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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 31 October 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 31 octobre 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER FOR CONSUMERS,
BETTER FOR BUSINESSES ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR MIEUX
SERVIR LES CONSOMMATEURS
ET LES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to enact the Consumer Protection Act, 2023, to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and to amend or repeal various other Acts / Projet de loi 142, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2023 sur la protection du consommateur, à modifier la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et à modifier ou abroger diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and add the voices of the great people of London North Centre to this debate on Bill 142, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act. When we look at this bill, any bill that purports to increase protections for consumers is one that is easily supportable, one that the official opposition can easily get behind. Following the hour-long lead for our critic for consumer protection, I'd like to add my words to this.

If we take a look at what experts have been calling for for a number of years, they've been calling for regulation on new home sales and their warranties. This bill puts in new provisions for NOSIs, or the notices of security interest, but does not include any provisions on putting in rental hot water heaters in contracts for new homes. This is a situation whereby people will sign the biggest purchase of their entire life, and then, after the dust has settled, once they've moved in, once they start receiving those bills, they realize they've signed up for something that they didn't necessarily know they were agreeing to. This is a huge and tremendous concern.

Additionally, this government has taken it upon themselves to talk about talking. We don't actually see actions within this bill that will take out the beating heart of the situation where consumers are exploited by unethical HVAC companies. Back with the Liberal government, we

saw that there was a ban on door-to-door sales. That was good. However, there were no teeth for that legislation, so there really wasn't much by way of enforcement. This government has heard for numerous years about the pernicious and exploitative actions of many of these HVAC companies.

You see, Speaker, they no longer—in most cases, I should say—sell door to door. Instead, what they will do is they will send an email, they will make phone calls and they will set up an appointment within a person's home. Typically, these companies prey upon the elderly. They prey upon people living with disabilities. They prey upon newcomers. They engage in high-pressure sales tactics, making claims that are patently false, promising savings that never occur and will often say that this is part of a government program and really misrepresent the services that they provide. If that weren't bad enough, what they'll do is they will have a consumer engage or sign a contract which they don't explain the terms of—and that should be in contravention of the Consumer Protection Act to begin with, because contracts need to be in clear, plain language so the consumers can understand them, but they, in their huckster snake-oil tactics, will absolutely not get into what the details are.

I've seen many of these contracts, and I know this government has as well. This government, though, is talking about talking. They want to engage in a consultation period to discuss this issue when the issue is well known. They will have heard it from many of their constituents.

CBC Marketplace has done tremendous investigation on this topic. On January 14, 2022, CBC Marketplace had a hidden-camera exposé on the tactics that these companies will engage in. They witnessed high-pressure sales tactics. They witnessed claims that were not backed up in actual truth. They saw these salespeople engage in what this government should stand up against, yet this government wants to just talk about it. They don't want to act. They don't want to actually do the right thing and protect seniors, people living with disabilities and newcomers by cutting out the beating heart of this issue, which is liens attached to property titles.

The CBC Marketplace exposé, for those of you who would like to view it, was entitled Hidden Cameras Capture Decisive Tactics Used to Sell Overpriced HVAC Contracts. In that exposé, they talked about a company called Ontario Green Savings. You see, oftentimes these companies will use the name of the province, so that people automatically think there's some sort of credibility or some sort of connection to the government when there actually is none—to our knowledge, but who knows;

perhaps there is. Maybe this is why we don't see any action and we see just more talking about liens and NOSIs, rather than actually making sure that they're not being foisted upon people. In this, Karen Norgaard, of Cornwall, signed two contracts for an air conditioner and a furnace. What will happen in these situations is that they will be sold equipment that is very inexpensive in comparison to what they actually pay.

I want to take a look at a contract that I have. This is from Green Retrofit Program Capital Inc. This contract is in particular for a water heater. It's—let me see—an electric water heater, and it's \$60 per month; it doesn't seem unreasonable. I mean, we know that Reliance, which has long had a corner share of the market, costs less. However, much of this is not actually filled in. It's very strange. We see that after tax, this will cost \$67 or \$68.

Then, this contract is full of terms and conditions. Within this—and this should be in contravention of the Consumer Protection Act—there is a section in here where it states: “You hereby grant us an exclusive security interest in the equipment as collateral security for the consumer amounts owing by you to us under this agreement,” and it goes on. At that point, the customer is meant to initial, thereby giving away their rights. In that simple initial, a consumer is saying, “Yes, you can issue a NOSI and attach a lien against title.” They're giving away their right under the Consumer Protection Act, as set out in the contract that they push, badger and berate people until they sign.

In that CBC's Marketplace exposé, we actually saw some of the tactics of these high-pressure salespeople. We heard from folks who actually had to curse, swear and yell at the salesperson just to get them to leave the home. We know that this is an issue. It has been known for years.

0910

Now, within this, if I go through this contract—and, of course, this information is varied, but don't worry, I'm getting to it—much is missing. The UPC code is missing; the sticker from the equipment. And then when you actually look at the payment schedule, Speaker—it's buried—it is a contract for 144 months. That's 12 years. They've bamboozled elderly folks, they've bamboozled people living with disabilities and they've bamboozled newcomers into signing a 12-year contract.

If that weren't bad enough, within the provisions of this contract, the equipment appreciates in value. They charