape-reduction package, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction has been working collaboratively across government and consulting with a range of stakeholders and people across the province to build an unparalleled inventory of ideas. I want to take a moment and recognize some of the pieces coming out of this package that directly address ideas and requests like these from stakeholders and people across the province.

We have a proposal coming from our Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to amend the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act. The proposal will make it easier for agricultural and horticultural societies to operate, and reduce confusion between the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act and the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, as well as provide less onerous financial reporting options. This idea came as a direct ask from the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies and the Ontario Horticultural Association, and our government was happy to deliver through the great work in the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction.

Next, we have an item coming from our colleagues at the Ministry of Transportation, who are developing a new and more efficient land-development-review model as part of the online Highway Corridor Management System. We've heard from developers, municipalities and businesses who suggested the need for an online land-development-review process as part of the initial consultations for the system. They asked, and we delivered. The new module will allow municipalities and developers to submit land development applications, track the status of submissions and access comments, all from a convenient online public portal.

Currently, folks use a number—a multitude, really—of different channels to complete this type of work, from arranging separate pre-consultation meetings and emailing submissions and comments to multiple people or groups, to requesting updates by email or phone. It's onerous, and it's not really a good use of anyone's time. By being able to navigate the land-development-application process through one central location, it reduces the number of interactions or touchpoints, improves the overall efficiency of the land development application process and helps get the shovels in the ground quicker for priority projects. That's a win-win for Ontario, Madam Speaker.

Next, we have a proposal from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to extend the term limits of the chairs of college and university boards of governors. Right now, board members have a legislated six-year term limit. Sometimes colleges and universities want to extend the terms of their board chairs to support continuity of leadership, but unfortunately they've not been able to do so because of these limits. These changes will provide colleges and universities with more flexibility to maintain continuity of leadership and to provide for more orderly board chair transition.

There are many, many more examples of items that address stakeholder requests. I'd like to just share one more now.

We're proposing to modernize and streamline the regulation and processes for credit unions and caisses populaires. These changes will help them to stay competitive in the current climate and ensure that they can continue to offer first-rate services to their communities. This is a request that came to us from the Canadian Credit Union Association and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario.

These proposed changes clarify rules and reduce administrative burden on the sector and credit union members. In fact, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario estimates that for larger, more complex credit unions, removing the requirement for offering statements to contain two financial statements would shorten offering statements by 100 to 200 pages, encouraging efficiencies and savings in the sector—less red tape, more common sense. As I've said before, Speaker—

Interjection.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Yes. We are incredibly grateful for the ideas that our colleagues across government have received from these stakeholders, from people across our province and from every ministry who have worked diligently to streamline process and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government. That's probably music to some people's ears. These suggestions have allowed us to continue delivering on our commitment to support economic competitiveness and create high-quality jobs and an attractive investment climate. We continue to encourage people and businesses to share their best ideas for reducing red tape through Ontario's dedicated red-tape-reduction portal on ontario.ca.

As a member of this government, I am incredibly proud of the work that our government has done so far and that our Ministry of Red Tape Reduction has led to reduce regulatory burdens on people and businesses. And I'm even more proud of the work that we're going to be doing in the future. The 32 initiatives in the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023, and in our Fall 2023 red tape reduction package will improve services for people and reduce costs for businesses, while making it easier to work with government.

The items in this, I believe, 11th red tape reduction bill build on over five years of progress in modernizing legislation, regulations and policies that are burdensome, inefficient and inflexible for businesses, workers and

individuals in Ontario. Building on the previous red tape reduction bills and packages, the impact of these proposals will streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy. Altogether, they will ensure that our province remains a leader in regulatory modernization. Less red tape, more common sense: I think it's something that should appeal to everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I can appreciate that the government wants to make things run smoothly, make sure there are streamlined processes, and I do appreciate the minister and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's explanation on the seven guiding principles.

I did want to ask a question. Under Bill 139, you have identified five post-secondary education institutions—Algoma University, Nipissing University, Ontario College of Art and Design University, l'Université de l'Ontario français and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—which allow, again, an extension for board members to be on these boards.

My question is—I'd just like to delve into a little bit of an explanation. Why were only five of the post-secondary education facilities identified here? Why not all of them so that there is a consistency that allows that option for all post-secondary education?

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Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member opposite for that important question. Obviously, one of the ways that—any item that we're bringing forward in a piece of legislation or other changes are done in consultation with the stakeholders from the industries. In this case, as well, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities held a very comprehensive consultation in terms of what it is that we're able to do to continue to support the sector, especially universities and colleges. We heard it loud and clear with some of the changes that we've introduced in this piece of legislation, addressing some of the concerns that were raised by them, to continue to help them become more efficient so they can continue to provide an important education for all students across the great province of Ontario. That's the item that is always kept in mind.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for introducing this very important piece of legislation which would help improve services for the people and reduce costs for the businesses.

Madam Speaker, since we took office in 2018, our government has been focused on cutting red tape, cutting unnecessary regulations and making life affordable for the people of Ontario. There's one very important act in this legislation, which is the Ontario Heritage Act. So my question to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction is, how are we helping places of worship to continue to provide important services with some of the changes under the Ontario Heritage Act?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague from Brampton West for that important question and for his

hard work. The changes that the member is talking about under the Ontario Heritage Act to help faith-based organizations are addressed so they can continue to provide that important service to the members of the community. Let me talk a bit about that.

Currently, let's say, if there's a small, minor repair that needs to take place to a place of worship and that happens to fall under the Ontario Heritage Act, they would have to go through a lot of different approvals to get minor repairs done. Let me give you an example: If a window breaks down or glass breaks down, before that could be replaced, they would need to go apply to the municipality and ask for an approval to be able to change something as simple as glass in a window.

Some of the changes in this bill will help places of worship to continue the important work that they need to do by not having to go through some of those unnecessary approvals for some of the very basic repairs to do with a place of worship.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened to the government's presentations closely this morning. I know in this bill there are provisions to deal with inefficiencies in the reporting requirements of physicians and their work. I want to ask either the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health or the minister: I know the Ontario Medical Association was in the building recently asking for this, but I'm also aware of the fact that we have a critical shortage of primary care physicians in this province. I don't see anything in this bill to signal that the government's prepared to work to open up, immediately, more residency opportunities for internationally trained physicians, and that is something we urgently need.

Speaker, when I was a professor for a brief time at Nipissing University in North Bay, I was told by my faculty head, "If you want a family doctor in North Bay, Joel, hail a cab in Toronto." We're wasting talent. So I'm wondering, to the minister or the parliamentary assistant: Do you have a plan to open up more residency opportunities for internationally trained physicians now?

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. I want to remind him—and I'm sure he's been around this place for a while—of some of the changes we have introduced over the years in terms of opening new medical schools to make sure that we're bringing in new doctors, whether they're local, whether they're internationally trained, and creating the space for them to get their qualifications and practise in this great province of Ontario.

At the same time, we're also looking for efficiencies to help doctors, to take the burden away from them when it comes to filling out unnecessary forms. We all know that in some cases, on an average week, doctors spend anywhere from eight to 10 hours just filling out forms. So this piece of legislation and the changes we've introduced in this will help them save, roughly, about four and a half hours a week. Altogether, it works out to about 95,000 hours, Madam Speaker. What is that translated into patient

visits? About 285,000 patient visits, where they will be able to see patients and provide them the service. That's what they're trained to do, not to fill out—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you, Minister. The member from Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, for their presentation.

The Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act is really making common sense, not making nonsense. I was talking to many doctors, including my wife, Dr. Rajes Logan—it's wonderful news. It's a game-changer; it is really revolutionizing the medical system when it comes to freeing up thousands and thousands of hours. I would say there was a research that came out and found that doctors are losing millions of hours in Ontario on paperwork. I think this is really a game-changer when it comes to freeing up the doctors. I was talking to many doctors. They were telling me they are trained for eight to 10 years to diagnose the patient, not to do the paperwork.

This is a great-news story, and I ask the minister to elaborate on how the negotiation was with the OMA and freeing up—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you for that question. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for the question. It's certainly an important question.

As the member knows, my colleague the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora and I did a lot of consultations over the summer talking to physicians who were excited to be able to tell us about how we could help improve primary care everywhere and also how we could reduce red tape. So we certainly heard about a lot of forms that doctors spend a lot of time filling out. What this package is about is eliminating that burden as much as possible, or minimizing it as much as possible, so that physicians can spend their time being physicians and doing, as you said, what they are trained to do, which is provide care to patients.

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

M. Guy Bourgoïn: J'aurais une question, c'est sûr. Je pense que c'est le cinquième projet de loi que le gouvernement amène où on parle de « red tape ». Je demanderais au ministre—tu sais, on a entendu souvent, puis mon collègue et moi avons parlé souvent des « issues » des Premières Nations : comment on parle juste d'eau potable, de maisons adéquates, et la liste est très longue quand ça vient aux communautés autochtones.

J'aimerais savoir pourquoi on ne voit pas de réduction de « red tape » quand ça vient aux Premières Nations.

Hon. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member opposite for that important question. I want to obviously remind him this actually is not the fifth bill that the government has brought forward since forming government; this is actually the 11th bill that we have brought forward to continue to eliminate red tape in the province of Ontario.

Let's compare that with the record of the previous Liberal government that spent 15 years just piling on red tape over red tape over red tape. Of course, for the most part, they were supported by the NDP in their efforts on all of that.

It wasn't until we formed government and we turned this into a priority—so to give you an example, Madam Speaker, previously, on average, businesses were spending about \$33,000 a year in compliance costs alone. Thanks to our efforts and 11 bills, businesses are now saving nearly \$950 million annually in compliance costs.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's a great honour for me to stand here in this place and represent the great voices of the wonderful riding of London North Centre.

As I take a look towards Bill 139, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, it is an interesting bill to arrive at this time. We have yet another doorstopper bill, a bill with a number of different technical amendments to legislation—which are in and of themselves not necessarily odious. As the official opposition, we usually look towards these large, omnibus sorts of bills that are full of schedules and try to look for that poison pill, the arsenic in the pie that majority governments are often foisting upon oppositions—you know, something that appears as though we cannot technically vote for.

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But if we take a look at this bill, I also think about the current situation in Ontario. Families in Ontario are hurting incredibly right now. We have a cost-of-living crisis. We have a housing crisis. We have an opioid epidemic across our province. And this government seems content to pursue technical amendments.

Today, as it turns out, Speaker, we have an opportunity for the government to vote on really life-changing legislation that would help empower low- and moderate-income families. Today we're going to be voting on my motion that was debated just yesterday, for the government to actually provide affordable housing and supportive housing to low- and moderate-income families. Given the debate yesterday, I am deeply concerned that the government is not taking the housing crisis seriously, because they have indicated that they won't be voting for it.

If we look towards the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act—just at first blush, given I only have a few minutes on the clock this morning—this bill sort of tinkers around the edges. It's interesting because, within this bill, it is going to tinker with the agricultural act, while at the same time, in recent memory, we have seen that this government has been hell-bent on carving up the greenbelt, turning millionaires into billionaires with their greenbelt grab. And to that \$8.3 billion that they were content to hand over to a few well-connected insider friends, that was also—just a point of note, Speaker—based on the Auditor General's 2016 numbers. So that number could be far, far more than \$8.3 billion.

We look at the impacts that would have had for our province, for our precious farmland, where we're losing

319 acres of prime farmland each day—once you lose that farmland, it never comes back—the ecologically sensitive areas such as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve and so many more.

But what I wanted to just speak about this morning is about the bill itself and what it hopes to achieve, and also what it is entitled. The bill is entitled the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, and it harkens back to a time—I hope the member, my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga, will cover his ears for this next little bit. When this government talks about common sense, it harkens back to a very dark time in Ontario's history. It harkens back to a government that had what they called the Common Sense Revolution, and it's something that strikes fear into many people's hearts.

I was a high school student at that time, and I saw the tremendous and grave impacts on the educational system, where a billion dollars was stripped out of the educational system that was never put back—certainly not by the Liberal government—something that has impacted education for many, many, many years.

We can also thank Conservative common sense for downloading services from the provincial jurisdiction onto municipalities. They downloaded social assistance. They downloaded public housing. They downloaded public health. We need not look far to think of what that downloading and the impact of it was, considering the deaths and all of the poisonings that happened in the Walkerton area as a result.

We can also thank Conservative common sense for cutting funding to health care and closing hospitals. I believe the Harris Conservative government closed 28 hospital and laid off 6,000 nurses.

And we can also thank the Conservative common sense for creating our current housing crisis: 16,000 units of co-op and non-profit housing that were under development at that time were cancelled by the Harris Conservative government. What a shame. You think about those 16,000 units and how many lives would have been impacted by having that economic stability, having that safe place to call home, having something that they could pass on to their children, where the economic benefits could have been realized with these low- to moderate-income folks. Think of those lives—16,000 individual spaces. Think of all the lives that could have been within those units. It's shocking to think.

You know, earlier—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. My apologies to the member from London North Centre. It is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVENTS IN BRAMPTON

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Being an elected official in the beautiful city of Brampton gives me the chance to visit and support many wonderful initiatives within the city. I have

had the privilege of supporting amazing initiatives for the betterment of society, such as the blood and plasma drive held by Dr. Shri Nanasaheb Dharmadhikari.

I also had the opportunity to support many great initiatives that support healthy and active living through sport. Two sporting initiatives I have had the honour of supporting are the United Brothers Field Hockey Academy Toronto cup 2023 field hockey tournament and the United Canadian Christian Board's tapeball tournament. It is always amazing seeing members of the community come together to watch the amazing display of skill, dedication and hard work exhibited by all the players.

Thanks to the great ethnic diversity of Brampton, I have also had the pleasure of immersing myself in a wide variety of different cultures from all over the world. Just recently, I have been joining the community in celebrating Navratri, a holy festival in the Hindu community. I have also joined the city of Brampton for their Latino heritage month celebrations. It is always amazing seeing the community get together to celebrate and display their unique cultures.

Speaker, I feel blessed to show my support for the many, many amazing initiatives that are organized in the wonderful city of Brampton, whether they be blood drives, sporting events or events that bring the community together.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yesterday, we were horrified by news of yet another senseless femicide in Sault Ste. Marie as a result of intimate partner violence. Five people, including three children, are dead. A community is in mourning. These deaths will be recorded in the monthly OAITH femicide report, which confirmed in September that 46 women have already been killed by their intimate partner this year. Last year, there were a record 52 femicides in Ontario.

Yet, the Ford government continues to refuse to recognize intimate partner violence as the epidemic it is, which was the very first recommendation of the coroner's inquest into the murders of Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam and Anastasia Kuzyk by their intimate partner in Renfrew county in 2015. The Ford government dismantled the round table on violence against women as soon as they were elected in 2018, leaving nobody to provide the coordination and identify the resources necessary to prevent intimate partner violence. They have ignored urgent pleas for stable and adequate funding for women's shelters and organizations that support survivors.

Speaker, I am proud that the city of London is among the 63 Ontario communities that have declared intimate partner violence an epidemic. Let this be the femicide that finally forces the government to do the same.

SMALL BUSINESS

PETITES ENTREPRISES

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Last week was Small Business Week and I would like to take this opportunity to

congratulate all the small businesses of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and across the province. I used to own a small business myself and I know that small businesses, or businesses with fewer than 100 employees, play a big role in Ontario, making up about 98% of all businesses in the province and employing more than two million Ontarians.

From family businesses to manufacturers, small businesses are crucial to Ontario's economic success and their impact is felt in communities across the province. These small business owners are giving so much to our community. They're the ones sponsoring sport leagues and many events, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the small businesses in my riding.

Sur une autre note, j'aimerais féliciter la SÉO, la Société Économique de l'Ontario, pour l'organisation du Gala Améthyste édition 2023, qui aura lieu le 8 novembre prochain à Ottawa. Je ne pourrais malheureusement pas être présent au gala dû à mes engagements avec l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Je sais qu'au cours de cet événement, nous applaudirons et récompenserons des gens d'affaires, des propriétaires d'entreprise, des employeurs ainsi que d'autres personnes ou organismes ayant contribué à l'essor de l'économie franco-ontarienne.

Je tiens à les féliciter et les remercier d'avoir contribué à l'essor de l'économie franco-ontarienne.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: With profound sadness, I rise to acknowledge the tragic deaths of five people, including three children, one as young as six years old, killed by femicide at the hands of a man in Sault Ste. Marie. My deepest condolences go to the family and friends of the victims and to the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie who, I'm certain, is helping his community deal with this profound tragedy.

In 2022 in Ontario, every seven days a woman or child was killed in a femicide. Please, all of us, take a moment to pause and reflect on this horrifying loss. We count femicide because it is intended to mark the tragic loss of each life, to raise a public alarm and to engage everyone in working together toward prevention.

The Premier offered his prayers to the victims, and that is appropriate. However, the Premier has a responsibility to show leadership—to change these tragic outcomes. We must do better. Premier, you can start today by declaring that intimate partner violence is an epidemic in Ontario.

On August 18, 2023, the city of Hamilton declared intimate partner violence as an epidemic, and almost 65 municipalities across Ontario have done the same. Where is the commitment to prevention in Ontario? Premier, please show these survivors that they are not alone.

In Hamilton, the Woman Abuse Working Group is a coalition of more than 20 agencies working to end violence against women and their children. They offer this message:

“We know that it takes a community to end violence. To anyone facing violence, to survivors, please know you are not alone. There are programs and services in place to support you and your family. Please do not hesitate to reach out when you are ready to do so.”

ISLAMIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Es salaam aleikum. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today to recognize Islamic Heritage Month and to celebrate the many important contributions of Muslim Canadians in the arts, sciences and literature, and often all three. This includes leaders like my friend Imam Shaykh Ibrahim Hussain from Masjid Rahmatul-lil-Alameen in my community of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Shaykh Ibrahim is a leader in the field of ADR or alternative dispute resolution. He's the founder of Sulha Solutions, the first Muslim ADR organization in the world. Sulha comes from the Arabic word “sulh,” which means “to make peace,” and that's what Shaykh Ibrahim does, promoting peace and reconciliation and making a positive impact around the world. His goal is to train thousands of faith leaders in online dispute resolution by 2030.

He also launched his new book today, *A Muslim Dispute Resolution Guide*, a guide to help us all become better peacemakers, and I encourage everyone to pick up a copy.

I'm proud to sponsor Shaykh Ibrahim's lunch reception today in rooms 228 and 230, and I encourage all members to join our celebration of Islamic Heritage Month and learn more about Muslim dispute resolution.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Joel Harden: I also rise, as my colleagues have done, to grieve collectively the five folks whom we've lost in Sault Ste. Marie and to acknowledge that we have a responsibility in this Legislature to reach out to anybody who, right now, is living in a violent home.

I'm sad to say, Speaker, the Ottawa Police Service has just confirmed there has been a double-digit increase in intimate partner violence charges in our city. Across the river in Gatineau, the increase is up 300 in police officers having to intervene in domestic assaults in violent homes.

Right now, Cornerstone women's shelter in Ottawa has had to turn away 360 people who have called them for help in accessing their shelter because their shelter is full. Shelter Movers Ottawa has had a double-digit increase in their folks who try to call Shelter Movers Ottawa so that they can move out of a violent home, free of charge for women and their children in low-income circumstances.

So I call upon this government—because I know we all care about it in this place—to send a message imminently out of this Legislature that intimate partner violence has reached epidemic proportions, to agree with the Renfrew county inquest report and to send a signal, through funds that we will allocate to organizations in all of our ridings, that you can leave a violent home, that the province of

Ontario is behind you and we believe you have the right to live free of violence.

ROBERT W. RUNCIMAN

Mr. John Yakabuski: How can someone be affectionately known as Mad Dog? They're generally seen as a hard-edged ruffian you'll want to stay away from. Well, you can if you're the unmistakably dedicated, focused and truly compassionate Bob Runciman. As many of you would know, Bob, who has been a mentor and a friend to me as long as I've been here, had a political career that spanned 45 years, including municipal and provincial elected office as well as the Senate of Canada.

Clearly, Speaker, if you've spent 45 years in politics, you've got a lot to talk about, and most will do exactly that, but Bob Runciman has gone a step further. He's penned a book entitled *From Mad Dog to Senator*, his memoir of that 45-year career, which former Premier Mike Harris has called a “great read.” Well, Speaker, I can echo the sentiments of Premier Harris. And of course, I encourage every member here to get themselves a copy.

I'm also offering a great opportunity to listen to the Honourable Mr. Runciman speak about his book and the making of it at a special reception to be held at the Albany Club on November 14. It will be a great opportunity to hear first-hand the inside story on a number of his unique and special experiences, including the highs and the lows during his remarkable 45-year career. I'll certainly be there, Speaker, and I encourage every member of the House to join me at 5:45 p.m. for what will be an exciting and revealing evening.

VETERANS

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: As we embark on November, our thoughts turn to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and to honouring those who served and continue to serve today. But remembrance should be a year-long commitment. I'd like to thank and congratulate some people and groups in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk who work each and every day to ensure year-long remembrance.

Recently, I attended the 95th anniversary of the Major Walter Barnard Branch 125 Legion in Delhi. It was a fantastic evening, and it was so heartening to see neighbouring Branch 158 Port Dover out in full support.

The Hagersville Chamber of Commerce recently unveiled its veterans banner project. Motorist travelling Highway 6 through Hagersville will be reminded of the local young men who served. Banners have also been raised for OPP Constable Greg Pierzchala and Calgary Police Service Sergeant Andrew Harnett, a native of Hagersville. Down the road, in Jarvis, the banner project, supported by the board of trade, is now in its fifth year.

In September, Veterans Voices of Canada raised 128 flags to honour the 128,000 Canadian military and RCMP members killed and missing in action, from the Boer War to current missions. This was the third year for this ceremony in Wingfield Park in Dunnville.

In the coming days, Legion members and army, navy and air force members and cadets will be outside many stores in our respective communities as part of the poppy campaign. I will be taking part in the campaign once again, and I encourage all members to do so as well.

FREDERICK BANTING

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Today is a historic day for the members of Simcoe county. It is the 100th anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Alliston's native son and hero, Sir Frederick Banting.

Dr. Banting was awarded the peace prize in biology for the discovery of insulin. He was the first Canadian to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and was the youngest recipient at the age of 32, a distinction that remains today.

Dr. Banting was raised on a farm on the outskirts of Alliston, in the town of New Tecumseth, and I'm very proud to say that the town has rallied around and maintained the Banting homestead, which has been preserved and restored by the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation.

Sir Frederick was a true renaissance man: an artist, musician and war hero who enlisted in both the First and Second World Wars and received the Military Cross for heroism under fire as a member of the medical corps. Dr. Banting was an accomplished artist and spent time with the Group of Seven and A.Y. Jackson.

Dr. Banting and his friend Charles Best discovered insulin in 1921 and refined its production to change the lives of thousands, if not millions, of people around the world suffering from diabetes. He sold the patent to the University of Toronto for \$1 and ensured that all monies from the production were reinvested to make sure that diabetics around the world and in this country could be saved. Prior to its introduction, diabetes was a death sentence. Sir Frederick Banting has saved the lives of millions around the world and done Canada proud. Happy anniversary, Dr. Banting.

1030

THE HOSPICE OF WINDSOR ESSEX COUNTY

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's always a privilege to rise in this House, and today it's in celebration of a beloved organization in Windsor-Tecumseh called the Hospice of Windsor Essex County. Hospice delivers compassionate palliative care for our community's residents. Led by executive director Nancy Brokenshire and her incredible team, Hospice is a pillar of support for our families during their time of grief.

John Fairley is a well-known name in our community, and he has led the Hospice Face to Face fundraising campaign in conjunction with YourTV Windsor for the last 21 years. And 2023, just concluded, was its best year ever, bringing in \$125,791. That brings the campaign total to more than \$1.5 million in the last 21 years. These funds mean a lot, supporting transportation for patients to their medical appointments and patient wellness programs.

What the Face to Face campaign challenges us all to do is to find 10 friends to donate \$10. Speaker, it didn't take long for me to find those 10 friends right here in the Ontario Legislature, who joined me in contributing this year. To them I say thank you so, so much.

With \$470,000 in new funding for Hospice over the next two years for nursing, personal support and patient services, and over \$450,000 to support three new beds, two in Windsor and one at the Erie Shores site in Leamington, I'm proud of our government's ongoing commitment to Hospice.

To John Fairley and to Nancy Brokenshire and the entire team at Hospice of Windsor Essex, congratulations on completing a successful campaign this year.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Today we are celebrating 100 years of the anniversary of modern Türkiye. I would like to welcome the Turkish delegation who is here today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Türkiye: the consul general of Türkiye, Can Yoldaş, and Ipek Yoldaş; the deputy consul general, Mebsure Taskin; the current and former presidents of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, Sima Acan and Inanc Yildirim; and also my dear friend Dr. Arshi Kizilbash.

I also want to welcome my constituent office staff, Salma Elmanawy and Andrew Tadros, for their first visit to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This morning I attended a breakfast with the Catholic Health Association of Ontario, and I had the pleasure of meeting Mieke Ewen of St. Joseph's Villa in Dundas. Welcome to the House.

Mr. John Fraser: A few quick introductions here: Ron Noble, the CEO of the Catholic Health Association of Ontario, as well as members of the Catholic Health Association are here.

Also here today from my riding of Ottawa South are representatives from Perley Health. There's Margaret Tansey, the board chair; Akos Hoffer, the CEO; and Katrin Spencer, the director of senior living and community program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I am pleased to introduce Bayla Saltzman and Jonathan Alter to the House of the Legislature today. Both are students associated with CJPAC and both share an interest in politics. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning, Speaker. I'd love to welcome and introduce guests in our House today. They are members from No Demovictions Toronto. I'd like to welcome Lindsay Blackwell plus her two children, Enika, who's just under two years old, and of course Ellex, who is 10 months, still a baby. I'd like to welcome Nathalie Dooh-Tousignant; Corine Van Kester; Lee Turner; Annette Trevorrow-Gasher; Theresa, or Terry, Mitchell, and Geoffrey Hayworth. Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr. Adil Shamji: It gives me great joy to introduce Ibrahim Meru. He is a constituent from Don Valley East, a champion of our community and an all-around exceptional human being. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd also like to welcome the Catholic Health Association of Ontario and specifically Doris Shirriff, a board member at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, as well as Demetrios Kalantzis, who's a VP at Waypoint. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to welcome Carolyn Fast, a housing advocate from Welland, and Bonnie Fokkens, a Welland city councillor, who are here to advocate for vulnerable persons in supportive living accommodations. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I, too, would like to welcome members of the Catholic Health Association of Ontario, with a special shout-out to John Woods, interim president of St. Joe's health care in Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to give a warm welcome to today's page captain: all the way from Kitchener–Conestoga, Michael Milloy.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'd like to give a proud welcome to Megan Kee, one of the No Demovictions leaders in our community of Toronto–St. Paul's, and Wanda Barret, also from our local community. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your hard work. Rock on. No demovictions.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'd like to welcome some members from CJPAC who are with us today: Rabbi Jenn, Bayla and Jonathan. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker. I'm proud to introduce members from the Organic Council of Ontario: Nova Dexter, Kaelin Barichello, Norm Hansen and Ann-Marie Saunders.

I am pleased to encourage all members to join us in room 228 later this evening to celebrate all good, organic things grown in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors unless there is an objection.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome Bishop Ronald Fabbro, who is the bishop of London from the Diocese of London and is here this morning for the Catholic Health Association of Ontario.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I would like to welcome Charlotte Mickie from University–Rosedale. She is representing No Demovictions Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you, that concludes our introduction of visitors—oh, the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I would also like to recognize and welcome from No Demovictions Toronto, from the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Patricia Pokorchak as well as Katherine Mae Balfour. Thank you very much, and welcome to your House.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before we commence oral questions, I want to remind the House that for

many years, it has been our practice for members to seek the unanimous consent of the House for permission to wear lapel pins or ribbons which in some way are intended to draw attention to an issue or a cause or symbolize your support for it.

If you wish to wear a lapel pin or a ribbon, it would be best if you seek the unanimous consent of the House before wearing it.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. This government has so many backroom deals with their insiders that it's actually hard to keep track. Just a few years ago, this government was, once again, embroiled in a scandal where they attempted to pass a law to accredit a private, evangelical university; a school known for being Islamophobic, homophobic, transphobic; a school run by a very close friend of the Premier, Charles McVety. At the time, the government claimed the process was all up to code. Now, they're subject to a lawsuit.

Speaker, does the Premier believe the process of accreditation for this school was free from interference?

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Colleges and Universities to reply.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The Court of Appeal dismissed Canada Christian College's appeal, and the ministry is pleased with the court's decision. There is no further comment on the matter at this time.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The then Minister of Colleges and Universities said the process and their actions were "the most transparent thing that could exist."

Now, a leaked recording of a phone call between McVety and that same minister found the minister was working overtime to help McVety get his school accredited, even asking him to make the submission "as easy as possible for me to sign off no matter what."

Back to the Premier: Is the Premier concerned about the ongoing pattern of preferential treatment his friends are receiving?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: As I said, the ministry is pleased with the court's decision and has no further comment on the matter.

I will comment, though: PEQAB submitted their report, and the minister of the day accepted that report and the recommendation for the college to not receive their university status.

This government will stand up against all forms of hate and ensure that all students feel safe on their campuses.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't think the government appreciates just how bad all this looks—backroom deals in land use planning, the greenbelt grab, MZO, private health care, and even universities now.

I have another quote for you, Speaker. Weeks after that recorded phone call, that minister told this House, “We cannot interfere with these types of procedural safeguards. It's wrong. It violates the principles of fundamental justice.” But privately, he was telling McVety something very different: “We're going to guide this process through and we are going to make sure you got to where you wanted to go, and right where you want it to get.”

Back to the Premier: Why was your government saying one thing to the people and a different thing behind closed doors?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I said that this government will stand up against all forms of hate and ensure that all students feel safe on campuses across this province.

PEQAB submitted their report and the recommendation to not give university status to the college, and the Court of Appeal dismissed Canada Christian College's appeal. There's no further comment on the matter at this time.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, let's talk more about this government's shady deals and doublespeak—this time about urban boundary changes—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Withdraw.

This time, we're going to talk about urban boundary changes.

To the Premier: Two weeks ago, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was asked whether he would reverse the forced expansion of Hamilton's urban boundaries. He said, “No, Mr. Speaker, I will not reverse the expansion of the urban boundaries.” But just two weeks later, the minister suddenly reversed course.

To the Premier: What spooked his minister so much that he would completely reverse a position he was doubling down on just two weeks ago?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: A week ago, the Leader of the Opposition wasn't going to force the member for Hamilton Centre out of the party, and in the same week, she flip-flopped three or four times.

Do you know what changed, Mr. Speaker—very sincerely. I had a long discussion with Mayor Sutcliffe in Ottawa. He explained to me what Ottawa would like to accomplish with respect to their housing targets. I did the same with other mayors. I had a very good conversation with the former leader of the NDP, who is now the mayor in Hamilton. They're all on the same page with wanting to ensure that we build 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario and to work with us to get that happening. So I made the decision to better work with our municipal partners and to build on the successes that

we've already had in bringing housing supply action plans to this House. That's what the change was.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's be clear: It was never about land. It was never about housing. You didn't need that land. And it wasn't just two weeks ago—it was as recent as last week.

Last week, we asked the minister about this government's overuse of ministerial zoning orders to give preferential treatment to their favourite speculators. Once again, the minister doubled down and defended his government's abuse of MZO. Now he's reviewing them.

Back to the Premier: Why does it take an RCMP investigation for this government to understand why preferential treatment is wrong?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats. I will remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I can get up here and again identify all of the MZO that are allowed for housing to be built in the member's own community—housing requests, MZO requests, that we got from the city of Toronto; requests we got from other municipal partners; the requests that we got from the Minister of Health so that we could build hospitals; requests that were submitted by the Minister of Long-Term Care to build long-term care.

What I am reviewing are those MZO that were given for the purpose of building housing that at this point has not started. As I said in my first press conference, I want to move to a system of “use it or lose it.” There is no benefit for the people of province of Ontario for our home-building partners to be sitting on allocations if they're not going to use them. That's what I am reviewing, Mr. Speaker, because the primary goal of the MZO has been to move development ahead, whether it's for schools, long-term care, hospitals and supportive housing to the tune of thousands of homes in the member's own community.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it's their friends, but it's Ontarians' money.

Today the CBC reported that certain amendments to Hamilton's official plan were written word for word by a well-connected developer and Conservative donor, Sergio Manchia, the very same Sergio Manchia who received preferential treatment in the greenbelt grab, the very same speculator who bought tickets to the now-infamous stag and doe from the head of the Conservatives' fundraising team. The Integrity Commissioner's report has evidence the Premier repeatedly called Mr. Manchia prior to the changes to the greenbelt and Hamilton's official plan.

Speaker, back to the Premier: In any of those phone calls, did the Premier discuss changes to Hamilton's official plan with Mr. Manchia?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, let me explain to the Leader of the Opposition some of the things that happen when you are working both as a government and as a member of Parliament.

In advance of official plans, I can say that in my office I had community leaders tell me what they wanted to see happen. I had mayors call me saying what they wanted to see happen. I even had home builders making suggestions to me.

But ultimately, Mr. Speaker, what we should be guided by is the provincial planning statement. The reason I made the decisions to reverse some of those changes to official plans is because I didn't feel that they met the spirit that is important to bring public trust with you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know the Leader of the Opposition is hemming and hollering. She asked a question she doesn't want to hear the answer to. Do you know why, colleagues? Because for her it's the same old thing: roadblocks that get in the way. That's all they're about: stand in the way of development; stand in the way of progress. They're a radical small group of people who don't understand what it takes to move the province forward, and that is why they continuously lose.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the Premier: This morning, CBC Hamilton—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The government House leader and Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order. The rest of you will all come to order.

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has the floor.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the Premier: This morning, CBC Hamilton confirmed that the government's changes to Hamilton's official plan came directly from speculators connected to the Premier. The city of Hamilton rejected the original application for development because it contradicted Hamilton's zoning rules and faced public opposition. Instead of listening to city council and local residents, the government's decision came word for word from speculator Sergio Manchia and lobbyist Matt Johnston to allow an eight-storey building on a designated heritage site.

Premier, are ministers in your cabinet taking direction from speculators?

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1050

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know who I take my direction from: the people of the province of Ontario. That's where I take my direction from. And when I hear parents tell me that they have kids who have 21 offers on homes and are not even in the game, I know I have to double down and do even more. And do you know who else knows that? All of the Progressive Conservatives who are sitting in this chamber. We are completely focused on one thing: making life more affordable for people in the province of Ontario, building 1.5 million homes so that the next generation of Ontarian families can have the exact same dream that almost every one of us in this chamber have, and that's the dream of home ownership. It is why millions of people have chosen to come to the province of Ontario—in her own community.

So to the member opposite, I saw very clearly: We will not stop working on behalf of the people of this province, we will not stop building a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario, even if that means rolling over the radical NDP who simply say no to everything. If it was up to them, we'd be back in 1933, and we won't let that happen.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The people of Hamilton wish you would just stop taking direction from speculators. That's what we wish in Hamilton.

These are not just any speculators that the Premier took direction from, but the exact people who were at his daughter's stag and doe. They're the same people interviewed by office of the Legislature because of preferential treatment in the greenbelt grab. Ancaster councillor Craig Cassar said it best: "It is entirely undemocratic for the province to accommodate for-profit interest that are in complete contradiction to the public interest."

So how many changes to official plans came directly, work for word, from speculators?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, I think that the valuable part of that question was profit, and here is the crux of everything with the NDP: They don't want a system where people can get ahead in this province. Anything that is about helping people advance, they're going to be against.

So what are we doing? We're building more homes for people and we're removing obstacles so that we can get more homes built for people in the province of Ontario. We're cutting taxes so that the lowest-income earners don't have to pay taxes to the government. Imagine that they voted against it. I'm building long-term-care homes because, as the Minister of Long-Term Care says, we owe

a responsibility to those who helped build this province. They're against that.

Later on today, we will be bringing a motion forward. The member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington will be bringing a motion forward to call on the federal government to remove the carbon tax from fuel, and we are hoping the NDP will do the right thing and vote with us to put more money back in the people's pockets. I bet you they won't, and they'll continue on a destructive path.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The policies of the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, saw our tech sector stagnate. Our brightest tech workers were leaving the province and game-changing tech innovations were occurring abroad. Thankfully, our government took office and immediately reversed the Liberal's anti-business policies.

Now, Ontario is home to one of the fastest-growing tech hubs in the world. Ontario's Critical Technology Initiatives are one of the measures we are implementing to remain a global tech leader. Can the minister please speak to the importance of our critical technology initiatives and some of the projects it has supported?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our government is making strategic investments to ensure that Ontario is at the forefront of global tech innovation through our \$107-million critical technology initiatives. We're accelerating the development, commercialization and use of important technologies like cyber security and AI. This includes a \$5-million investment we made to support CCTX's Ontario Cybersecurity Excellence Initiative. This will help companies across the province develop and adopt cyber security technologies, help them to become more competitive, grow and create good-paying jobs. Speaker, we are making sure Ontario is a global leader in tech innovation and ensuring that businesses have access to the technology they need to remain competitive.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thanks to the minister for his answer. It's great to hear about the important investments we're making through our critical technology initiatives. We know these critical technologies present massive economic opportunities for Ontario. AI, 5G and quantum technologies are expected to contribute \$29 trillion to the global economy by 2035. By supporting technological innovation, we can help more companies access the critical technologies they need to become more competitive.

Can the minister please elaborate on other investments recently made by our government to critical technology initiatives?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Critical technologies fuel innovation. They drive growth in every sector, and that's why our government invested \$50 million into the Ontario Centre of Innovation for their new program to help businesses

adopt these critical technologies. It will focus on helping businesses in mining, agri-food and advanced manufacturing so that they, too, can increase their competitiveness and boost their productivity. That's in addition to the \$27 million we invested in the Vector Institute as they make it easier for companies to develop AI applications for safe and ethical AI right here in Ontario.

The Premier reminds me every day: We have 414,000 tech workers here in the province of Ontario because we're building this world-class ecosystem to make sure those technologies are developed right here in Ontario.

LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

M. Guy Bourgouin: À une époque, cette province construisait des logements hors marché. L'Ontario finançait des dizaines de milliers de logements publics, à but non lucratif et coopératifs chaque année.

C'étaient des maisons construites en fonction des besoins et non pour du profit. Le gouvernement a arrêté en 1995 lorsque, oui, vous vous en doutez, les conservateurs ont abandonné cette responsabilité. Cela a ouvert la voie à notre crise du logement d'aujourd'hui.

Au premier ministre : appuiera-t-il la solution du NDP qui vise à construire des logements hors marché dont notre province a désespérément besoin?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fairness, I did take a look at the NDP plan that they provided yesterday. It's very similar to a plan that was brought forward by Bob Rae between 1990 and 1995. Now, the hallmark of that plan, Mr. Speaker, was that they suggested one price and then it came in hundreds of millions of dollars over budget, and what they thought would happen didn't happen. It didn't provide the housing that was required. What then ended up happening was that the government had to go out and spend money on buying land, so housing wasn't built. The program was cancelled because it wasn't coming through for the people of the province of Ontario and because the previous NDP government literally bankrupted the province of Ontario.

Now, to put it in context, they left the province of Ontario back in 1995 with an \$11-billion deficit. What's that? The equivalent of \$25 billion in today's economy? And what did they accomplish? They actually outpaced the Liberals; they accomplished even less than zero.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Peut-être que le ministre devrait aller se promener dans les parcs pour aller voir comment il y a des villages de tentes. On en voit même dans le nord de l'Ontario, ce qu'on n'a jamais vu avant. Je pense qu'il y a une réalité qui est déconnectée.

Le logement est un droit humain, monsieur le Président, au même titre que les soins de santé, l'éducation et la sécurité de retraite.

Si le secteur privé ne parvient pas à construire suffisamment de logements abordables pour tous ceux qui en ont besoin, le secteur public doit alors intensifier ses efforts.

Il est clair que le plan du gouvernement ne fonctionne pas. Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, voulons nous assurer que chaque Ontarien ait un toit digne de ce nom au-dessus de leur tête, un logement qu'il peut arriver à payer sans serrer sa ceinture qui est déjà bien serrée.

Monsieur le Président, revenons au premier ministre : quand le gouvernement commencera-t-il à prendre cette crise de logement au sérieux?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, we've brought in a series of bills in this place since 2018, and the member opposite has literally voted against every single one of them. He talks about, in his answer, some of the issues surrounding mental health and addictions, and he has voted against the Roadmap to Wellness.

He's talking about jobs and opportunity, yet he and his colleague from Sudbury voted against mines and more opportunity for people.

1100

Their plan is predicated on the fact that somehow there is a secret cache of bureaucrats somewhere who are going to go out and start building homes for the people of the province of Ontario. If they're there, then I will unleash them, but I have not found this secret cache of people. Because do you know who builds social housing? It is the same people that build rental housing. It is the same people that build the homes that all of us live in.

They say they want to take the profit out of it, but they want to add a tax to it. When we took away development charges on purpose-built rental and the HST, when we said no development charges on social housing, they voted against it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Mines. Ontario's mining sector has never been more important than it is today. Our province depends significantly on our resource sector, which impacts every part of our daily lives, from the cars we drive to the phones we carry in our pockets.

Mining is also responsible for creating the economy of the future, and it is a source of job opportunities in the north and throughout Ontario. Sadly, the opposition NDP and the Liberals continue to say no to opportunities that will help maintain Ontario's position as a world leader in sustainable mining. That is why our government must continue to act with urgency in supporting this vital sector.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is strengthening Ontario's mining sector?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member from Brantford-Brant for the question. Thanks to our government, the opportunities for the Ontario mining industry have never been better than they are right now. This is the result of our plan to make Ontario the leading mining jurisdiction in Canada. We have made strategic investments like the \$35 million in the Ontario Junior Exploration

Program and \$5 million in the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund. We have passed the Building More Mines Act to cut through red tape to ensure that government operates at the pace of business. The response from industry has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are just getting started.

Even though we all know how important mining is for the economy, the NDP voted no to every investment and every red tape initiative we have done to support this sector. It's a shameful record, Speaker.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I know from speaking to the minister that the mining sector supports 75,000 jobs across our great province and contributes over \$13 billion to our GDP every single year. Yet the NDP continues to vote against every investment made by our government that helps to strengthen this sector.

It's unfortunate that the NDP and the Liberals continue to promote narratives that incite fear and mistrust of Ontario's mining industry. In contrast, our government must support mining and the many benefits it provides to northern and Indigenous communities and our province as a whole. Most importantly, we must show respect to the hard-working and dedicated miners who are reshaping our economy and advancing electric vehicle production.

Can the minister please elaborate on the role of the mining sector in building a stronger Ontario?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you again to the member for this question. Mining provided a career and life for many people in my hometown of South Porcupine, and it is our government and this Premier that are creating more opportunities for mining. We are ensuring everyone in Ontario will benefit from this generational opportunity to fuel the future.

We know we can't do this without strong industry partners like the Ontario Mining Association. I invite all members to join the Meet the Miners reception with the OMA at 5 p.m. today at the Sheraton Hotel. I encourage everyone, including the opposition, to come and learn about the sector—which is a sector they clearly have lost faith in.

The future of our economy is evolving right now, but none of it can happen without mining. Everyone needs to vote yes to mining.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: This afternoon, this House will vote on my bill, the Protecting Vulnerable Persons in Supportive Living Accommodation Act. Once again, I want to thank Welland city councillor Bonnie Fokkens and Carolyn Fast for being here today. If passed, it will provide a regulatory framework requiring all supportive living home operators to be licensed and allow for inspection and complaint protocols.

The Toronto Star's investigation into unregulated supportive living homes revealed gut-wrenching conditions.

In just one home, they found rats, mould, bedbugs and soiled mattresses, and there have been deaths due to fire.

Will this government support this legislation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague for the question. Speaker, I want to be very clear: We expect everyone to uphold public health and property standards, especially when it comes to housing the most vulnerable in our communities. All landlords and housing providers have a legal responsibility to provide safe and habitable homes to their tenants. That's the law.

We're tackling the issue from both sides. My colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is creating more opportunities for at-risk people to receive the critical supports they need, and our government has made two of the largest increases to ODSP programs in the program's history, putting more money into ODSP recipients.

This year, we're investing \$2.1 billion to fund accommodation that meets the needs of adults with developmental disabilities. That's an increase of nearly half a billion dollars since 2018, when we formed government. Mr. Speaker—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister will take his seat. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Toronto–St. Paul's, come to order.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, that's little comfort to vulnerable persons. My private member's bill will set minimum standards so that vulnerable tenants no longer suffer from dangerous and sometimes life-threatening situations.

Following the death of a tenant in London in an unregulated supportive living home, the city acted quickly to put bylaws in place, but municipalities want provincial regulations. Will this government listen to its municipal partners, pass my bill and bring it back from committee as quickly as possible before we see more deaths of vulnerable persons in Ontario's supportive living accommodations?

Hon. Michael Parsa: When it comes to providing supports, as I mentioned, this year, for the developmental sector alone, we're investing nearly three quarters of a billion dollars more than we did when we formed government. On supportive housing, \$2.1 billion is being invested. On this side of the House and in the middle across, we have put initiatives forward to make sure that we protect Ontarians, especially our most vulnerable.

We will stop at nothing to hold those accountable who do not protect the people of this province, especially our most vulnerable. The only problem is, every single initiative that we put forward to provide supports for the people of Ontario the opposition votes against. They'll come here and ask for things, but when we put bills forward that support Ontarians, especially our most vulnerable, the NDP constantly—

MPP Jill Andrew: That is a lie.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Okay, stop the clock. The member for Toronto–St. Paul's will rise and withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

MPP Jill Andrew: Withdraw.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

I think we're ready to start again. Start the clock.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Nearly two years ago, there was cause for optimism for long-term care in Haldimand–Norfolk, with 334 new beds and 324 upgrades announced. Two years later, and ground has not been broken at any of the six facilities where beds or improvements were announced.

When will the members opposite admit the environment to build does not exist here in Ontario? I'm told construction costs have risen to the point where all these projects may be in jeopardy. All the while, wait times continue to grow and are abysmal, with most families waiting over a year for a bed.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the ministry doing to ensure these announcements from two years ago will actually go ahead, and what is the plan to expedite construction?

1110

Hon. Stan Cho: There's a lot to update this House on in long-term care, which we've been doing for the past several years, to be frank: a \$10-billion capital plan with a plan to build and redevelop 58,000—and they're not beds, they're homes in this province for our amazing seniors.

In fact, Speaker, the member does mention something very important, which is that construction costs have escalated. That's why we introduced the construction funding subsidy under the leadership of our last Minister of Long-Term Care, which has led to the approval of 11,000 beds for construction in this province.

The member sits next to the independent Liberals, who built 611 net new beds for the better part of a decade. I'm proud to update this House that, under this Premier's leadership, since 2018, we have completed—or are under construction—18,000 beds in this great province.

There's more work to be done, but we're on track. We're going to take care of our seniors in Ontario.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: While the minister talks sunshine and rainbows for other parts of the province, that does not help my seniors in Haldimand–Norfolk. Approval and supporting projects elsewhere is not actually getting the beds built in Haldimand–Norfolk.

Dover Cliffs, a retirement home in Port Dover, was one of the projects announced for expansion, but those plans have been paused after the project went to tender this spring. From announcement to tender, it's been four years—I call that a snail's pace. Dover Cliffs is a class C

facility; B- and C-class licences will expire at the end of June 2025. Where will those 70 residents at Dover Cliffs go? There are actually 26,531 licences set to expire in two years, according to the Financial Accountability Office, and yet again here this morning, we don't see a plan to get shovels in the ground.

Speaker, can the minister assure seniors of Haldimand-Norfolk there will be a bed for them close to home in 2025, or will he relocate them halfway across the province?

Hon. Stan Cho: So, Speaker, I went through the update in the first answer, mentioning that we've got shovels in the ground or have built 18,000 beds. We're well on the way to complete that 58,000. But the member is correct, there are more beds to be constructed. In fact, we've got members from our government coming up to me with projects in their neighbourhoods. We've got members of the NDP coming up to me with projects in their neighbourhoods. The member chooses a peculiar way of lobbying for her riding.

We acknowledge that seniors need more homes. It is this government that has taken it upon themselves to actually build that capacity and staff it with health human resources. So I encourage the member: Perhaps instead of standing in question period and saying, "The neighbourhood needs this and that," come to me and show that information to me and let's work on that because this government has proven, under the leadership of this Premier, that we are building those very beds in this province.

After a decade of neglect under the people who sit next to her, this government has taken it upon themselves to take care of our seniors. They took care of us—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. The previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, ignored the housing crisis that was developing across our province. There are currently hundreds of thousands of individuals and families struggling to find a home that meets their needs. Also, the lack of transit infrastructure creates barriers to accessing convenient transit services. Our government put forward the solution of developing transit-oriented communities to increase housing supply. This is a positive step forward and shows that our government understands that housing is one of the most important infrastructure issues facing our communities.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how transit-oriented communities are helping to build a stronger Ontario?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for asking the question.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made a commitment to build more homes in the province of Ontario, and one of the ways that we intended on reaching that target is

through our Transit-Oriented Communities Program. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We're expanding the subway system by 50% in the city of Toronto and in York region, and that's why we're no longer building station boxes, but rather communities around the stations.

Exhibition, King-Bathurst, Queen-Spadina, Corktown, East Harbour, Bridge and High Tech are already under way. Last week, we announced that we're sharing information with the city of Toronto, working collaboratively with them on six new, complete communities. Eastern, Gerrard-Carlaw South, Pape, Cosburn, Thorncliffe and Lawrence will all be new transit communities where people can live in the future.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is clear from the minister's answer that our government is committed to increasing housing options and making access to transit infrastructure more convenient. There are many economic, social and environmental benefits that come from increasing housing supply and bringing housing closer to transit stations.

Our government has made excellent progress to expand transit networks, but we must remain focused on solutions that will provide even more transit options. Can the minister please explain how our government is addressing Ontario's growing transit infrastructure needs?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, thank you to the member.

Mr. Speaker, these six proposed TOCs would create approximately 5,900 new residential units in the city of Toronto, including affordable housing units, as well as 1,900 jobs, all at or within walking distance of a transit station.

We are building complete communities that will have housing, jobs and community amenities close to transit. By building complete communities, we are making life more convenient and affordable for the hard-working people of Ontario.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The residents watching from the gallery today are from No Demovictions Toronto. They represent tens of thousands of tenants whose lives will be thrown into chaos when their homes are demolished to make way for new luxury condominiums. One tenant told my office how they're considering applying for MAID, medical assistance in dying, because of the hopelessness that they feel about losing their home, which has been enabled by the Premier's housing legislation.

Will the Premier give the tenants hope today and commit to a moratorium on demovictions in large rent-controlled buildings?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Since we came into office in 2018, we have been focused on building homes for people, and that has included, of course, rental housing. One of the things that we saw, which was the hallmark of the previous Liberal and NDP coalition in this province, was that rental

housing starts literally collapsed across the province of Ontario. What we are seeing, of course, is that rental housing starts in the province of Ontario, under our government, are at a 30-year high, and the good news on that is that in the first half of 2023, that pace has increased by over 44%.

One of our biggest challenges in Toronto and across the province has been the supply of rental housing, and we are tackling that head-on. At the same time, we are making significant investments in the Landlord and Tenant Board to ensure that we can get through cases much more quickly, and I thank the Attorney General for that.

We have introduced a number of pieces of legislation to better protect tenants across the province of Ontario, but ultimately, we have to increase that supply so that there are more options for all Ontarians.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Speaker, vulnerable tenants are contemplating suicide rather than facing eviction and demolition.

Terry lives in a 250-unit building in my riding which is slated for demolition. She's 92 years old. She's in the gallery today. She shared with me, "I want to die here. I live here alone. I am widowed. I am not even looking for another place."

Terry's story is not singular. Thousands of families are facing eviction from large but good rent-controlled buildings.

This question is from Terry to the Premier: Will he use his extraordinary powers today to help Terry and hundreds of her neighbours by stopping the demolition of their home?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We've used our "extraordinary powers"—from the member opposite—to use ministerial zoning orders to build thousands of supportive housing units across the city of Toronto, including in the member's own riding. Now, I say very clearly to the member opposite, she is against that. In fact, at the start of question period today, her leader literally asked question after question after question, telling me that I should not do that.

1120

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: So I say to the member opposite, I will continue to use ministerial zoning orders when it helps build housing for the people of the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The official opposition will come to order.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the floor.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It hurts them when their own radical ideas are put back in their face—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Ottawa Centre, come to order. Response.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Minister of Long-Term Care talked about 58,000 new homes for seniors. We've brought in MZO's to build supportive housing in the city of Toronto; they voted against it. We brought protections for landlords and tenants; they voted against—

Interjections.

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

The next question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Kitchener Centre will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre is warned. The government side will come to order.

The next question.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Andrea Hazell: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The residents of Scarborough–Guildwood and across Ontario are struggling, and under his government, rent has never been higher. The average new listing for rental apartments in Toronto is almost \$4,000 a month, or 60% of the household income of my riding.

This government has had five years to address the housing crisis, but what do they have to show for it? One RCMP criminal investigation.

Does the minister think it is past time for his government to bring back rent control, or will they keep showing they don't care for the renters of Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, unfortunately for the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, I happen to know the riding very, very well, having grown up there and gone to high school at Pope John Paul II just in that riding. And you know what the problem is in that riding? Fifteen years of Liberal inaction when they had the opportunity to do something.

I know the member is new to the House, but I would suggest to the member opposite, if she wants to find out why there are no homes being built in her riding, she should ask the leader of her party. If she wants to find out why there are no new long-term-care homes under 15 years, she should ask the person in front of her; why it's this government that has to bring in new universities and medical schools to her riding—because of this government.

We built bridges the right way; they build them upside down. They didn't get transit and transportation did; we got it done.

So if you want to know why your community is suffering, it is because, for 15 years, Liberals supported by the NDP did nothing for Scarborough, Mr. Speaker, and despite that, we are getting the job done for them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. The House will come to order so that we can resume question period.

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Mr. Speaker, every day I hear this government blaming everybody for just about any problem, but instead of addressing the issues, they have only gotten worse.

But he has only recently been appointed Minister of Housing; he has the opportunity to right his government's wrongs. He has already backtracked on the previous minister's decision to expand urban boundaries and develop farmland, and he's already backtracked on developing the greenbelt, after it came out that his government gifted their developer friends \$8.3 billion in prime real estate.

Now, through you, Mr. Speaker, I once again ask if the minister intends to backtrack again and restore universal rent control that his government got rid of in 2018.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Very similar to the minister, I've sent years and years in Scarborough–Guildwood. We have a lot of friends there. But I'll tell the new member: Why don't you ask your colleagues why they voted against a hospital that's been overdue for decades? Why don't you ask your members why they—

Interjections.

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

I'm going to ask the Premier to pause for a second. I can't hear the Premier because of the noise in the House. It's not an issue with the volume of his voice; it's the heckling that's going on, so come to order.

Restart the clock. The Premier has the floor.

Hon. Doug Ford: Just to remind the member again: voting against hospitals, voting against subways that you had the opportunity, for 15 years—you totally ignored Scarborough, the forgotten city until we came into power. You forgot to mention Extencicare that was built, long-term care, and the one on Kennedy Road, Kennedy Lodge, as well. We built two long-term-care homes right in your riding. But guess what you did? You voted against it. You vote against everything for the people of Scarborough. You voted against our housing bill. You voted—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take a seat. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat. Order.

Two reminders, the first one being that members should make their comments through the Chair. Secondly, when the Speaker stands, whoever has the floor should sit down.

Start the clock.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Attorney General. All Ontarians deserve access to a justice system that is easy to access, efficient and fair. However, On-

tario's justice system is difficult for some to access due to barriers such as inclusivity, equity and affordability of legal services. These are all important issues that need to be addressed in order for Ontario's justice system to be effective.

Speaker, this week marks the start of Access to Justice Week across Canada. This is an opportunity to explore how this sector can be improved and updated. Can the Attorney General please explain the significance of Access to Justice Week and how its goals promote an effective justice system for all?

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank my friend from Richmond Hill for the question, and I'd be happy to explain what Access to Justice Week means both for this government and for my ministry. It's occurring across Canada all throughout this week, and it involves government and stakeholders reviewing and working together on important changes across Canada and within our provincial justice system. This year is going to be the eighth annual Access to Justice Week, with participants examining a variety of different issues across our system.

But right here, we're building a justice sector that is modern and works for people. Under the leadership of the Premier, we've seen transformational investments in improvements to our system, greatly increasing access to justice. We are investing in people, processes, technology and capital.

I'll have more to say in my supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the Attorney General; it is great to hear that our government is committed to making continual improvements to Ontario's justice system. However, I hear from constituents that, due to the previous Liberal government's neglect of our justice system, they have encountered inconvenient and confusing procedures that deal with our courts.

Speaker, Ontarians benefit from a convenient and efficient court system that supports them in addressing their legal matters. That is why our government must focus on replacing procedures that are slow, outdated and ineffective. Can the Attorney General please explain how our government is transforming and modernizing assets in the justice system?

1130

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to outline some of the initiatives and funding and changes that we're making. We provided funding to legal aid to ensure there was continued access to justice for those who need it. In 2020, we updated the Legal Aid Services Act for the first time in 30 years.

In August, we announced a generational online transformation of our justice system, a \$166-million investment that will drive the courts' digital transformation, centralizing and improving access to court information and documents for everybody.

When it comes to tribunals, we've seen millions of dollars of investments in people, in staff, in processes and systems that were left to rot under the previous

administration. We had to replace them. This builds on our previous work of justice accelerated, which saw generational change to our justice system through technology and updating outdated rules.

Mr. Speaker, you can no longer serve documents by telegram; you can do them by email—

Interjection.

Hon. Doug Downey:—and if you think that's funny, it is kind of funny, but it's very sad. That's what was left to us in 2018.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Elaine, a senior, has been living in her rent-controlled apartment at 220 Lake Promenade for decades. She will soon be evicted because her building is slated for demolition, even though it is in good repair.

Tenants are being unnecessarily displaced and new buildings will not be under rent control because this Conservative government removed it. These demolitions of perfectly good apartments are making the housing crisis worse because it's removing rent-controlled units from the housing stock. Will the Premier protect tenants like Elaine by bringing back rent control for all tenants?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, look, one of the problems we're having across the province of Ontario is a lack of supply, and that's a lack of supply that has been brought on by historic obstacles put in the way by the Liberals and the NDP, right? They say they want to help tenants, yet every bill that we've brought in here to protect tenants further and to give them more rights, they have literally stood in their place and voted against. They want to increase taxes on those who want to build affordable homes. It is part of their plan.

So I say to the member very sincerely, if you want to help tenants, help us build more homes. We're at, this year alone—the first half of this year—a 44% increase over last year in purpose-built rentals across the province of Ontario. We are at a 30-year high, but more needs to be done. You cannot unravel the mess they left this province in in five years. We're seeing that, right? It is going to take us longer, but if they would help us, we could move even quicker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: To the Premier: Wanda is a senior living at 55 Brownlow with her daughter and granddaughter. As we speak, her and their neighbours are facing demovictions. They're being told that the city must rush through approving their demovictions because if they fight it, the Ontario Land Tribunal will leave them with nothing. Planners are telling tenants they need to take away their homes today so that this government's tribunal—one stacked with their buddies, I might add—doesn't take away their housing tomorrow, all while giving Wanda and her family nowhere else to go.

My question is to the Premier. Will you repeal Bill 23? Will you stop demovictions? Will you bring back rent control? Where is Wanda, where is her family, where are neighbours and tenants across Ontario supposed to go? Will he speak to them? Will the Premier of Ontario speak to the tenants in our gallery today and let them know that their right to housing is a human right that they will respect?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to rise in your place and scream and holler; it is another thing entirely to actually do the work that is needed to bring more housing for the people of province of Ontario.

This is a member who has voted literally against the very same people that today she is suggesting she wants to support. When we have brought more measures in to protect tenants, that member rose in her place and voted against them. When we reduced taxes so that more purpose-built rentals could be built, that member voted against it. When the Minister of Finance brought in a bill and forced the federal government to remove the HST and PST on purpose-built rentals, they voted against it.

You know what is causing the problems across the province of Ontario? Fifteen years of attitudes like that that put obstacles in the way of the people of the province of Ontario. That is what caused the problem—

Interjections.

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. As 2023 Small Business Month continues, thousands of entrepreneurs across this province and in my own riding are looking to our government for the resources they need to launch a successful small business.

There are many ways to earn a living in Ontario, but entrepreneurship will always be among the top. Owning your own business gives you independence as well as an opportunity to provide jobs for others in your community. That said, starting and growing is hard work. That's why it's important that our government continues to make critical investments that will support small businesses across Ontario.

Can the associate minister please share how our government is supporting Ontarians to successfully launch their own small business?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the member from Thornhill for the great question. During Small Business Week, I visited many great small businesses across our province together with our great caucus. I want to talk about one specific business in Orillia that I visited alongside the Premier and the member from Simcoe North.

Leadbetter Foods launched a butcher store in 1926 on Main Street in Markham. Through their hard work and determination, the Leadbetter family was able to grow that small business and have expanded their operations into processing and distribution. They now have two large facilities in Orillia and are continuing to provide good food and good jobs right here in Ontario. The Leadbetter family's journey and success is a testament to what small businesses can do in this great province.

Our government will continue to make record investments and help create the stable economic conditions needed for more Ontarians to start, operate and grow a successful small business right here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the associate minister for that great response. It's really great to hear about local success stories like this one, the one that the associate minister shared.

The previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, gave up on small businesses. They watched both businesses and jobs flee the province. Their agenda was higher taxes and more red tape.

But under the leadership of the Premier, Ontario is once again open for business. Can the associate minister please explain how our government is creating the conditions for small business owners to thrive once again?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member for the question. Because of the leadership of this Premier, we've worked tirelessly to lower taxes, reduce electricity costs and cut red tape. This has resulted in an estimated \$8 billion in cost savings and support for Ontario's employers, with \$3.6 billion of those savings impacting small businesses.

What would be beneficial is if the NDP understood that their job in this Legislature is not to unequivocally oppose everything that this government is doing, especially when it comes to supporting our small businesses in their constituencies. But unlike them, our government will continue to ensure that more entrepreneurs can enjoy the same success the Leadbetter family has had and make certain Ontario remains the best place to live, work, raise a family and own a business.

HOME CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Health. In April 2022, this government announced that it would finally be investing direct funding for home care. This money was supposed to go directly to improve access and quality home care because it was a mess. Quality home care should actually be a shared goal for all of us. It means more than one bath a week, for sure. However, in filing an FOI request, Seniors for Social Action Ontario has learned that at least seven of the provincial home and community care support services have returned millions of dollars to the Ministry of Health as of March 31, 2022.

When our seniors are crying out for better care, and some have become so despondent that they are contemplating

medical assistance in dying because that seems like the only option for them—these caring agencies didn't want to send this money back. They know what the need is.

1140

Can the Minister of Health explain why millions of dollars are being returned to the ministry when the need for home care in Ontario is so great?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: On one point we will agree, and that is, the need for home and community care continues to increase.

We will continue to invest. Of course, in our most recent budget, a billion dollars in home and community care—that, first, stabilized the health human resources who are working in the field, but more importantly, actually allows us to make sure that there is consistency in what we are providing to our patients, to individuals across Ontario in a very stable manner. We've been able to do this.

Frankly, I ask the member opposite why, yesterday, when we were improving and bringing forward legislation that would actually stabilize home and community care, the member opposite and the NDP voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We voted against Bill 135 because it's actually going to complicate an already chaotic system, and people in this province deserve so much better.

Almost \$78 million of home care funding was returned to the Ministry of Health—that's \$3.8 million from Toronto Central, \$24.3 million from Champlain, \$5.5 million from Waterloo Wellington. That's a lot of money that is needed in those systems.

A constituent of mine says that she was appalled to learn that the funds were not invested, after she spent years as a primary caregiver to her husband and she witnessed first-hand the lack of stable care, the different people coming to bathe and dress him. This caused great hardship for that family—and she is only one person who would have benefited from this \$5 million.

Speaker, to the Minister of Health: Will the government return the \$78 million, plus any additional funds as yet unreported by other offices, and truly invest in stable funding and fair wages so that people in Ontario can age in place with some dignity?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, it sounds like the member opposite and the NDP are saying that we shouldn't stabilize home and community care wages. It sounds like the member opposite is suggesting that there is no opportunity for improvement in the home and community care sector. It sounds like, frankly, the member opposite and the NDP are satisfied with the status quo; we are not.

We will move forward. We have a plan, and it's working.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to take a moment to introduce in this place some CJPAC interns who are visiting the Legislature today—Bayla Saltzman, Jonathan Alter—and staff member Rabbi Jennifer Gorman. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's technically not a point of order, but we welcome them.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph has a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I need to correct my record from yesterday in question period. I made a mistake, I will admit—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I did make a mistake. In the excitement around my possible name change, I mistakenly said, "The government took \$1.5 billion away from municipalities," but I should have said, "\$5.1 billion." I'd like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You are allowed to correct your record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, point of order.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I want to welcome a special visitor on behalf of the member from Nepean. Vincenzo Calla is from MPP MacLeod's office. He is the social media manager. I'd like to welcome him to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's technically not a point of order, but we welcome him to the House.

Point of order, the member for Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm happy to welcome our honoured guests from Vietnam, who arrived during question period. Please join me in welcoming an ambassador from Vietnam, H.E. Pham Quang Vinh; his lovely wife, Madam Nguyen Thi Nguyet Nga; the head of the Vietnam Trade Office in Canada, commercial councillor, Ms. Quynh Tran; the ambassador's secretary, Mr. Dao Nguyen. Joining them are Yvonne Chan, president of ACCE, as well as Karen Ng, executive director, ACCE. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It's technically not a point of order, but we welcome them to Queen's Park.

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SAULT STE. MARIE

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, I move that the House observe a moment of silence for the four victims of the unspeakable tragedy in Sault Ste. Marie yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You need to seek unanimous consent to move a motion.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I seek unanimous consent that the House observe a moment of silence for the four victims of the unspeakable tragedy in Sault Ste. Marie yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in memory of the children who lost their lives in Sault Ste. Marie. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members may take their seats.

DEFERRED VOTES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 65.

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

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

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

Mr. Kernaghan has moved private members' notice of motion number 65.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Andrew, Jill | Gates, Wayne | Sattler, Peggy |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Gélinas, France | Schreiner, Mike |
| Begum, Doly | Glover, Chris | Shamji, Adil |
| Blais, Stephen | Harden, Joel | Shaw, Sandy |
| Bourgouin, Guy | Hazell, Andrea | Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) |
| Bowman, Stephanie | Karpoche, Bhutita | Stiles, Marit |
| Brady, Bobbi Ann | Kernaghan, Terence | Taylor, Monique |
| Burch, Jeff | Mamakwa, Sol | Vanthof, John |
| Collard, Lucille | Mantha, Michael | Vaugeois, Lise |
| Fife, Catherine | McCrimmon, Karen | West, Jamie |
| Fraser, John | McMahon, Mary-Margaret | Wong-Tam, Kristyn |
| French, Jennifer K. | Pasma, Chandra | |

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Anand, Deepak | Hogarth, Christine | Riddell, Brian |
| Babikian, Aris | Jones, Sylvia | Sabawy, Sheref |
| Barnes, Patrice | Jones, Trevor | Sandhu, Amarjot |
| Bethlenfalvy, Peter | Jordan, John | Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh |
| Bouma, Will | Kanapathi, Logan | Sarrazin, Stéphane |
| Byers, Rick | Ke, Vincent | Saunderson, Brian |
| Calandra, Paul | Kerzner, Michael S. | Scott, Laurie |
| Cho, Raymond Sung Joon | Khanjin, Andrea | Skelly, Donna |
| Cho, Stan | Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia | Smith, Dave |
| Coe, Lorne | Learidi, Anthony | Smith, David |
| Crawford, Stephen | Lecce, Stephen | Smith, Graydon |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy | Lumsden, Neil | Smith, Laura |
| Dowie, Andrew | Martin, Robin | Smith, Todd |
| Downey, Doug | McCarthy, Todd J. | Surma, Kinga |
| Dunlop, Jill | Mulroney, Caroline | Tangri, Nina |
| Fedeli, Victor | Pang, Billy | Thanigasalam, Vijay |
| Flack, Rob | Parsa, Michael | Thompson, Lisa M. |

Ford, Michael D.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
Ghamari, Goldie
Gill, Parm
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Mike

Piccini, David
Pierre, Natalie
Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan
Rae, Matthew
Rickford, Greg

Tibollo, Michael A.
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 35; the nays are 68.

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

Motion negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'd just like to welcome Amanda Brisson here to the House today. She's coming from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Amanda was with Big Brothers Big Sisters for the longest time, so we've bonded over that with my restaurant. She's now a real estate agent. Thank you for coming, Amanda.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm so happy to introduce page EJ Wang—he's there—and his parents, Bill Wang and Jin Wen Liu from my beautiful riding of Markham–Thornhill. He also is going to a very popular high school in Markham called Middlefield Collegiate Institute. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to welcome the grade 5 class from Thorncliffe Park Public School who will be joining us in the gallery shortly. I'd also like to acknowledge my new legislative assistant, Joe Ramlochand, who's just on his second day today.

PETITIONS

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

M. Guy Bourguin: Je voudrais remercier Gaetan Gagnon de Mattice pour les signatures qu'il a ramassées pour une pétition intitulée « Pour améliorer l'entretien hivernal des routes du Nord.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Considérant que les routes 11 et 17 jouent un rôle essentiel dans le développement et la prospérité du nord de l'Ontario;

« Considérant que l'ancien gouvernement libéral a initié la privatisation de l'entretien des routes, et que le gouvernement conservateur actuel n'a pas su améliorer les conditions routières hivernales » dans le « nord de l'Ontario;

« Considérant que sur les routes du Nord, les taux de blessures et de décès par habitant sont le double de ces mêmes taux correspondant aux routes du sud de la province;

« Considérant que la classification utilisée actuellement par le ministère des Transports pour l'entretien ... des

routes » hivernales « a un impact négatif sur la sécurité des personnes qui empruntent les routes du Nord;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons » à « l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de mettre en oeuvre les mesures suivantes :

« —classifier toutes les autoroutes série 400, l'autoroute Queen Elizabeth, ainsi que les routes 11 et 17, comme des routes de catégorie 1;

« —exiger que la chaussée des routes de catégorie 1 soit complètement » déneigée « dans les huit heures suivant » la « chute de neige. »

Je supporte cette pétition. Je vais la signer et la remettre à—what's your name?—Bronwyn pour l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ONTARIO PLACE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like to submit this petition to the House.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario Place has been a cherished public space for over 50 years, providing joy, recreation and cultural experiences for Ontarians and tourists alike and holds cultural and historical significance as a landmark that symbolizes Ontario's commitment to innovation, sustainability and public engagement;

“Whereas redevelopment that includes a private, for-profit venture by an Austrian spa company prioritizes commercial interests over the needs and desires of the people of Ontario, and it is estimated that the cost to prepare the grounds for redevelopment and build a 2,000-car underground garage will cost approximately \$650 million;

“Whereas there are concerns of cronyism by Mark Lawson, Therme Group Canada's vice-president of comms and external relations, who was previously” the Premier's “deputy chief of staff;

“Whereas meaningful public consultations with diverse stakeholders have not been adequately conducted and the Ontario NDP has sent a letter of support for a public request to begin an investigation into a value-for-money and compliance audit with respect to proposed” development at “Ontario Place;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt any further development plans for Ontario Place, engage in meaningful and transparent public consultations to gather input and ideas for the future of Ontario Place, develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the revitalization of Ontario Place” in a sustainable “and accountable manner, with proper oversight, public input and adherence to democratic processes.”

I'm very proud to affix my signature to this petition and return it to the table with page Saniyah.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for her tireless advocacy on behalf of people living on

ODSP and OW. The petition is entitled, "To Raise Social Assistance Rates.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,308 for ODSP;

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

"Whereas small increases to ODSP have still left these citizens below the poverty line. Both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I support this petition very much. I will sign it and hand it over to Ananya.

LAND USE PLANNING

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Haldimand county has requested a minister's zoning order (MZO) to accelerate the development of a proposed city of 40,000 people on industrially zoned buffer land in the Nanticoke industrial park; and

"Whereas the housing development will grow the population of the Port Dover-Nanticoke area from approximately 7,000 to 47,000 people; and

"Whereas this development will have a significant impact on infrastructure such as roadways; and

"Whereas 40,000 people living in the Nanticoke industrial park buffer zone is a threat to area jobs in steelmaking, oil refining and the related trades;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to not grant the Haldimand county request for an MZO."

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition here that reads, "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

"Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior's health;

"Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

"Whereas Ontario's bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states 'every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs';

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

"Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario's long-term-care homes."

I'll be very happy to sign this and send it to page Saniyah to the Clerk's table.

HOUSING

Mr. Dave Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas our government is taking action to increase housing supply to make sure that everyone in Ontario can find housing based on their income and to provide certainty to municipalities to help more Ontarians find an affordable home based on their household income; and

"Whereas changing the definition of affordable housing units would qualify for development-related charge discounts and exemptions which will support the lower cost of building, purchasing, and renting affordable homes across Ontario; and

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"Whereas Ontario will be consulting on new regulations to streamline hearings and speed up decisions at the Ontario Land Tribunal that will help set service standards and prioritize those cases that would create the most housing; and

"Whereas Ontario is working closely with the federal government to increase the supply of purpose-built housing by removing federal and provincial portions of the HST that will make it easier and cheaper to build these important housings; and

"Whereas the province is seeing meaningful progress in its plan to build homes. Both 2021 and 2022 saw the most housing starts in over 30 years, with close to 100,000 homes built in each year. In 2022, Ontario recorded close to 15,000 purpose-built rental housing starts, the highest number on record.

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to take action tackling the housing supply crisis and making life more affordable for all Ontarians."

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Paxten.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm honoured to table this on behalf of my constituents in Parkdale–High Park. It is titled, "No More Gas Plant Expansion," and it reads, "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas our planet is undergoing significant warming with adverse consequences for health, for agriculture, for infrastructure and for our children's future;

"Whereas the costs of inaction are severe, such as extreme weather events causing flooding and drought;

"Whereas successive governments over the last two decades have expanded gas plants despite public push-back;

"Whereas Ontario must reduce our province's reliance on fossil fuels and instead invest in new renewable energy projects to ensure we meet our provincial climate targets;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop expanding Ontario's gas plants, end reliance on fossil fuels and invest rapidly in low-cost, proven renewable energy and conservation technologies."

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

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "All-Day, Two-Way (Including Weekend) GO Trains for Waterloo Region."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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 a lack of reliable transit options impedes quality of life and growth opportunities for commuters and businesses, including the tech sector, in Waterloo region;

"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 weekday and weekend train options; and

"Whereas dependable, efficient public transit seven days of the week is critical to the growth of our region;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide a firm funding commitment and a clear timeline for the delivery of frequent, all-day, two-way GO rail service along the full length of the vital Kitchener GO corridor."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Ananya.

HOME CARE

Mr. Dave Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is taking the next step to better connect and coordinate people's home care services through Ontario health teams; and

"Whereas the province has already approved 57 teams across the province that will help people experience easier transitions from one provider to another, with one patient record and one care plan being shared; and

"Whereas the government is investing over \$128 million to provide OHTs with \$2.2 million over three years to better coordinate people's care. This would establish a new single organization called Ontario Health atHome that will coordinate all home care services across the province through the Ontario health teams; and

"Whereas instead of navigating a complex system and waiting for a call at home, Ontario health teams will be able to provide people with easy-to-understand home care plans and what care they will receive before going home from the hospital; and

"Whereas care coordinators would be assigned to work within OHTs and other front-line care settings to facilitate seamless transitions for people from hospital or primary care to home care services; and

"Whereas an initial group of 12 Ontario health teams have been chosen to accelerate their work to deliver home care in their local communities starting in 2025. With support from the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health, these teams will start by focusing on seamlessly transitioning people experiencing chronic disease through their primary care, hospital, and home and community care needs;

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to build on the progress this government has made on building a patient-centred home and community care system."

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Gurkaram.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled "Save Ontario Place.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario Place has been a cherished public space for over 50 years, providing ... recreation, and cultural experiences for Ontarians and tourists alike and holds cultural and historical significance as a landmark that symbolizes Ontario's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and public engagement;

"Whereas redevelopment that includes a private, profit-driven venture by an Austrian spa company, prioritizes commercial interests over the needs and desires of the people of Ontario and it is estimated that the cost to prepare the grounds for redevelopment and build a 2,000-car underground garage will cost approximately \$650 million; ...

"Whereas meaningful public consultations with diverse stakeholders have not been adequately conducted and the

Ontario NDP has sent a letter of support for a public request to begin an investigation into a value-for-money and compliance audit with respect to proposed redevelopment of Ontario Place;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt any further development plans for Ontario Place, engage in meaningful and transparent public consultations to gather input and ideas for the future of Ontario Place, develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the revitalization of Ontario Place that prioritizes environmental sustainability, accessibility, and inclusivity, and ensure that any future development of Ontario Place is carried out in a transparent and accountable manner, with proper oversight, public input, and adherence to democratic processes.”

I fully endorse this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to page Beckett to take to the table. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1105954 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive 1105954 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1105954 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive 1105954 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

LEAGUE TECHNIQUE INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Bowman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive League Technique Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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LEAGUE TECHNIQUE INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Bowman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive League Technique Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

ICE HOCKEY RESOURCES LTD. ACT, 2023

Mr. Glover moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Ice Hockey Resources Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

ICE HOCKEY RESOURCES LTD. ACT, 2023

Mr. Glover moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Ice Hockey Resources Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

PARRINGTON'S FOOD MARKET LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Brady moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act to revive Parrington's Food Market Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

PARRINGTON'S FOOD MARKET LIMITED ACT, 2023

Ms. Brady moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act to revive Parrington's Food Market Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Third reading agreed to.

TAXATION IMPOSITION

Mr. Trevor Jones: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on grocery items.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent–Leamington, has moved private members' notice of motion number 69.

Expand, please.

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's a privilege to rise in the House today to speak to motion 69, which calls on the federal government to take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on grocery items.

The delivery of every single consumer good in the province, particularly fresh and processed food we eat, is being affected by the worst tax this country has ever witnessed—a tax that is harmful to hard-working Canadian families, individuals, farmers and businesses and provides no value other than to take money from families. This is the carbon tax.

The carbon tax is a fee imposed on the carbon content of fuels, including transportation and energy costs, which are ultimately passed along through the supply chain directly to every consumer, impacting every aspect of our daily lives. Although this costly carbon tax negatively affects consumer spending power by raising the prices on a wide range of goods we purchase every day, its impact on the agri-food sector is even more dramatic because it raises the real costs of essential grocery items that we depend on for sustenance.

Since the introduction of this carbon tax, total production costs for our farmers, greenhouse growers and food processors have risen substantially. In this scenario, the carbon tax itself has increased the cost of growing, producing and delivering products and services faster than the revenue generated for the products and services being created, which results in shrinking profit margins or margin compression. To survive and remain viable, food producers cannot simply absorb the tremendous costs associated with this tax and must rely on increased market prices to maintain any relative viability or profitability. Simply stated, as the cost of production increases with the implementation of this carbon tax, prices to the consumer increase proportionally. If they don't, the very food production systems we rely on for our survival risk failure.

As a government, it's critical to protect and preserve the viability of our farms and our food producers and their supply chains while ensuring an adequate, affordable, wide range of healthy products that are available year-round without interruption to maintain basic human health. This is precisely why this motion today is so important: The health of every Ontarian depends on our food supply and the ability to access it.

The effects of the carbon tax start with the farmer. For example, last year, a Durham-region-area chicken farmer would have seen an increase of 26% on their gas bill. A midwestern Ontario pig farmer would've seen a 38% increase. The cost of this gas, which is essential to heat the very barns that house and protect our livestock, rose dramatically and immediately after the carbon tax was introduced, shrinking the already slim profit margins of these farming groups which caused the cost of goods that each produced to increase proportionally—costs which are ultimately passed on to the consumer.

Processors also saw substantial increases in their real costs, as their fuel costs rose by 14 to 17 cents or greater, effectively increasing transportation costs immediately.

Understandably, the costs of these finished goods were also passed on to the consumer. The carbon tax didn't discriminate as it added pressures and reduced the profitability and the very viability of businesses big and small. These costs and the overall impact must also be measured in broader terms that include the imports of inputs used in Ontario agri-food production all the way to the exports of fresh and finished goods intra- and extra-provincially.

In a study recently completed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they found over 56% of all businesses would need to increase their prices immediately due to direct pressures from the carbon tax. In the very same study, CFIB found that of the \$8 billion small businesses will pay in carbon taxes, only a paltry \$35 million will actually come back as some form of a credit in a program—\$35 million as opposed to \$8 billion. These factors contributed to the overall 11.4% increase in the overall grocery prices that we all experienced in 2022 to 2023. Consequently, the carbon tax disproportionately affects lower-income earners.

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The added tax results in more money going to our bills, and less towards nutritious foods. The reality is, the current fiscal situation under the carbon tax forces farmers, processors and grocers across the value chain to increase their prices because of one unnecessary tax.

The carbon tax is harmful to the health, wellness and progress of Ontarians by adding an artificial barrier to the affordability of items considered to be essential to all. Our government is strongly opposed to the federal government's costly carbon tax and we will fight to lower prices for all of Ontario.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, I'm proud to represent a wide range of hard-working food producers including farmers, greenhouse growers and food processors. The agri-food sector in Chatham-Kent–Leamington alone employs 24,000 people who support 2,000 farms and over 2,000 acres of protected greenhouses, growing sustainable fresh fruit and vegetables for consumers across Ontario and North America year-round. Further, this essential industry directly and indirectly supports thousands of other good-paying, stable careers in the trades, technology and transportation sectors.

My home community of Leamington is host to over 60% of Ontario's controlled-environment agriculture and represents a concentration of the highest high-tech growing capability anywhere in North America. It's often referred to as the Silicon Valley of the north, producing fresh fruits and vegetables. I frequently hear from my constituents who share their serious concerns about the negative impacts of this carbon tax and what it does to impact their budgets and their daily lives.

In 2022 alone, Ontario's greenhouse growers were assessed and forced to pay an additional \$12 million under the federal carbon tax regime, resulting in tax of approximately \$3,400 per acre on fresh fruits and vegetables. The protected farming sector has long been dedicated to innovative and sustainable farming practices that dramatically reduce their carbon footprint, and recycling

of water and recycling of nutrients while growing the trusted healthy fruits and vegetables we can enjoy and be proud of year-round, all while dramatically reducing food waste.

By year 10 of the carbon tax, 2030, one acre of greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables will have incurred taxes of almost \$90,000. This means that a small family-run 15-acre farm that produces Ontario tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers or strawberries will have paid \$1.3 million in carbon taxes. This is money taken from the hands and the pockets of hard-working Ontario farm families that otherwise would have invested in expansions, technology, innovation and on-farm practices that optimize sustainability and, of course, lost potential in creating more upskilled jobs and more trusted Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables.

Organizations like the OGVG, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, prioritize year-round efficient production, which yields up to 15 times more produce per acre of production when compared to traditional field farms, while maintaining world-leading, sustainable on-farm practices such as carbon dioxide recapture, natural pollination, nutrient management and water conservation. Why are our food producers being punished with carbon taxes when they are already taking steps to ensure maximum efficiency, environmental stewardship and sustainability?

I have also consulted extensively with other leaders, who have said the following: “Natural gas is a necessary input required to produce fresh, nutritious, and affordable vegetables in our greenhouses all year long. The importance of a full exemption on carbon tax cannot be understated as our family farms continue to be penalized for their efforts in strengthening domestic food,” a system that we want to ensure maintains Ontario-grown food is on the shelves without interruption. “We applaud the actions taken by the provincial government to support agriculture in Ontario. An exemption from this tax will enable additional investment in the sector to enhance cutting-edge, innovative, sustainable technologies...” So says George Gilvesy, farmer, business leader and chair of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers.

Another greenhouse grower shared the effects of the carbon tax on their family’s monthly gas bills. In March of this year, their farm paid \$40,000 for their natural gas bill; \$11,000 of that went to the carbon tax. At the same farm, in June 2023 they paid \$7,000 towards the carbon tax alone. This year, these farmers will pay \$150,000 of needless carbon taxes that should be going to their investment.

To strengthen supply chains and reduce the mileage that food travels from farm to table means growing sustainably, closer to markets, closer to our homes and year-round. This allows Ontario families to see healthy, nutritious greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables on our store shelves throughout the year while reducing the reliance on distant growing regions that require sometimes thousands of miles of food travel before they reach our stores.

I’ve also asked our colleagues from Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association how the carbon tax is

affecting their members, and they promptly shared the following: “The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association continues to be deeply concerned about the affordability of food in Canada. It is crucial that government work with the industry to help reduce costs along the entire food value chain, including at the farm level. Ontario fruit and vegetable” growers “are facing historically high production costs as a result of the carbon tax applied to fuels for heating of greenhouses, packing facilities, and warehouses,” the very same places we’re “required to grow and store” our “quality produce” sustainably. “The carbon tax increases the cost of transporting inputs like seed, fertilizer and packaging, and the cost to transport fruits and vegetables to market. These additional costs ultimately increase the cost of food to consumers, hinders domestic food production, and reduces the financial stability of farmers who compete against products imported from countries where there is no price on carbon. The OFVGA appreciates efforts by the Ontario government to identify ways to remove the burden of the carbon tax on the fruit and vegetable supply chain.”

The costly carbon tax only builds on the increasing costs on fuel and fertilizer that farmers are facing. This is just the first stop on the food supply chain. Costs are carried through, ending with increasingly inaccessible prices for a wide range of grocery items for all of Ontario’s consumers.

Ontario’s agricultural sector is a multi-billion-dollar industry, a crucial pillar to our economy. It’s essential we stand up and fight for this sector. It’s essential that we work together in a unified voice to ensure its continual long-term growth and success.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer states that the carbon tax will cost farmers an added \$108 million per year by 2030. Our government vehemently opposes the carbon tax because we want to support local farmers and local producers, the very people who ensure that we have the food that feeds North America. This is why our government has introduced the Grow Ontario Strategy, a road map to boost Ontario-grown agri-food production to strengthen our supply chains and to grow our economy. Grow Ontario focuses on strengthening supply chains and keeping more Ontario food available on our grocery shelves.

Removing the carbon tax from grocery items would reduce the constraints on farmers and small businesses and the consumer. This government is committed to keeping costs down and putting money back in the pockets of Ontarians. Our government has introduced several tax credits to provide relief to workers and families, including the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit; Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses, another tax credit to ensure that working families can support child care expenses; and the Seniors’ Home Safety Tax Credit that keeps seniors in their homes that are safer and more accessible.

Our government is committed to lowering prices for all of Ontario wherever we can, and we need the federal government to come onside. Local producers must be

competitive in the global marketplace. It's imperative that they're able to balance economic viability with sustainability and environmental responsibility. The costs associated with the carbon tax hit farmers and growers directly, which means it will directly impact consumers.

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The carbon tax is set to increase \$15 each year per unit. Currently, the rate stands at \$65 per tonne. This number will increase to \$95 by 2025 and \$170 by 2030. The carbon tax affects the very profitability of companies, big and small, specifically companies in the agri-food industry. Companies struggle each day to stay competitive and viable in a global market. The Canadian Energy Centre estimates Ontario's primary agriculture production costs will increase by 4% or more due to the carbon tax alone.

Madam Speaker, our government seeks to grow Ontario businesses, not hinder their ability to compete on the global scale. The federal government continues to create barriers for businesses and to disincentivize Ontario producers.

When Ontario businesses grow, Ontario grows. As Ontario exports fresh products, our GDP grows; Ontario families can grow. We must support our producers as they grapple with these rising costs to ensure they can remain viable and competitive, preserving our vital food supply chains.

Removing the carbon tax from grocery items is a very simple solution to reduce overall grocery costs while not punishing our producers. To quote two very well-known and venerable academics and economists in our public space, Mr. Stuart Smyth, an associate professor of agricultural economics at the University of Saskatchewan, stands firmly by this point and emphasizes that cutting the federal carbon tax for food processors and transporters would offer immediate relief at the grocery store for our consumers. Affordability at the grocery store has an easy solution: Cut the carbon tax.

Further to this point, Professor Sylvain Charlebois from Dalhousie University's agri-food lab testified to the parliamentary committee on finance recommending the carbon tax directly impacts food supply and Canadians need relief at the grocery store.

Experts from across Canada, like Professors Smyth and Charlebois are calling on the federal government to eliminate the carbon tax. It's a simple solution to add affordability for all of Ontario.

As I previously mentioned, producers in the greenhouse sector are investing in renewable energy sources, reducing waste, reducing food waste, reusing water and focusing on carbon dioxide recapture. These innovations are happening right now in our communities. These innovations are designed to reduce their carbon footprint and ensure environmental responsibility. These innovations also ensure the long-term sustainability of our food supply in the agri-food sector. If producers did not have the ability to innovate, to invest, to grow and to grow our food, then we're at risk.

Speaker, it's simple. The carbon tax hurts Ontario. It places an unfair burden on producers. It forces small busi-

nesses to increase prices, making them less competitive and leads to higher grocery costs, which disproportionately affects all of Ontario, especially lower-income families.

Our government has fought back against the federal carbon tax because we understand it negatively impacts all of Ontario. In a time of high inflation and affordability issues, let's not tax Ontarians more. Let's put money back in their pockets. Let's axe the carbon tax.

We cannot remain silent so, as a House, let's remain unified and remove the carbon tax which allows farmers, food processors and our families relief from these higher, unnecessary costs. Say no to the carbon tax and yes to growing good things in Ontario.

I look forward to the passing of this motion. I look forward to your debate and your contributions to this very important component to relieve these costs in all of our everyday lives.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an interesting debate that we have before the House today. First of all, we, as a party, have no problem supporting a motion because there is no federal carbon tax on groceries. This is a fact. We all know this.

The member is demanding that the federal government maintain the status quo, which is no tax on groceries. It's a bizarre motion, poorly written. But okay, fine—no carbon tax on groceries, just like what exists already. We are all agreed.

However, cost-of-living pressures in the province of Ontario are very real, food insecurity is very real, housing insecurity is very real—and we are bringing those voices to this debate today.

It is possible that the member and the government are referring to a carbon tax on the inputs that go into groceries, like the fuels used by industrial agricultural producers. That's not what the motion actually says, however, but maybe that's what the member means. It would make more sense. But there is no federal carbon tax on industrial agricultural producers; there is, however, a provincial carbon tax—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's right. The province, not the federal government, charges a carbon tax on grain and oilseed mills, on sugar manufacturers, on fruit and vegetable processors, on milk processors, on meat processors, on industrial bakeries, on beverage manufacturing. It is well within the purview of the provincial government to take action on these cost pressures. The province is responsible for that carbon tax, so why is this member, why is this government, pointing their fingers at the federal government? This motion makes no sense on the surface.

I will also give a bit of a history lesson on how we got here. You'll remember, in 2018, when this government first took their seats, one of the first things they did was promise to remove the carbon tax. The implementation of the carbon tax in Ontario faced significant challenges and

changes. Prior to the carbon tax, we had a cap-and-trade agreement between Quebec and California. In 2018, this government announced its intention to repeal the carbon tax. This was a big deal. There have been a lot of big deals—you could be forgiven to be lost in the transgressions and the scandals and the walk-backs. I remember it very distinctly. This was a very heated debate in this House, and the decision sparked many views on carbon pricing—and those who saw it as a burden on businesses.

In response to the province's repeal of the carbon tax and going to court—the government's opposition to the carbon tax—the federal government imposed its own carbon-pricing system on Ontario. This system, known as the federal backstop, came into effect in April 2019. Under the federal backstop, a price on carbon emissions was applied to fossil fuels such as gasoline, diesel, natural gas and coal.

In June 2019, the Ontario government launched a legal challenge against the federal carbon pricing. You'll all remember this. There was a big hullabaloo. There were stickers on gas stations that didn't stick. This challenge made its way to the Supreme Court of Canada, which heard arguments in September 2020, but in 2021, they ruled it was constitutional to have a carbon-pricing mechanism across this country, including in Ontario. That is why we have the Ford carbon tax in Ontario.

To go back to the motion—I just think it's important context, because we had cap-and-trade. There are a lot of benefits to businesses, to consumers, and reduction in greenhouse gases, when you talk about cap-and-trade. It's a very clear mechanism to address pollution, to price pollution, to reduce greenhouse gases, to strengthen the economy—the reinvestment in innovation, back to businesses. It's a very clear pathway. Ontario does not have that right now, thanks to this government.

It is worthy to note that the province is expected to collect billions in revenues from the provincial carbon tax between now and 2030. This is an important piece of the conversation; I truly don't want it to get lost. Millions of that revenue will come from food-related industries.

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Maybe, just maybe, the province should exempt food-related industries from its carbon tax and shift some of the burden to other industries, high-polluting industries. It's quite possible. You have a majority government. You can do this. It has the power to effect positive change for those sectors, but the member isn't proposing this. He apparently wants his own government's carbon tax on food-related industries, while asking the federal government to remove its non-existent carbon tax on groceries. It truly doesn't make any sense.

This place, over the years—I've only been here for 11 years; there are moments when theatre and drama are called to our attention, but this is the theatre of the absurd. All the revenues from the provincial carbon tax on food-related industries are flowing into general revenues. That's where the money is going. So if you follow the money here at Queen's Park, you will see that the government is generating a fair amount of revenue from the provincial carbon tax.

Here's an idea: Why doesn't the government use some of this revenue to help food-related industries update their systems and become carbon-free, like the greenhouse sector? We meet with the greenhouse sector as well. They want to be part of the solution. They need a partner in government to get there. You have the revenue directly from them; feed it back to that sector, reduce greenhouse gases, make it more streamlined and really support the sector. If the government did that, we would be fully in support of that. But this would also reduce their carbon footprint, save them money and potentially reduce the price of their products. So if you're going to get to the heart of the matter of the high cost of food, let's do the full circle. Let's have a holistic approach to this.

The province can totally do this, and I do suspect that there are some members on that side of the House who truly want to get this done, but that is not what we have before us in this motion. The government wants to keep the provincial carbon tax revenues to help pay for publicly funded parking garages for private luxury spas, and fight in court to avoid disclosing records related to the greenbelt grab, including the records on the Premier's personal phone, where he's clearly doing government business. This is truly about priorities, and about restoring some integrity and ethics back into this place.

It's important to note that nothing that the government is doing currently will reduce the cost of groceries, even though all of us agree—and you only have to go to a grocery store these days to find out how expensive everything is. I'm not sure how much the provincial carbon tax is affecting everybody—certainly some of the clients of this government are not really impacted by that—but a bigger problem seems to be price-gouging by the giant grocery monopolies. These are the guys who were caught a few years ago—you'll remember this well. They were found criminally conspiring to fix the price of bread. This is a serious issue in this province.

If you're wondering who might be responsible for high grocery prices, I think the bread-price-fixing conspirators would be a prime suspect. In fact, they have just all been recalled back to the federal Parliament, because they made a commitment back in spring when they appeared before the finance committee. They said they were going to bring back a plan to reduce their prices. Nothing has come from them. There are no deliverables. There are no actions. Just like some delinquent students, they've been called back to the principal's office to report on their lack of progress. This is a serious issue. It's a federal issue, but it certainly is something that we should all be supporting the federal government on, to hold those grocery chains to account.

I remember how during the pandemic, when people were struggling, their profit margins skyrocketed, as people were seriously being hurt in this province. They jacked up the price of food and other essentials. Shareholder profits went up. Executive pay went up. The government passed an emergency anti-gouging law, but then never enforced it. This is well within your purview to address price gouging. This is something we could work on together across party lines, 100%. Bring it here tomorrow—

Mr. John Vanthof: Didn't the Premier promise to do something like that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, he did promise, but they haven't enforced it.

So the government has the power to crack down on price gouging by the grocery monopolies, but the member isn't proposing this today, and the government certainly doesn't seem to have any problem with the price gouging of these certain grocery store chains.

But pointing the finger at the federal government on a carbon tax on groceries that does not exist is not helpful. I think that's the key piece here. It's just not helpful to address the very real issue of high grocery prices. In fact, the government is actually helping one grocery corporation expand into privatized health care. Now, this is interesting, right? There's an acknowledged problem with price gouging; they've got the market cornered on groceries. They hold all the cards, Madam Speaker. But there is no attempt on behalf of the provincial government to balance that relationship out and address price gouging.

Maple, a Loblaw-funded virtual care business, charges \$69 per doctor's visit. It is illegal to charge for medically necessary care in Ontario, but it is happening anyway and it's this government that is not doing anything about these fees. If you want to help people with their cost of living—going to a doctor should not cost you \$69. In fact, this was the promise by the Premier: that you will never have to use your credit card. Well, these people who are going to Maple, a Loblaw-funded virtual care business, are using their credit card, not their health card. And this is a cost pressure that is impacting many Ontarians. Ontarians should only need an OHIP card to pay for health care, not a credit card.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Hansard caught you going off-topic.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know my friend over there from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke agrees with me.

And so we've already said the government doesn't seem to care about Loblaws charging fees for health care, and it certainly doesn't care about the grocery price gouging. Instead, it is pointing fingers once again at the federal government, which actually is now happening more and more in this House.

Let's just move over to farmers, because we've spoken to a lot of farmers. We have a very strong agricultural critic in our caucus. We've spent a lot of time with speaking with farmers around the kitchen table and talking about their cost pressures and the reality that they face in a very competitive market. Ontario farmers are really, really upset with this government right now. They really are mad. The government keeps launching wave after wave of a tax on farmland and food security, MZOs, the greenbelt scandal, urban boundary expansions, allowing farms to be split in three and fragmented, gutting conservation authorities and wetland protections, increasing the risk of flooding and putting soil and water at risk. This government is actively working against farmers in Ontario. I mean, I've never seen anything like it, when you sit down with a farmer and they just say, "What is going on at

Queen's Park? Who is driving the bus?" Because we've now seen this government have to backtrack and reverse on so many of your policy initiatives, and nobody—nobody—in this province believes that you were doing it to increase housing.

Interjection: Not a soul.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not a soul.

So, all of these measures, which are actively working against farming, working against agricultural productivity, moving those farms further and further away from city centres—not in the best interest, Madam Speaker.

The government could have listened to its own Housing Affordability Task Force and made it easier to build homes within the existing urban boundaries. This would have been something that is a great idea, quite honestly. We all want it. We know that's where people want to live. This narrative that has been espoused by the Minister of Municipal Affairs—the new one, the government House leader—that immigrants want to live out on the greenbelt: Immigrants who are coming to this country have enough challenges. They need to be close to transit, close to employment and close to education, and that's what they've told us. So that informed our argument on many fronts.

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Protecting the greenbelt and irreplaceable farmland is clearly not a priority. Instead, the government ignored the vast majority of the task force's recommendations, wasted a year giving preferential treatment to favoured speculators, enriching them by billions while putting food and farms at risk. It is hard to be a farmer in Ontario, and this government keeps making it more difficult, disrespecting the work that they do.

After the vice-president of OFA warned that government policies were sacrificing "some of the finest and most productive farmland in the province" to Hamilton's urban boundary expansion—our members fought hard against that—the other member in Hamilton said, "It isn't being farmed."

If Ontario farmers can't make a living, it means higher food prices. But this motion won't do anything to stop this government's relentless attacks.

Really, that entire process has now clearly been articulated.

Now we have a criminal investigation from the RCMP. I was here when the OPP were investigating the Liberal Party on several fronts; I think at one point, there were four active OPP investigations—but an RCMP criminal investigation is a place that this Legislature has never been before. So it is precedent-setting that this government's policies and actions run counter to the public interest. It is our job, as the official opposition, to hold the government to account and to make sure that every dollar that is directed from this place—that that return on investment goes to the people we're elected to serve.

I hope that the government members are listening. I hope that you are as interested as we are in addressing the price gouging that's happening in our grocery stores; the preferential treatment to some of these large grocery

chains, as I mentioned with Maple—and their expansion into privatized health care is not in the best interest of the people we're elected to serve.

So here we are debating a motion that will not address those cost pressures. While the government has well within your own purview, your responsibility, maybe even your mandate letters—we don't know; they're still in court. But if that were to happen and we were to look at your mandate letters, I hope that there would be some common ground, where we would be addressing the increased costs of basic necessities.

We also regard health care as a basic necessity.

We also regard housing as a basic necessity. When the Minister of Municipal Affairs stands in his place and says, "We must address the need for more rental properties"—how could you say that with a straight face, when just as many people are getting renocted from those rental spaces?

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And demovicted.

It is heartbreaking to see what we saw here in the Legislature this morning—to have a very callous response to a 92-year-old woman being evicted.

There is so much more that this government can be doing to make the lives of Ontarians better, not more difficult.

As I said, there is no carbon tax on groceries, so the government is going to be sending a motion to the federal government to ask them to do something that they can't do.

But the provincial government, the Ford government, can invest the carbon taxes that you are collecting on the food agri-business, on the agri-industrial sector, and put that money back to those stakeholders. They're looking for a partner to reduce their greenhouse gases. They're looking to this government to show some leadership on this front, and if you were to do that in a very strategic and targeted way, we would be very supportive of that.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and speak to motion 69 and understand the government's genuine concern for people by writing this two-sentence motion asking somebody else to do something. In my opinion, maybe it's worth the paper that it's written on, because it's in a big book here right now. But honestly, folks, really?

First of all, you know how impractical what you are suggesting is. You know that it's neutral. It's great politics—sounds good—but when you start digging in, not so good. If you really were concerned about affordability, you would return rent control. People can't afford to pay their rent. And when they do pay their rent, they can't afford to buy their food, carbon tax or not, whatever you're trying to do.

You know it's not going to work, but you do like to say, "Hey, we'd like you to do something. We'd like you, this government over here, to do this," or, "It's their fault," or, "They did this thing." Five and a half years, no responsibility for anything—incredible.

But here, I want to help you. I do. I want to help you. Here's how you could help: return rent control. Make sure people have enough money to buy their groceries. That would really help, and you can do that. The minister can do that. We talked about that this morning. The member from Scarborough–Guildwood mentioned that.

If you can't do that, if you're unwilling to do that, why don't you just raise social assistance rates? The people who are most impacted by grocery price increases—I spent 22 years in the grocery business. I go into grocery stores all the time. It's hard, so you're right in that part of it. But the action you're suggesting is, let's be clear, abdicating any responsibility.

If you can't do that, if you can't do rent control and raise social assistance rates, let's try something else maybe a little easier—a little easier for the government to swallow, apparently. That's not a food joke but it just ended up happening. What about the Ontario Child Benefit? One year ago, we said you need to raise the Ontario Child Benefit. For those families—and there are a lot of families that are captured by that—it would help them pay for groceries. Fifty, 100 bucks a month is going to help.

You could've done that. You've done nothing. You didn't even entertain it. Why not? I don't understand. Given your genuine, deep, abiding concern with people's ability to buy their groceries, I just can't understand why you haven't increased the Ontario Child Benefit. It's something I think we could all agree on. I think it would be fair. But you know what? Now's our opportunity. We have an opportunity here today. You have an opportunity here today.

Speaker, I would like that the motion be amended by adding at the end: "And that, the government of Ontario, move to raise the Ontario child tax benefit."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The motion that has been brought forward is out of order as it does not tie into the debate that's on the floor.

Mr. John Fraser: You know what? All hope is not lost. I just want you to know, you'll still have an opportunity.

Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for this motion to be considered by the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The motion is on the floor. We ask for unanimous consent for the motion to be added. I heard a no.

We're back to the debate.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we know who said no. You had the opportunity. You had the chance here today maybe not to pass it but to debate it, guys. Come on. It's a simple solution that you can do, that this government can do, that this Premier can do, but you didn't do it. It was easy.

1410

As a matter of fact, it was shorter than your motion. It was shorter. But I'm going to tell you one thing: This motion is worth way more than the paper that it's written on. And it's important to families and it's a serious thing. I know I'm chiding you and I know I'm smiling, but it's serious. Think about this—think about this when you go back to caucus, think about this when you go back to cabinet. Think about it.

Okay, let's try for something else. You can throw me an idea from behind or over there if you'd like, I'm good. Hey, why not give a tax credit to families who are trying to put their kids in extracurricular sports, or something after school so they'll have a bit more money to pay for the groceries because they're trying to make sure that their kids have the activities that they need to be healthy, and they can have the food to be healthy. Why not that?

I'm not going to put forward another amendment on that because I want you to remember the last amendment. I want you to remember the last amendment, because you can do that. You can do that in the fall economic statement. You've got a couple of days to figure it out. It's going to help a heck of a lot of families.

Okay, so, it's clear, to me anyway, that it doesn't look like the government wants to take any real action, any kind of meaningful thing that they can do. They don't want to pick up a hammer or a screwdriver or anything—to do anything to help families with their grocery prices. I spent 22 years in the grocery business. I know how it works.

If they're so concerned about grocery prices—I mean we saw the bread-fixing thing. We know that happened, and it wasn't just bread. There's more stuff in there. I go into a lot of grocery stores because I like to, because I love what I used to do, so I know how the prices are. So I really don't understand why the Premier, the Premier for the people, the little guy, isn't running to write—well, actually, if he started with writing, I think there's too much letter-writing and motion-writing going on here—but if he wrote the grocery CEOs and said, “Get your act together. Stop putting it to the people of Ontario. Stop doing the things that you're doing and profit-taking and think about what's happening to families right now.”

Maybe he could write a letter to the Competition Bureau, maybe he could dig a little deeper. But you know, the stuff on the surface, that's so easy. Writing a 12-word motion that says, “Hey, you, over there. You need to fix this thing, and we're not even going to tell you how to do it.” With all due respect to the member, I understand the politics and I understand why you're doing it, but you know what? It ain't putting food on anybody's table. Whether it passes or whether you write the letters that you write—you know, write the Governor of the Bank of Canada—tell him to do something and he's going to totally ignore you. Come on, guys, this is a serious place. We need serious motions. We need serious things like raising the Ontario Child Benefit.

So, think about this, if you leave this debate today, if there's only one thing you remember, one single thing is that if you raise the Ontario Child Benefit, you'll be putting food in front of children right away, not writing a motion that is essentially meaningless.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's a great pleasure to rise to speak to this motion about the government abdicating its responsibility to do anything whatsoever to assist families in their desperate time of need during this economic crisis.

As we know, this government has failed for the last five years—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Sorry; the member from Orléans, my apologies. The member from Ottawa South did not say he was sharing his time.

We'll recognize the member from—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Mississauga Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mississauga Centre.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: The best riding in all of Ontario.

Mr. Mike Harris: Second-best.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: No, no—the best.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to join my colleague the deputy House leader in speaking to his motion 69: that the government of Canada should take immediate action to end the carbon tax on grocery items.

In 2018, when I first ran for political office at the age of 28, I served as an emergency room nurse at Etobicoke General Hospital, and I saw first-hand the devastation caused by the Wynne Liberals. Let's not forget hallway health care, with vulnerable people being underserved and not properly cared for, and the opioid crisis—not having life-saving naloxone within reach for those suffering from substance addiction. I also heard from friends and family that life was getting too expensive in Mississauga. Everything was going up—food, gas, utilities. Ontario was their home, and they didn't want to leave. I wanted to help make this province a world-class place to work, play and raise a family.

And to this day, I get emails and calls from constituents sharing how the price of gas and food has reached unfathomable levels.

I was elected by the people, and I'm honoured to serve for the people—and that includes fighting daily to keep Ontario affordable for all.

This is why our government has always been a steadfast opponent of the federal government's carbon tax. We were re-elected to get it done. And we have been cutting taxes, reducing red tape, and we've brought hundreds of thousands of jobs back to Ontario.

Last year, we passed Bill 23, which, among many things, eliminated development charges for non-profit and affordable housing. People regularly call my constituency office asking for help with housing. This is, I think, the number one issue that all Ontarians are facing. When it comes to vulnerable Ontarians, we do not believe affordable housing providers should be charged massive and unsustainable fees.

J'ai été élue par le peuple, et j'ai l'honneur de servir le peuple, ce qui implique de lutter quotidiennement pour que l'Ontario reste abordable pour tous. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement a toujours été un opposant résolu à la taxe carbone du gouvernement de Justin Trudeau, le gouvernement fédéral. Nous avons été réélus pour faire ce qu'il fallait, et nous avons réduit les impôts et la bureaucratie. Nous avons ramené des centaines de milliers d'emplois en Ontario.

À la fin de l'année dernière, nous avons adopté le projet de loi 23, qui, entre autres choses, a supprimé les redevances

d'aménagement pour les logements à but non lucratif et abordables. Les gens appellent régulièrement mon bureau de circonscription pour demander de l'aide en matière de logement. On sait qu'on a une crise de logement. Lorsqu'il s'agit d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens vulnérables, nous ne pensons pas que les fournisseurs de logements abordables devraient se voir imposer des frais massifs et insoutenables.

We increased the eligibility for the Low-income Workers Tax Credit to \$50,000 for individuals and \$82,000 for families, to provide well-deserved relief for hard-working Ontario families.

Our government also offered further tax relief through the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit, the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit, the Ontario CARE tax credit, and more.

Madam Speaker, I have many seniors living in my riding—at Camille's Place, at Aghabi Place—from different walks of life, different ethnicities, and they all agree that for seniors who live on a fixed income, the price of food is becoming out of reach. We all know that the carbon tax is causing everything to go up, but especially these items.

I have a price comparison of one specific food item: ground beef. Back in 2019, before the carbon tax was introduced, 750 grams of ground beef cost \$2; after the carbon tax was introduced, and today, that same 750 grams of ground beef costs \$4.89—that's more than double.

So we really need to do everything we can to ensure that the price of food items that our seniors and all Ontarians rely on is maintained at a level that is affordable for all.

Madam Speaker, we eliminated licence plate renewal fees and plate stickers.

We removed tolls on Highways 412 and 418, so people in southern Ontario can have a painless commute to work.

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Nous avons porté l'admissibilité au crédit d'impôt pour les travailleurs à faible revenu à 50 000 pour les particuliers et à 82 000 pour les familles, afin d'offrir un allègement bien mérité aux Ontariennes et Ontariens qui travaillent dur.

Notre gouvernement a également offert d'autres allègements fiscaux grâce au crédit d'impôt pour la sécurité domiciliaire des personnes âgées, au crédit d'impôt pour la formation professionnelle en Ontario, au crédit d'impôt « CARE » de l'Ontario, et plus encore.

Nous avons éliminé les frais de renouvellement des plaques d'immatriculation et les vignettes. Nous avons supprimé les péages sur les autoroutes 412 et 418, afin que les habitants du sud de l'Ontario puissent se rendre au travail sans problème.

Lastly, we extended the gas tax cut, which freezes the tax on gas and diesel at nine cents per litre. This is a much-needed relief for so many families. I think all of us probably commute to Queen's Park every day, and we can see the difference that this particular action of our government to freeze the gas tax makes on our wallets and on the wallets of all Ontarians. Madam Speaker, I could go on and on.

While our government is working hard to make life affordable, Prime Minister Trudeau continues to be out of

touch with the struggles of everyday Ontarians. Not everyone was brought up on Sussex Drive, so I can imagine why maybe the Prime Minister struggles to really put himself in the shoes of hard-working moms and dads in the province of Ontario.

The carbon tax is, in essence, a tax on everything: your groceries, your gas, heating your home and more. It's even a tax on fun stuff. On a night out, your food order, your pint of beer, your Uber ride—all these things have gone up since carbon pricing was implemented in 2019 by the Trudeau Liberals. At a time when inflation is at record-breaking levels and grocery prices are rising, this is the last thing Ontarians need in their lives.

In fact, Madam Speaker, even the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the carbon tax will cost Canadian households more than they will ever get back. They reported that it will cost the average household between \$402 and \$847, even after the rebates.

À une époque où l'inflation atteint des niveaux record et où les prix des produits alimentaires augmentent, c'est la dernière chose dont les Ontariennes et Ontariens ont besoin dans leur vie.

En fait, même le directeur parlementaire du budget fédéral a indiqué que la taxe carbone coûtera plus cher aux ménages canadiens et qu'elle ne leur rapportera jamais. Il a indiqué qu'elle coûterait au ménage moyen entre 402 \$ et 847 \$, même après les remboursements.

The proof is in the pudding, Madam Speaker: Ontarians are suffering. Food bank usage is at an all-time high. Half a million adults and children in Ontario accessed a food bank between April 2021 and April 2022. Visits last year increased by 24% when compared to the previous year with one in three people being first-time visitors. As someone who was raised by a single mom, we struggled when my dad left and went back to Europe, and I know how much it takes away from someone's dignity when you have to go to the food bank, line up and depend on your community to help you at a time of need. So when I see that one in three people are first-time visitors, I can relate to that, because my mom was that first-time visitor.

So I think it's imperative on all of us to do the hard work to ensure that Ontarians can actually afford food and grocery items. We live in one of the richest places in the world, and we need to ensure that we keep those prices affordable. At my local Mississauga food bank, in the previous year, they served 18% more users than the year before and—get this—more than 82% more than before the pandemic. That is a frightening statistic. This speaks to the real challenges people in my city are facing, and when we plead to the feds, our complaints fall on deaf ears.

According to a report from Dalhousie University published this past April, Canada is experiencing the highest rate of food inflation since the 1980s. In 2022, vegetable prices rose by 12%, bakery items by 15% and meat prices by 7.6%. Right before Thanksgiving, there were many reports coming out and everyday Ontarians were saying that this year, they will not be able to afford a turkey and that this year they will be having chicken instead. So again, I think it's in all of our interests to work together to

ensure that next year, Ontarians—hard-working families—can afford to buy that turkey and to celebrate.

Our government was re-elected because we represent the core issues Ontarians care about: affordability, building more homes to cool the market and investing in transit infrastructure to get people to and from work as painlessly as possible. While the federal government keeps raising taxes, thereby increasing the cost of groceries and gas, our government reduced the gas tax—while the Trudeau Liberals raised the carbon tax by three cents earlier this year. Another increase: Isn't that unimaginable? The more taxes go up, the more our people are hurting. Our government is doing everything within our jurisdiction to make Ontarians' lives more affordable, but we are not getting the proper co-operation from the federal government.

Notre gouvernement a été réélu parce que nous représentons les enjeux fondamentaux auxquels les Ontariennes et Ontariens sont attachés. L'abordabilité : comme construire plus de maisons pour refroidir le marché, et investir dans l'infrastructure de transport pour que les gens se rendent au travail et en reviennent le plus facilement possible.

Alors que le gouvernement fédéral ne cesse d'augmenter les impôts, faisant ainsi grimper le prix des produits alimentaires et de l'essence, notre gouvernement a réduit la taxe sur l'essence. Tandis que les libéraux de M. Trudeau ont augmenté la taxe sur le carbone de trois cents au début de l'année, plus les taxes augmentent, plus cela nuit à nos concitoyens.

In conclusion, the last thing Ontarians need is another tax. What the Prime Minister has proven is that he's really out of touch with the people of Ontario and I think with the people of this entire country. I think the Prime Minister has to step up and do the right thing and axe the tax because Ontarians are suffering. The carbon tax is essentially driving the price of everything up—the price of fuel to deliver the products that our farmers grow to the markets.

Farmers—we are very lucky; we are fortunate in Ontario. We have a great agricultural sector. We have our farmers. Great things grow in Ontario. There are many products that we can buy locally, and I encourage all members to buy local so that we support our farmers. When I go to the grocery store, I'm fortunate; I don't have to look at price comparisons. I'm very fortunate and blessed that I don't have to look for that \$1 saving. But what I do look for when I go to the grocery store is “made in Ontario.” We have our beautiful made-in-Ontario logo, so when I go shopping and I look at my tomatoes, apples, I try to buy local, and I really, really encourage all of us to go out there and buy local.

I know that we recently celebrated, also, Agriculture Week in Ontario—the Minister of Agriculture. Again, we need to highlight the great work that's being done, the products that are being grown, and support our farmers. But part of our job to support our farmers is to ensure that when they grow their produce, it can get to market at an affordable rate and that Ontarians can afford to buy those

groceries. So I'm very honoured to be able to contribute to this debate today and I call on the federal government to do the right thing and remove the carbon tax.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in the House today and respond to the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington, who I quite enjoy discussing issues with. I'd like to read the motion in the House first: “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on grocery items.”

I have to echo the member from Waterloo that the motion, quite frankly, as written, doesn't make sense, because there is no direct carbon tax on grocery items. I listened very intently to the member when he made his presentation. What he was actually talking about was the cumulative effect of the input costs of the carbon tax on the end price of groceries. I think that's what he was trying to say, but that's not what the motion says. There is no carbon tax on groceries, so I have no problem voting for this, but it doesn't make much sense, honestly. There wasn't a lot of horsepower put in this.

Let's think back on things we can agree on here. The reason there's some kind of regimen on carbon is that the use of fossil fuels is impacting climate change, global warming. Can we all agree on global warming? Because there are a few people—and I'm not saying people in the House, but I've heard a few people who even disagree that the world is actually a globe, that it's not round; it's flat. So let's all agree that the world is round and it's being impacted by—what happens is, over millions of years, we have used a lot of the leftovers from dinosaurs, from plants and animals, which have turned to oil. We've burned it all in 100 years, and it's impacting our climate.

Forward-thinking countries are looking for ways to use less carbon. We hear a lot about electric cars. We talk a lot about electric cars. That's one of the reasons we're trying to get rid of the use of carbon.

But if you don't go back that far, I was here when—and I don't agree with everything the former Liberal government did. I disagreed with a lot of it. But when the Ford government got elected, there was a cap-and-trade system in the province of Ontario. Actually, it was done with Quebec. Did you know that the federal carbon tax doesn't apply in Quebec? It doesn't apply because they came up with their own program to try to help their residents use less carbon. Ontario had that chance as well. The federal carbon tax is a backstop. If you can't think of anything else to do, you get the federal carbon tax.

So the Ford government didn't really know the difference between cap-and-trade or a carbon tax. They all put it under one umbrella, and they cancelled the cap-and-trade. But have no fear, folks. Have no fear. The Ford government—I think at one time they called themselves the greatest government ever known to the people—they knew how to deal with the carbon tax: gas pump stickers. The first line of defence against the carbon tax: gas pump

stickers. And at cabinet, “If that doesn’t work, we’re going to go to court.”

That’s what they did: spent millions challenging the federal government whether they had the right to implement a carbon tax, and they lost. And they still didn’t realize that the federal carbon tax is a backstop program. A provincial government can come up with their own program to try and lessen the use of fossil fuels so you lessen the impact of burning carbon and—and—eliminate the need for the feds to use the carbon tax. You can still do that, and perhaps if you put some horsepower into it, you could make that program work, but that’s not what you’re choosing to do.

What’s really sad about that—and I listened very closely to the member from Mississauga—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Centre.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes—and, actually, a lot of the things she brought forward are very important points. The food bank use in Ontario is skyrocketing. Food prices in Ontario are going up. There are a lot of people in this province right now who have to make serious choices, and she made a very good case about that. But this motion isn’t a serious option—it isn’t. In the time you have left, think about the things that you have been doing, or could be doing, to lessen the use of carbon and try and make that into a program that exempts Ontario from the carbon tax. But you don’t want to do that. You seem to be more intent on campaigning for Pierre Poilievre than actually working for the people of Ontario. I heard, “Axe the Tax”—that’s a federal Pierre Poilievre thing.

You have the power in the province of Ontario to actually do things. And the member for Waterloo also brought this up: There is a provincial carbon tax on manufacturers and it applies to food processing facilities, bakeries, meat-packing plants. So if you want to have an immediate impact, a provincial carbon tax holiday on food processing plants—as long as those savings get passed through to consumers—you could do that, actually, and make a huge difference very quickly. And you can do that right from this Legislature, not simply just pointing at the next level of government.

I’m getting a bit worked up, so I’m going to calm down a bit.

It reminds me of a story I was once told. Have you ever heard, Speaker, that there’s a custom in some governments that, when a government loses power, the head of the government—Premier, Prime Minister, President—leaves three envelopes for the next Premier, Prime Minister or President? And when they really get in trouble, the advice is that you open an envelope. So the government gets in a lot of trouble and the leader of the day opens another envelope and the advice is, “Blame the previous government,” right? Now, we’ve heard that.

I’ve got to say, I was talking to the former House leader for the Wynne government and it was a great conversation with Mr. Milloy, who I respect. And he asked me—and I hope he doesn’t get angry with me for it, but, he said, “John, you were here when I was the House leader.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Were we that bad?” I said, “What do you

mean?” He said, “Did we actually do nothing in 15 years like the government said?” I said, “John, that’s not actually true. You did absolutely nothing.” He laughed as well.

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So anyway, they opened the envelope. They blame the previous government—and this government’s really good at blaming the previous government—and then they get in trouble again. And do you know what? I would say that right now, the current government has got a few problems: the RCMP, greenbelt, special prosecutors—man, I didn’t even hear words like that with the Liberals. So they’ve got a few problems.

So they’re opening up the second envelope. They open it up, and you know what it says? “Blame another level of government.” That’s what this motion is; this motion is part of the second envelope: Blame it on the feds.

Do the feds have things that they should work on? Absolutely. But there are things that we can work on, that you can work on right now, that will actually make a difference on people’s grocery bills, right now, that you have the power to do. Because if you don’t, at some point you’re going to have to open up the third envelope, Speaker. Do you know what the third envelope says?

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: No, but I think you know.

Mr. John Vanthof: I do. Do you know what the third envelope says, Speaker? It says, “Prepare three envelopes.” And that, Speaker, is where we are.

I don’t want to make light of the subject matter; I’m making light of the motion itself. The subject matter is extremely serious. The fact that people in this province, many of them, can’t afford to eat, can’t afford their rent, can’t afford in many cases to live—I’m from northern Ontario. Everything is more expensive where I’m from. There is no public transport, so regardless of how little you make, you need a car. So I’m making fun of the government, that they seem content to try and play political games, instead of actually looking at what they could do.

And I’m being serious about the industrial carbon tax. Why don’t you, if you’re serious about making food cheaper in this province, take the industrial carbon tax that food processors have to pay now to the province? Because the province does have a carbon pricing scheme for manufacturers and processors. They have it. They put it in, and they’re getting big bucks from it. They could make a holiday for food processors, provided that’s put through to immediate relief. Hopefully some of the members will talk about that, but I haven’t heard anything yet about what they could do.

Something else that the province could do is, yes, look into price-fixing with the major retailers, because retail is controlled by three or four major companies, and that is a big part of the bottleneck in food pricing. The bottleneck isn’t at the farm level. I’ve been a farmer my whole life. Actually, I’ve gone for 15 minutes without mentioning cows, but I’ve been a cow farmer my whole life. It’s not there. It’s not even at the processing level. Because if you talk to processors, whether they’re milk processors, beef processors—they’re not the issue either. It’s the major retailers who call the shots, because they have all the

power. And the major retailers have done this before—price-fixing on bread. It's not a new concept. Why isn't the government looking at that? Why isn't the provincial government pushing for a grocery code of conduct so that consumers can be sure they're paying the actual cost? Should retailers make a profit selling food? Yes. Should they be able to gouge because of their monopoly? No. That's where the government should come in. I don't hear anything about that.

So there are things that we could do. But the Ford government chooses not to act.

Do you know where the Ford government did choose to act? They did choose to try to gobble up the greenbelt. They did choose to take Hamilton boundaries—to take farmland to supposedly build housing that they already had land for.

Did you know that even without the greenbelt grab, we lose 319 acres of farmland every day in this province? You think that food prices are high now? Just wait. Remember, I started this speech about climate change. Well, climate change is going to have an impact on our food prices, big time, because there are going to be big parts of the world that now grow food that are going to be able to grow less, or maybe not at all—but specifically, in southern Ontario. I'm from northern Ontario. I'm proud to farm there, and it's a great place to farm. But the land in northern Ontario is not equivalent to the land here. Why? It's not just the land, but here, we're surrounded by the Great Lakes. We have the best climate to grow the 200 various crops we grow in the world. It's a gift. And the Ford government chooses to stand idly by—not even stand idly by; to actually increase the process. They want to eat up more land.

I listened to the member from Perth–Wellington yesterday, and he was responding to our housing motion. He said that there was a housing project in his riding and it was stopped by NIMBYs, and the government stepped in and eliminated the NIMBY problem. Then, I kind of heckled, “Yes, that's when the RCMP had to step in.

Please, I urge you—you have a majority: Actually do things for the right reasons. So look at the industrial carbon tax. Look at trying to make a carbon-pricing scheme, so that we won't have to be under the yoke of the federal one. You should be able to do that.

To the member across: You're right on the border of Quebec. They don't pay a carbon tax; your folks do. You're in the government. Fix it. How come Quebec doesn't pay a carbon tax and you do? That's a good question.

1450

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: We were on the same program before.

Mr. John Vanthof: We were on the same program. We were on the same program, and there's things that could have been done better with the carbon pricing, with the cap-and-trade—I'm not saying there couldn't. But the reason we have it is because you scrapped it and we have no alternative.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'll be splitting my time with the member from Guelph.

As I started earlier this afternoon, after five years in office, this government continues to fail to take responsibility for anything. After five years in office, the price of buying a home is up. The price of renting a home or an apartment is up. The price of electricity is up. The price of buying food at the grocery store is up. Even the Premier's signature promise: the price of buying a beer at the hockey game is up. All these prices are up after five years of the Ford government.

As has been so articulately explained already this evening, the government has tools at its disposal to help bring these prices down. It has tools at its disposal to provide benefits and supports to families who are struggling. It has tools at its disposal to help middle-class families enjoy the middle-class lifestyle they've worked so hard to try to achieve by providing tax credits to help put their kids into sports and other extracurricular opportunities, like ballet and piano and art and drama and, of course, my favourite—and I'm sure the minister's favourite as well—football. The government has these tools at their disposal, and yet they choose not to use them.

I remember, a couple of years ago—shortly after I got elected to the Legislature, in fact—the Premier got on television and said that he would not allow grocers and retailers to price gouge, that he would use the power of his office and of his government to stop price collusion and price gouging. Well, three years later from that, what have we seen? I walk into any grocery store—I walk into the Rabba across the street from my apartment here in Toronto, I walk into the Metro or the Loblaws or the Sobeys, and guess what? The price of a rotisserie chicken is exactly the same. The price of a steak per pound is exactly the same. It's amazing that all these retailers who operate independently have exactly the same prices for everything, all of the time. And it's remarkable how their prices go up all of the time at the same time. In fact, we know that they're colluding because they issued a news release about how they were going to jointly not increase prices at the last round, when everyone was expecting prices to go up. We might remember that. I believe it was last fall or last winter they put that joint news release out, saying they weren't going to collude and increase prices, as expected.

The government has tools within its authority to ensure that grocers don't do that. It's interesting, though, Madam Speaker, that some of the families that own many of the largest grocery chains are also very close to this government in other ways that I don't think I need to describe to anyone. So if the government was serious about reducing the price of groceries, they would use their power to end the collusion that exists in the grocery business and to stop the price gouging that is happening here in Ontario.

So I have to ask the Premier—he stood at a podium; he stood, on television, and said he was going to stop it. So, Mr. Premier, where is the beef? Where is the beef? Because families can't afford it. Food banks don't have the resources to provide meats and fresh foods the way that

they used to because they've seen such a huge uptick in their usage here in Ontario. In every community across Ontario, whether it's Ottawa, Toronto, in the north or the southwest, food banks are struggling to keep up with the demand.

The theory behind the motion is that if you reduce the costs for farmers, distributors and those involved in the agricultural sector who are being subjected to this tax, that that will trickle down and grocery prices will come down. And, you know what? If you reduce the cost to farmers, chances are there will be an impact on prices at the grocery store, which is why the government has another tool. They could have helped the farmers in Navan and in Sarsfield who had their farms destroyed in the windstorm last year. Farmers who had barns with roofs ripped off, with silos that were damaged: These farmers got absolutely no support from this government.

The Premier came to east Ottawa, went to a fire station and said, "We're going to be there to support you." And not a single dollar has flowed to the city of Ottawa to help recover their cost, one of the largest agricultural and farming cities in our province. Not a single dollar flowed to Hydro Ottawa, which, of course, charges Ottawa residents for the hydro they pay. Not a single dollar, as I understand it, flowed to any individual farmer from the government to help them with their costs of repair from the vicious derecho windstorm that tore through eastern Ontario in 2022. That would have helped those farmers directly. That would have helped those farmers directly, but this government chose not to take that action.

I find it interesting, too, just the way in which the debate on the other side of this House has happened throughout the day to day—those who have chosen to speak to it in a language that they used. It feels to me that everyone on that side of the House is working on an audition tape. They're auditioning for a job at perhaps a higher level of government, which may soon become available to them in their eyes. I think their tape that they're going to get out of the debate tonight is going to make a great addition to their application for that job. I think that's largely what's driving the need for the debate tonight.

Because if it was about helping families, if it was about reducing the cost of groceries and the cost of food, there are any number of other tools and levers this government has at their disposal to pull. As the opposition House leader mentioned, there is a carbon tax that this government controls that applies to farms, farm producers and distributors. There are other taxes that apply to farmers and distributors in Ontario.

With that in mind, I'd like to move a motion to amend the motion. I move that the motion be amended by adding at the end:

"And that the government of Ontario remove all taxes from agricultural inputs including sales, income and corporate taxes from farm equipment, fertilizer, fuel and all other inputs that increase the cost of food."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I rule this amendment out of order as it is beyond the scope of the motion.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'd like to move for unanimous consent for the Legislature to consider the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. Blais has moved the unanimous consent to accept the amendment to the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? No.

Continue debate.

Mr. Stephen Blais: A representative of a farming community refusing to even debate the idea of removing sales tax and corporate tax off of farm equipment, fertilizers and fuel, all of which goes into the cost of groceries as we know. I can't believe that the members who represent farming communities like in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and in Renfrew and other farming communities across the province voted to even deny debating the opportunity to reduce taxes on farmers.

I can't believe that this Ford government doesn't want to take taxes away from farmers to help reduce the cost of groceries. They should be ashamed of themselves that they don't support the farming community the way they ought to.

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In conclusion, I think that we have demonstrated quite clearly that this government that's all about the people has many opportunities, both legislatively and regulatorily, at their disposal. They have levers they can pull to reduce the cost of groceries already. They have levers they can pull and dollars they can spend to support families today. Writing a letter is easy. I can show you guys how to write a letter; it's pretty easy. It's a lot harder to make the tough decisions that will actually bring prices down. These are decisions that you're avoiding. They're decisions you have at your disposal.

You have an economic update coming in a week or two. You have the opportunity to make life more affordable for families in Ontario as part of that update; to provide tax relief for families who put their kids in extracurricular activities and in sports; to increase social assistance rates to those who are the most vulnerable; to ensure that Ontarians can continue to live the lifestyle that they've worked so hard to enjoy.

Madam Speaker, instead of simply blaming everyone else for the challenges that are facing our province, it's time that this government took some responsibility and used the power that they were elected to use.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I had to wait for a second because I was overcome with the rapturous applause from the Liberal side for the last speaker. I guess they all got together and applauded at the same time. It was quite remarkable.

Speaker, the carbon tax increases the cost of everything, plain and simple. The carbon tax drives up the cost of everything we do and everything we consume. When we talk about groceries, we have to ask ourselves—and you're talking about over the last year. I hear the Liberals and the NDP talk about cost-of-living issues over and over again,

cost-of-living issues that are exacerbated dramatically by the carbon tax because it's this spiralling thing. The carbon tax drives up the cost of something; people have to pay more for that something. The next thing you know, people are demanding that they want to get paid more for what they're doing, and it's just an endless upward spiral driving up the cost of living on everything we do.

I was somewhat entertained, I must say, by the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane talking about his three envelopes. I can assure you this, Speaker, and this can go out to as wide an audience as you want: The member can prepare three envelopes if he chooses; he will never, ever have the need to open them.

In fact, let's talk about what's going on over there. I know, because I listened to them wandering all over the world in their dissertations, and I asked myself, "Boy, I'm just glad I'm not a member of the NDP caucus these days. Wow." I was just watching CP24 when I took a little break here. What is going on? The poor leader of the NDP must be just beside herself wondering, "Do I even want to have another caucus meeting to hear what's going on there?" So I know that they're having so much turmoil amongst themselves and so much confusion that they're not sure what they're talking about here today, because here's one thing that is clear: There is no provincial carbon tax on anything—no provincial carbon tax on anything.

I know the member mentioned Pierre Poilievre. Have you seen those ads, how effective they are? When you're a consumer and you're somebody struggling in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke with the cost of living, which is a burden for us as everybody else, and you see that ad—I talk to people on the street every weekend and if I'm home during the week, and they're saying, "Wow. It's just amazing, when you think about it, how that is driving up the cost of everything in that grocery store."

You've got the input costs. You've got the fertilizer. You've got the fuel. You've got the trucks that move those goods from place to place. You've got people who drive to that farm to go to work. When you start to think about it, it is absolutely scary, because it's endless. And when you go to buy those groceries, if you live in rural Ontario, you ain't jumping on the subway that's running whether you're on it or not; you're getting into your truck and driving to the grocery store.

So when I talk to people, they are just—I've got to tell you, it pains me when I see people who are just deciding whether or not they can actually buy that item in the grocery store, because the cost not just of those groceries, but everything else, is being driven by the carbon tax. Mr. Trudeau, every so often, sends out a cheque; that is just plain and simple bribery, a little bit of a cheque back to try to convince you that the carbon tax is actually working in your favour.

The member talks about—we're not debating about whether we have climate change. That's not the debate here. But what is clear is that Canada produces about 1.5% of the world's emissions. Are we the ones who are going to have to pay for the rest of the world that doesn't implement climate change solutions, such as India and

China, which are exempt from those agreements? But we're the ones that should suffer, and our citizens are the ones who should pay the price, because Justin Trudeau wants to have a little fun that he can play games with—him and his environment minister, Steven Guilbeault? That's what you get when you put a radical activist in as the environment minister for Canada, because they don't care what the average person is going through.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's right. They don't know any better.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they don't know, because they don't live in that real world. But even if somebody can inform them, they still don't care, as long as they get what they want, and what they want is a socialized view of how we live our lives.

So what we're trying to do here in the PC Party—and yes, we went to court. Yes, we went to court, not because of our philosophy or our beliefs on the carbon tax; it was because we believe, on behalf of the people of Ontario, that the carbon tax would be harmful to them, and we're right. We're 100% right. You can dance around that all you want over on the other side, but the carbon tax is hurting, and it is not leading to a reduction of Canada's carbon emissions. So it's failing on two counts, but it's driving up the cost of everything the people do.

So it doesn't matter if you're a farmer, a worker, a labourer, particularly if you live in rural Ontario. I remember one bill—we heat with oil in our house, and there was one bill for an oil tank fill-up—over \$1,700 for a fill-up, and a significant amount of it was taxation. I said to my wife, "You know, we're fortunate. We can afford to pay that bill, and we'll pay it on time." But if you're one of those people who is struggling on everyday cost-of-living issues, and you have an oil bill, and it's the wintertime, you either put oil in, or you don't and you freeze. What kind of hardship are you placing on them—additional hardship—because of the federal carbon tax, for them to heat their homes? How can you in good conscience actually sit there and say, "We're doing that because we're going to save the world, when the rest of the world isn't"? Little old Canada, with 1.5%, is going to take care of all of that, but our citizens are hurting deeply because of it.

1510

The carbon tax was totally motivated by politics, not about environment—totally motivated by politics on behalf of those Liberal socialists who decided, "We have to find another way to extract more money from the people so that we could put it into the pet programs that we actually like, not because it was going to be a benefit to the people. It was going to be a benefit to us, because now we can now highlight the things that we want the people to see, at least those people we consider our core voters." So now, that's just what you get anew.

Speaker, we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg, as they say, because as this carbon tax rises to 2050, what we're getting today is just a small sample of the pain that people will be experiencing if this federal government continues on the path that it is on. The sky is the limit, and the

provincial NDP were supporting a 300% increase in the carbon tax. And if they're saying over there that the carbon tax is good and is not inflicting pain on people, then they are denying reality. If they're going to stand there or sit there or just try to say that the carbon tax is not hurting people, they know they're wrong. So if it's wrong today, how wrong will it be tomorrow when it goes up and up and up? And yet those other countries that are far bigger polluters will be doing nothing. But they must be sitting back thinking, "Man, those Canadians are stupid. They are just committing"—I can't think of a word that is parliamentary. "They're doing it to themselves," is what they're saying.

But we have an opportunity as elected people—and thank goodness that Pierre Poilievre is standing up and saying, "If we're elected, it's gone, because we actually care about the cost of living, issues that people in Canada are facing." He has an ally here in Ontario, because we believe the same thing: It has absolutely gone too far, and it is not succeeding in its purported purpose. We were going to reduce CO₂ emissions by inflicting this carbon tax on the people. Well, they haven't done it. It hasn't happened. So in spite of all that, they're determined that they're going to not only continue with the carbon tax; they're going to raise the carbon tax. They're going to increase the amount of the carbon tax. Where does it end?

If it continues like this, how does it do anything else but drive the cost of inflation up, drive inflation up continuously and incrementally even more? Because if every day you have to pay more for the things that you absolutely have to have—and I speak as a rural member, and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane would understand this as well as anybody—it costs more. It costs more to get around in rural Ontario.

I'm grateful for the tremendous work that Premier Ford and our government is doing to increase public transit in the GTHA. It's a tremendous expansion, the greatest in Canada's history, the largest in Canada's history. So that will do a lot to reduce the amount of CO₂ that we're producing. We're doing those things. We're putting electric arc furnaces in our steel mills. That's taking one to two million cars off the road. We are doing the kinds of things that will actually matter to people, but not with a carbon tax.

We actually believe over here—of course, we believe; they don't believe. We believe that we can actually protect the environment, continue to reduce CO₂ without it having to be that tremendous burden on people who are trying to raise their families and wondering whether they're going to be able to make the mortgage payment.

The Minister of Economic Development has been a tremendous salesperson around the world, bringing to Ontario the greatest expansion into our auto and EV, electric vehicle, manufacturing system. We couldn't have believed that was going to happen. What is it doing? We're going to be the world leaders in electric vehicle battery production. If I'm not mistaken, \$27 billion has been earmarked or invested or contracted for Ontario in these particular ventures. How much will we be reducing our emissions by because of that? Think about it, folks.

But the NDP actually want us not to continue to produce and build nuclear power facilities. So we're going to have all these electric vehicles—world leaders in electric vehicles. But what are they going to do? Put a windmill on the roof? I don't know where they're coming from. They want us to be able to put all of these things that require more electricity, move them away from fossil fuels into electricity, but they don't want us to produce electricity except by the way that they want to produce it: unreliable, intermittent sources. There is a place for solar. There is a place for wind. We absolutely understand that. But you can never have your baseload on something that you cannot absolutely depend on.

You might have the smartest guy in the world working for you, but if he only shows up to work on Mondays and Thursdays, he's going to be a problem. But I'll tell you—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just like Ford.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, now, now. Be careful there, ma'am—from Waterloo.

So what about that guy who is there every single day—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Like Ford.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Like Ford—that you can depend on, that he's going to be there to make your wheels turn. That's the guy you want. Well, that's what we've got in nuclear power, but the NDP oppose it.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Even though it's good for the environment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, and it's green. Even Mr. Green might like that; I don't know.

This is the inner conflict that the NDP is dealing with all the time—and the carbon taxes are no different. They're up there every day, and I see them stand up there: "My question is for the Premier. I want to talk about affordability issues." And when they have an opportunity to stand with us against the federal government, which is taxing people to death—but the people have caught on to Mr. Trudeau.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Member for Waterloo, you know I never heckle when you're speaking.

Mr. Trudeau has been caught, and boy, are things looking bleak for him. He's not just an embarrassment here; he's an embarrassment all over the world.

I'll say to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, Trudeau probably should have had about six or seven of those envelopes. Anyway—

Mr. Dave Smith: No, she did it by email.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Hopefully, before he does go, before he does any more damage to the people of Canada and, by extension, the people of Ontario, he'll find a way or get some revelation—the road to Damascus, as they say—and look at this carbon tax and the damage that it is doing.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, that's one of the problems. I want to thank my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. She just mentioned Jagmeet. That's one of the problems. The alliance between Justin and Jagmeet—double J, double J.

1520

Anyway, hopefully he finds a way to stop the increases in the carbon tax, eliminate it from anything that is absolutely essential. I know the member is talking about groceries and grocery input costs, and I really appreciate the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for bringing that forward. But we have to look at the broader picture as well and look at how much damage it is doing in every facet of your life. Everything that we produce in this country, everything we produce in this province is more expensive because of carbon taxes. You can't do a thing without being impacted by carbon taxes. So if that has so much significance that it is driving up the cost of everything—and we are in a tremendously competitive world—why wouldn't it be prudent to ask yourself the question, “If I am harming every single citizen in this province, in this country by implementing and increasing the burden of a carbon tax that is not reducing CO₂ emissions, why would we be doing that in the first place?”

I support the motion. I thank the member for bringing it forward. I know this caucus supports the motion, because we stand firmly in opposition to the Trudeau carbon tax.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I didn't hear you, sorry. Did you say “Guelph”?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Speaker. I've been really enjoying listening to the debate today, and I certainly appreciate the fact that we want to talk about affordability today.

I want to ask the members opposite, are you going to take away my carbon rebate? Are you going to take away the carbon rebate cheques of the people of Ontario because you want to get rid of carbon pricing? Is that what you're suggesting with this? Because I don't know about the rest of you, but at least last year—I haven't seen the numbers for this year—myself, like most Ontarians, got far more back in the carbon rebate than we paid in carbon pricing. I used that money—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That's what the Parliamentary Budget Officer says.

I don't know about the rest of you. I got my cheque a little bit ago, I deposited it in my bank account, and I used it to help buy groceries. That's what I used my carbon rebate cheque for. I don't know about the rest of you, what you use your rebate cheques for, but we used ours to help address affordability concerns.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You should use it for speech writing.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Oh, the member opposite for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke wants me to use it for speech writers. Is that it? Is that what you said, “for speech writers”? I'm good. I don't need to hire speech writers. I'm happy to write my own speeches.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: You might need help this time.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: You think I need help this time.

You know what? I was going to say something nice about the minister of industry over there, so give me a second; I really was going to say something nice about the minister, Speaker. If the heckling can die down a little bit, I'll get to the point in what I want to say, and I'll say something nice about the industry minister. Okay.

The rebate: More people in Ontario receive more back in a rebate than they pay out in carbon pricing, and it creates an incentive—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay, I'm looking at what the Parliamentary Budget Officer has put out. If you want to disagree with the PBO, that's fine with you. And I look at what I've done to help my family reduce the amount of money we pay in carbon pricing, and I've used that rebate to help us address the affordability challenges we're facing.

Let's look at what is driving the affordability crisis—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: We need more homes in Peterborough; I guarantee you that. I heard the member from Peterborough say that, and I do want to once again put it on the record that housing starts in Guelph are much higher than in Peterborough. But now that my youngest daughter lives in Peterborough, we're hoping to get those numbers up. I'll just let the member know that.

Three things—

Mr. Dave Smith: Are you using the carbon rebate to buy her the house?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm hoping she's using her carbon rebate cheque to help pay for her groceries in Peterborough like I'm using mine to help pay for my groceries in Guelph; that's what I'm hoping. Okay. I'll ask her later tonight what she's using her carbon rebate cheque for.

So what is driving the affordability crisis people are facing? It's primarily food, fuel and housing. So I want to start by focusing on food. If you look around the world, if you talk to food economists—and I'm lucky, I represent the riding of Guelph that has the University of Guelph which has most of the country's leading food economists—at the University of Guelph. So I have the opportunity to chat with them. They will tell you there are three, well, four things—two of them are kind of related—driving up food prices. The first are supply chain disruptions partly due to the pandemic and partly due to the concentration we have in the food sector. Second is conflict—global conflict—primarily the global conflict in Ukraine. The third is all these changes in the weather: All the major food-growing regions in the world are experiencing significant droughts and have been experiencing them over the last five years. Then, oftentimes, when the drought ends, it's because extreme rainfall comes and floods their crops. It's one of the reasons the Salinas Valley in California was flooded, and we get a lot of our produce from California.

So when they say these weather events are causing food prices to go up, what is causing these weather events to happen? The climate crisis. It's all being fuelled by the climate crisis. If the reason was because of what the

government is stating—they're saying it's due to carbon pricing—if that was the reason, we wouldn't see food inflation in countries without carbon pricing, but yet we're seeing food inflation in countries all over the world.

As a matter of fact, food inflation in a number of other countries is higher than it is in Canada, even countries without carbon pricing. So we have to be honest with the people of Ontario. What is driving up the cost of food? Supply chain disruptions: There are two drivers of that. One is primarily due to the pandemic, which is exactly why we should be doing everything possible to support local supply chains. As a matter of fact, during the pandemic, one of the things the Premier said that I agreed with was the absolute need to protect local supply chains for PPE, food and other things.

So I asked the members opposite, will you work with us to end the loss of 319 acres of farmland each and every day in this province? We simply cannot allow more farmland to be lost in this province, because we need to have strong local supply chains. We have to grow food in this province for the people of this province so we're not so dependent on international global markets affected by supply chain disruptions and conflict. So will you support protecting farmland in this province and actually start building homes and communities people want to live in on land that's already approved for development, not on farmland?

Secondly, will you help—and this one we need the federal government's help on, but we can have a role here in Ontario—in the extreme concentration in our food sector? Five retailers control 85% of food sales in this country. That hurts farmers and it hurts consumers. We're both paying the price for that. That's exactly why you have things like the price-fixing scandal of bread and other things. That's why you see food producers, farmers and processors not making as much margins, even though you're seeing record profits by grocery retailers. It's why you're seeing us, as consumers, being gouged at the marketplace. We do need the Competition Bureau and federal government to deal with this issue, but we can also push for a grocery code of conduct here in Ontario modelled after places like the UK and other countries to protect both farmers and producers and to protect consumers from extreme concentration in the retail market.

Now, conflict—I don't know if there is much we can do about that. I mean, obviously we're supporting Ukraine; obviously the Canadian government is supporting Ukraine. To me, the disruption increase that conflict is creating—one of the best ways we can combat that is actually being more self-reliant, producing our own food, which is exactly why we need to protect the farmland that grows that food, Speaker.

1530

The big one is climate. The reason you're seeing huge food inflation across all countries around the world is weather-related drought and flooding, and it is getting more extreme, it's getting more severe, and it's damaging more and more crops each and every year. Our farmers are on the front lines of that, and I'm very confident, as

someone who grew up on a farm, that farmers are going to help us deliver solutions to that. But we also have to make sure we do our part to reduce climate pollution in Ontario, so we can reduce the impacts of the climate crisis on Ontarians.

As a matter of fact, I would argue that the climate crisis is nature's tax on every single one of us, and we need to do our part to reduce pollution. Last year alone, insurance claims, because of the climate crisis, were \$3.4 billion in Canada. The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that the public infrastructure costs are generally about three times higher than that, so that would be around \$10 billion last year alone. All of us have to pay for that.

Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer estimates that this decade alone, the cost to infrastructure just in Ontario is going to be \$26.4 billion. That's damage to our transit lines, our roads, our bridges, our storm waters, our sewers, our communities. So we (1) have to do more to invest in strengthening our infrastructure from damage driven by the climate crisis, but (2) we need to reuse climate pollution because that will help mitigate that damage and those financial losses.

So how are some of the ways we can do that? Well, one of them is that we can electrify our transportation system. This is where I was actually going to compliment the Minister of Economic Development and Job Creation: We are seeing increased investment in electric vehicle manufacturing in this province, and I hope that is something we can all celebrate. We're behind other jurisdictions—China, the EU and the US are ahead of us—but we're catching up, and that's a good thing. But we also need to make sure that those electric vehicles that we produce in Ontario—that Ontarians can actually afford to drive them. That's why I've supported things like rebates for new and used electric vehicles, so people can take advantage of the cost savings. If you want to help people save money at the gas pump, get rid of the gas pump.

I'm lucky; I drive one of the least expensive electric vehicles out there, probably. I'm lucky I drive that. Do you know why, Speaker? Because it costs me about one tenth to fill my car up with electricity as it would to fill it up with gas. I want all Ontarians to be able to realize those savings. That's how we can significantly drive down costs. We can also invest in better transit. We can also invest in bike lanes and communities that are walkable, so people don't have to drive as much, but for those who do, let's electrify transportation and cut their fuel costs.

Housing: If we can electrify housing, especially heating costs, through heat pumps, we can save people money and reduce climate pollution at the same time. I'm working on a project in Guelph with Habitat for Humanity to build a 72-bedroom, multi-unit family housing project for obtainable home ownership for people. It will be covered in solar panels. It's going to save those residents \$62,000 a year on their heating and cooling costs. So we can drive down climate pollution; we can address the real affordability challenges people are facing for food, fuel and housing; and we can increase our economy and benefit at the same time.

I want to close with that: \$1.1 trillion invested in the clean economy last year, about half of that in renewable energy; slightly less than that in electric vehicles. And like I said, I'm happy we're seeing more of that investment in Ontario, but we are missing in action when it comes to attracting that investment for renewables and for heat pumps. I want Ontario to be a global leader in both of those areas too because I want to attract those investment dollars. I want to see the jobs and prosperity they create because we know that's going to benefit our communities and help pay for things like health care and housing and education.

This year, Bloomberg estimates \$1.8 trillion will be invested in the climate economy. Solar alone will exceed investments in the oil and gas sector. Why? Because solar energy is now the cheapest source of energy anywhere in the world. That's why global investment dollars are flowing to solar.

We can utilize that solar to help reduce food costs. A great example of that is barns. I know solar companies now that are installing solar projects on chicken barns, hog barns, dairy barns, saving those farmers significant money, especially when it comes to chicken farming because of the amount of light required.

We have solutions to lower costs, increase jobs and lower climate pollution at the same time. The question is, are we going to implement the policies to do it? Because right now in Ontario, we're hardly installing any solar. The government seems to be actively hostile to it. I don't know why; it's the lowest-cost source of electricity generation. In the same way that we can attract capital investment in electric vehicle manufacturing, why not in renewable energy manufacturing? Why not in heat pump manufacturing? A 40% increase in demand for heat pumps in the EU last year alone: That's where the world is going. That's where the economy is going.

I only have a few minutes left. I want to close by saying that there's a lot of talk about the cost of carbon pricing, but not a lot of talk about the cost of the climate crisis—not a lot of talk about the climate crisis cost, even though it's driving up so much of the food costs we're experiencing. I want to work with government to protect our farmland, so we have those local supply chains.

Let's build homes in existing urban areas: big cities, small towns. Let's build homes there, where we have already paid for the servicing for those homes, where we can build more affordable communities and we can protect that precious farmland so not only would we feed our people, but we can export that, generating good jobs and prosperity for Ontario. Let's invest in solutions like helping people reduce their fuel costs by making it easier to choose things other than a car or a pickup truck, and when they need a car or a pickup truck, they can afford to choose a low-cost electric because it's going to save them money. Let's address the housing affordability crisis, and let's make sure we do it in a way where we build homes that are highly energy efficient and—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm sorry; the member opposite said "lollipops." I'm talking about solutions to the climate

crisis that are being implemented across the world, helping people save money, benefiting their local economies, attracting the \$1.8 trillion in global investment that's going to these solutions. Why not have that in Ontario? Why lose that investment to the EU and US and other jurisdictions?

Let's make those investments right here in Ontario, address the climate crisis, address the affordability crisis and improve our economy at the same time. Those are the kinds of solutions that are going to address people's affordability concerns, improve their quality of life and ensure their children have a better future. Speaker, that's what I'm hoping we can deliver on in this Legislature and in this province.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Before I get into my prepared remarks here, the member from Guelph spurred me to do a little bit of research. We can't correct anybody's record here in the Legislature, but I just want to put this on the record for myself: A 2023 report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer says the average Ontario family is set to lose \$478 based on the carbon tax. So I thought I'd just put that out there for everybody who's watching or who might be listening, and to make sure that the member from Guelph is aware that that indeed is the case. That's right from the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report this year, 2023.

1540

Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and join the debate on motion 69, the motion introduced by my friend the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington. I just want to go back to the premise of the motion, and that is, "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on grocery items." This is a motion that I wholeheartedly support.

During my remarks today, I'll focus on initiatives aimed at lowering the cost of the carbon tax on food, how skyrocketing food costs won't come down if you add another tax to producers and consumers, and a historic look at how this House has tried to protect Ontarians from these taxes in the past.

We know the federal carbon tax is driving food costs higher than they already are, and what is shocking is that we may not actually know how much it is truly adding to grocery bills.

Thankfully, there is some good news coming out of Ottawa, if you can believe that, colleagues. A Conservative bill, Bill C-234, would remove the federal carbon tax from on-farm uses of natural gas and propane, which I'm going to talk a little bit about here, because it's very important as to why these items need to be exempt from the carbon tax. Farmers use these fuels for processes such as grain drying or heating their barns. These uses are not currently exempt from carbon tax laws. This bill, which is now before the Senate, was supported by the entire House of Commons—colleagues, if you can guess, who didn't support it, though? The Liberals. I know it's hard to believe.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, who we've talked a little bit about here today, analyzed Bill C-234, and what they found is that farmers would save—this is a staggering amount, colleagues. Having natural gas and other heating fuels exempt from the carbon tax for on-farm use would save farmers \$978 million between now and 2030—almost a billion dollars back into the pockets of farmers. And we all know that hard-working farmers reinvest that money into their businesses; it's no surprise. Anybody who has had an opportunity to travel the province and speak with farmers knows this.

In the words of Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, the senior director of the agri-food analytics lab at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Bill C-234 is just a start. The professor shared an op-ed titled, "The Hidden Cost of Carbon Taxes and How it Will Impact Food Retail in Canada." The article begins with a very concerning point, and this is the point that I was getting to make earlier: We may not have an idea how much carbon tax increases will impact food security. That's really what we're talking about here today—food security and food affordability. The professor wrote, "On April 1, the carbon tax will be set at \$65 per metric tonne. We are slowly marching towards a carbon tax of \$170 per metric tonne, by 2030"—which is just around the corner, whether we like it or not—"which is more than double what it is today. Yet so far, not one study has looked at how the carbon tax will be impacting food affordability in Canada. Not one." So we know that it's going to drive up the price of essential goods like food. We know that this will impact vulnerable people the hardest, but we do not know how big the impact will be. Quite frankly, that's a recipe for disaster. The Liberals' approach to feeding Canadians has been all stick and no carrot.

To quote Professor Charlebois again, "According to a report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), more than \$8 billion will be collected from small business through the carbon tax by the end of fiscal 2023, and as little as \$35 million will be given back as credit in the form of programs. Many small businesses, especially family businesses, are in the food industry."

So what will happen if the federal government goes with the status quo? And to quote the professor one more time, "Food processors, artisan shops, and restaurant owners need more and better support or else, by 2030, the carbon tax will have the potential to become a ... more significant driver of food inflation than climate change itself. That's right, the policy to penalize polluters could hurt citizens more than climate change, the very thing we are all trying to mitigate."

So this is very concerning. The price of food has already increased dramatically over the last few years, and you don't need to look far to see the impact of food inflation. Kim Wilhelm, the interim CEO of the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, said in a recent article that over 1,000 students used the food bank just this August. That is, roughly, a 150% increase since last year.

Another telling stat is how much they are spending on food at the food bank. Pre-pandemic, the food bank would

spend about \$200,000 on very specific food purchases. Now they estimate, by the end of this year, they will spend about \$2 million on those same purchases. So what happens when that \$2-million bill goes up by another unknown amount, Madam Speaker?

I want to go back in time a little bit to 2008. The Dark Knight had recently been released in theatres; a young Justin Trudeau still had a political future. Prior to the federal election, the McGuinty Liberals moved a motion calling on federal party leaders to commit to treating Ontario fairly. For context, this was during the time that Stéphane Dion's Liberal Party was championing a carbon tax, back in 2008. The federal member from Thornhill moved a motion to amend that as following: "fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax." That was a motion on the carbon tax that was being introduced in Ottawa. And the Liberals, of course—can you guess, colleagues? What did they do? They voted down the amendment.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Of course.

Mr. Mike Harris: Of course. Every single member that voted "nay" no longer serves in the House of Commons. There are, however, some yeas that are still in the House.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the comments that happened during that time. And I am sorry, Madam Speaker; I'm getting a little confused as we go a little later into the afternoon here, and I'm going to snag a little bit of water.

That was actually a motion that was put forward here, in our chamber, and those members who are no longer here sat on this side of the House. So—

Mr. Dave Smith: It was only one member that's still here.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm going to touch on that. Thank you very much. You got me back on track.

So let's talk a little bit about the members that are still here. We have our Minister of Health, the member for Sarnia-Lambton, the member for Oxford and, of course, the member for Nepean who are still here from that 2008 election, even though the Liberals got voted out of office. And if you can believe it—here's the interesting part, Madam Speaker—across the way, the member for Nickel Belt at the time, who still serves in this chamber, as well as the current mayor of Hamilton and former leader of the NDP Party, Andrea Horwath, voted in favour. They voted in favour of the amendment to make sure that a carbon tax was not going to unfairly penalize the people of Ontario, and I would hope that the NDP offers its support to this motion, Madam Speaker.

This motion is following the spirit of that 2008 amendment by exempting the carbon tax on Ontarians already overburdened by the cost of simply trying to eat. Or, to quote the former member for Timmins from an exchange in question period at the time, "the Dion Liberals want a carbon tax that will hurt hard-working Ontarians." That was the former member from Timmins, who sat in this chamber for many years.

We will see which version of the NDP we get today. As several of my colleagues have pointed out, they have a role

to play here as well. We urge the Ontario NDP to call on their federal counterparts, who hold the balance of power in Ottawa, to demand the federal government remove the carbon tax.

1550

Speaker, as I want to conclude my remarks, I'd like to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for bringing forward this motion. I would also like to congratulate our new Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. She has spent years working to advance environmental issues while also protecting consumers, and if I can I'd like to borrow a line from the minister: We can fight for the environment—we can treat climate change seriously, we can work with industry, but we'll not pass the cost down to the consumer.

It is in this spirit that I support this motion and I call on all other members here in the House to do the same.

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Sadly, my eyes require a little bit of guidance here today.

I wanted to spend some time today talking about this motion, but mostly not just to repeat a phrase that our Premier has made but to expand on the why. The Premier said last month, "The delivery of every product we have in the province is being affected by the worst tax this country has ever seen—it's a useless tax—and that's the carbon tax." I couldn't agree with the Premier more on this one, and there are lots of reasons why.

I listened very carefully to the earlier discussion, and there are some things that I appreciated and agreed with, and there are some things that I just patently don't agree with. I think that when you put a carbon tax in the country, and here in Ontario, you really are putting a tax right from the beginning, right from the farm to the table.

When you put a carbon tax on the fertilizer that's going in the ground to grow the food that we eat, when you put a tax on the fuel that that farm is going to consume to pick the food and the fruits off the farm—then you put the fuel to transport that food. Then you need to put the fuel to refrigerate that food in the warehouses, who are all adding the carbon tax at every step of the way from in the ground all the way—now we're at the distribution centre with the refrigerators or freezers in that case that have a carbon tax on top of everything that they are buying. Then you transport that around the province or around the country and you're consuming gas with a carbon tax on it. Then it gets to the grocery store who have to refrigerate—again, you're adding a carbon tax on that fuel. Every single step of the way, from the farm to the business to the family's table, you have taxed. You have put a tax, and you wonder why we have inflation today, why we have the high cost of food.

We stood in this Legislature—I've been here 12 years and three weeks, and we've talked about lowering the cost on every item. That's what we on this side stand for: lowering costs. Lower costs create more wealth in the communities. Taxing never—never—creates jobs, never creates any help for families, and I'm going to give some

examples about what we did to lower costs and what that resulted in. So it's a little bit of a storyline that I'll take you on, but you'll see that, by lowering costs, we have had huge benefits to families in Ontario.

By putting a carbon tax, you have increased the burden on every single family. Now, the price of gasoline alone is 14 cents per litre—right now, today, at the pump, the carbon tax is costing an extra 14 cents a litre. As the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said earlier, we live in rural Ontario. We don't have many options. It is a vast land that we have to travel by vehicle, and in many cases, larger vehicles, as well, for our own safety on those back roads.

You have this carbon tax that is adversely affecting especially smaller and rural communities, but it's 14 cents today. If we think we have pain, it's on its way to reaching 37 cents a litre. We can see that everything we're consuming, every single thing we're consuming, whether it's the clothes you're wearing that were shipped to the stores to the food on your table to the shoes, your vehicles themselves—every single thing that you buy has an inflation built into it now because of this carbon tax. It can all be tracked back to this carbon tax. You need to support this bill to scrap that tax to give our hard-working families this needed relief.

I want to talk a little bit about what we've done here in our government to illustrate that in order to increase your government's revenues to be able to do things that we're doing—like the roads and transportation that we're building and the subways, our health care system and our education system, all the things that we've been adding billions of dollars to—you don't need to raise taxes to do that. In fact, I'm going to illustrate how lowering taxes actually gives you more revenue. I know that sounds counterintuitive, so let me give you the exact example of what has actually happened here in Ontario in the last five years.

We all have heard our wonderful successes in the electric vehicle business; \$27 billion has landed here. That does not happen by accident. That happened because we lowered the cost of doing business. We began by reducing the workplace safety insurance, the WSIB, by 50%—the premiums. The benefits to the workers have not changed; the premiums to the employers have been reduced. There was so much cash in there—stuffed with cash—that it was beyond any financial requirement, beyond any moral requirement. So we have said to the business community, "Enough." We've reduced that by 50%. That is a \$2.5-billion annual savings to those businesses that are paying WSIB, especially in the auto sector—129,000 employees, so it really affected them.

You can see, so far, \$2.5 billion annually. Then we put in what's called a capital cost acceleration, where you could write off the cost of your brand new equipment. You could write that off in-year, and that tax savings is \$1 billion a year to the businesses. So now we have \$2.5 billion and another \$1 billion. That's less revenue for the province.

Then we lowered the cost of industrial and commercial energy by 15%. That's \$1.3 billion. Then, through the great work of our Ministers of Red Tape Reduction, we have seen almost \$1 billion in savings. It's getting close to \$1 billion in annual savings.

The Liberal government, before we were elected, had put in a series of tax increases, and one was to come due January 2019, about a half a year after we were elected, but we did not let that go through—\$465 million annual savings by not having that tax, and then we stopped any tax increases when we were elected. So not only did we not go ahead with the Liberal \$465-million tax; we stopped any tax increases—not even your hunting licence. But then we rolled back the provincial share of local property taxes by \$450 million, and that's a savings to business. Add it all up, and a whole bunch of other savings that we did: We reduced our revenue from the business community by \$8 billion annually. So the business community saved \$8 billion a year; we had \$8 billion a year—temporarily, I'll say—less revenue.

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What did the business community do? They did exactly what we expected them to do: They put 704,000 people to work since we got elected five years ago. Now, those 704,000 people pay income tax. That's 704,000 more income tax cheques the province had than the day we started. And those companies that hired those 700,000 obviously got bigger. Without increasing the tax rate, our tax revenue increased.

You can see where I'm going with this, Speaker. When we got elected, our tax revenue was \$154 billion annually. We rolled back our revenue. We let the business community keep that to hire those 700,000 people. We had a short-term rollback of \$8 billion every year, but today our revenue is \$194 billion. We started with \$154 billion in revenue; by lowering taxes, our revenue went to \$194 billion. That is economics 101. That is a very conservative platform, a very conservative way of looking at things.

The other side will say, "You need higher revenue? Raise taxes," not understanding at all that a carbon tax or other taxes—when you raise those, you punish the families, you punish the business community, you stifle investment, you stop everything, you don't grow and you just keep increasing taxes, because your revenue keeps falling by increasing taxes.

It works the other way: When you lower taxes, your revenue goes up. That is exactly what happened in Ontario. It is an absolute fact. It is inarguable. You cannot argue against the fact that we rolled back \$8 billion in revenue to make \$40 billion a year higher revenue, a \$22-billion-a-year increase from corporate taxes. That's where that money came from. That's the money that we put into health care and education, the \$200 billion that we're investing in infrastructure, buildings, roads and bridges; and 50 hospitals and schools that we're building. All of that comes from that new revenue, because we lowered taxes.

Somebody has to give that lesson to the Liberal government in Ottawa, that lower taxes create higher

revenue. When we're out selling Ontario, it becomes so much more difficult in the US, because they do not have this punishing carbon tax in the US. It comes up at every meeting: "Yes, but what about that tax you have in Canada?" That's what they ask; they ask us specifically about that carbon tax, because they know that the fuel they're going to consume is not a choice.

It's not a choice for the construction worker who has to get to their worksite in the morning, or the parents who have to drive the kids to the hockey rink. It's not a choice; it's a necessity. The federal government has put this burden, and that's why cutting the gas and fuel tax that we're doing—we've reduced that by—I think the Premier uses the number 10.7 cents. That's our plan. We reduced the tax of gasoline. The federal government increases the tax by 14 cents on gasoline. We can continue to do things like reduce the licence plate sticker renewal fees, all of these kinds of things. Everything that we're doing is to put money back in the pockets of families, back in the pockets of that farmer, the business community, the end-users, so they have more money. Everything that that Liberal government in Ottawa is doing with the carbon tax is taking money out of your pockets. It's just really simple: The more money that you put in the pockets of the families, drivers, the better off our economy is.

Speaker, we're doing everything that we can in our government to continue to reduce costs for families. The Minister of Energy had a great announcement last week. As of November 1, we're going to increase the electricity rebate. For the average residential customer, it will decrease their bills by \$26 a month. That is the kind of relief that the people of Ontario need to grapple with the increased costs they're getting from the federal government.

So earlier we talked about this \$27 billion in auto EV. The member from Guelph certainly was right: that in itself is going to lower our carbon emissions. The fact that we are seeing this EV revolution, and it's being led, by the way, in Ontario. It was 2019 that Reuters announced that there would be \$300 billion spent on EV production in the next five years and zero of it—zero—was coming to Canada, zero was coming to Ontario. The fact that we turned that ship around—that sinking ship that the Liberals, supported by the NDP, left us in 2018 when we won our first majority—we were able to have an announcement by Bloomberg only a short while ago that from zero to \$27 billion in EV investment. We are the number two global supplier of EV parts in all of the world. We are only behind China. We are number one in North America, ahead of all of the US.

Ontario is leading this EV revolution and the fight to get to zero carbon. That is being led here in Ontario and a big part of that is the fact that we are making green steel, not only in Algoma, in Sault Ste. Marie, but at Dofasco in Hamilton. And that green steel—when we make an EV in Ontario, you are buying a car that is assembled with 94% clean energy, you're buying a battery that is assembled with 100% clean energy and a car that has green steel all

around you. You are driving a true, clean electric vehicle. That changed at Dofasco.

To go to an electric arc furnace from burning coal is equivalent to taking one million cars off the road. The same thing can be said for Algoma in northern Ontario. By converting from coal to an electric arc furnace, that's what we have done. That is part of this EV revolution that we have created—green steel. We've created clean energy assembly of vehicles; 100% clean energy batteries. You buy a battery made in Kentucky, it's 6% clean energy. You buy a battery made in Indiana, it's 7% clean energy. You buy a battery made in Ontario, and it's 100% clean energy. You have a true zero-emission goal when you buy products that are made here in Ontario. So we will continue to be laser-focused.

Each and every one of these investments that we see these companies making, they're all geared here not only because we have this clean energy and not only because we have the mega sites—we have the talent. We have that talent, and that talent in Ontario deserves to be able to get to and from their place of business without having to be punished by this carbon tax that the federal government has continued to place here.

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Despite this carbon tax, we have been able to be successful in Ontario. Even though the Liberals and the NDP continue to vote against measures we've introduced to make life more affordable, we continue—but now we encourage the federal government to reconsider their approach. Scrap the carbon tax. Give the people the much-needed relief at a time they're already struggling with the increased cost of living.

Speaker, our government will always work to put more money in the pockets of hard-working people of the province. We encourage the federal government to see what we've done here in Ontario. See what lower taxes has done. See the revenue that has been increased because we lowered the taxes. Lower taxes equal higher revenue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Harris): I beg to inform the House that the adjournment debate standing in the name of the member for Orléans scheduled for today has been withdrawn. Consequently, the adjournment debate will not be held today.

Further debate?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise today to discuss the impact that the carbon tax has had on grocery items and food in Ontario. Since the implementation of the carbon tax, the people of Ontario have been paying more and more every single day for food, for transportation, for goods and services. They've been paying more to heat their homes. They've been paying more to fuel their cars. The carbon tax has been making life more expensive for millions of people in Ontario. Living here has become more expensive because the delivery of goods and services has increased, and this is costing people more to live. More of their hard-earned money is going to paying a tax that does nothing for them. This is more money out of their pockets to eat, to get to work, to learn, to buy a home, and to live.

Our government spoke up at the beginning of 2018 about the carbon tax and said this tax would be a real

challenge for the people of Ontario. We fought that tax tooth and nail because we knew it would lead to poorer outcomes for the people in our province.

The carbon tax has contributed to inflation, and as the cost of living rises, the price of food goes up far more than inflation. If we can eliminate this tax, we can help untangle our economy from the grips of inflation and make it easier for the people of Ontario to afford a trip to the grocery store. With the increasing cost of gas, that trickles down into everything that we do.

The Ford government's gas tax cut has saved the typical Ontario family more than \$450 since it was put in place just over a year ago. But while our government is lowering costs at the pumps, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the federal government are doing the exact opposite. The federal carbon tax currently costs 14 cents per litre of gasoline. By 2030, when the fuel regulations are fully implemented, carbon taxes will increase the price of gasoline to about 37 cents per litre—and then HST on top of that. Just imagine how that cost affects families who are having a hard time getting by right now.

Carbon taxes increase the price of food. Farmers are paying more for fertilizer, and it costs them more to harvest food and to transport produce. All of these costs ultimately get passed along to consumers. The cost of bread, milk, eggs, cereal and produce have all increased since the carbon tax was introduced and makes for harder choices at the grocery store today, and in the future.

This unnecessary carbon tax is creating hardships for people in my riding and across the province. More people are turning to food banks to supplement their groceries. Food banks across the country are reporting record numbers of users. Many children and seniors are using food banks as well. Unfortunately, some Ontario families have to choose to heat their home or put food on the table. Seniors are amongst the most vulnerable population in Ontario, and they, too, are struggling with the rising cost of groceries. The cost of delivering food has gone up exponentially, leaving families and seniors in my riding and ridings across Ontario turning to food banks more and more.

Since 2020, the Burlington Food Bank has helped clients over 50,000 times. That's just one of the food banks in my riding. In addition to the Burlington Food Bank, there is also Food for Life, the Compassion Society of Halton, Food for Thought, St. Christopher's Church, Wellington Square United Church and many, many more just in my community of Burlington helping to feed people just in my riding.

An even more alarming statistic is that one in seven food bank users in Canada is employed. People are struggling to afford the necessities they need, meaning they are actually able to donate less in order to keep their money for their own means and their own needs.

Our government sees that Ontarians are in need of some relief. A simple place to start would be the carbon tax. With the cost of living going up, our government is committed to putting the money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, Ontarians no longer have to renew licence plate stickers.

The gas tax has been reduced. College and university tuition fees have been reduced by 10% and then frozen. We've increased ODSP. We reduced red tape and brought thousands upon thousands of well-paying jobs back to Ontario.

Unfortunately, the opposition continue to vote against the measures we've introduced, measures that would make life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

We live in a first-world country in the amazing province of Ontario. We have a world-class education system with some of the top universities in the world, top research facilities, top-notch manufacturing, and we are attracting businesses from around the world and skilled trades workers as well.

With all of Ontario's achievements, food security continues to be a growing concern. When your population is going hungry and can't get to work, or pay their bills or heat their homes because of the rising cost of inflation, the last thing they need is another tax that drives up the cost of food.

The federal government that is increasing the price of moving agricultural products isn't concerned about with bringing food costs down, but we are, Speaker. The delivery of every product we have in this province is affected by the carbon tax, which again continues to make life more expensive. The carbon tax was originally introduced as an incentive to reduce carbon emissions, but it has only increased the cost of living in our province and continues to burn holes in the pockets of Ontarians.

Speaker, we can fight for the environment, we can fight for Ontarians and we have the solutions. Under the Ministry of Energy, our government is bringing back nuclear power, which is clean energy that doesn't need a carbon tax. That extra \$50 a month of carbon tax for folks in my riding translates to about with \$600 more a year that they could be using to buy groceries for their families and subsidize tuition. However, the federal government once again increased the carbon tax this past April.

Instead of helping Ontarians reduce living costs, the people in Ontario and Canada were hit once again. Ontarians need relief. They need relief at the pumps. They need relief on their home heating bills and, most importantly, they need relief on the cost of groceries and food. Ontarians need to be supported, and they need to be heard. We're hoping that the federal politicians are listening and scrap the carbon tax.

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

Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent-Leamington, has moved private member's notice of motion number 69. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

Report continues in volume B.

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| Bresee, Ric (PC) | Hastings—Lennox and Addington | |
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| Byers, Rick (PC) | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound | |
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|--|--|---|
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| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
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| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
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| Hsu, Ted (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Jama, Sarah (IND) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | |
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| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
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| Sabawy, Sheref (PC) | Mississauga—Erin Mills | |
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| Smith, David (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | |
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| Smith, Laura (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
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| 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 Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain | |
| Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports |
| 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 |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
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| Vaugcois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| West, Jamie (NDP) | Sudbury | |
| Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes |
| Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| Vacant | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| Vacant | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | |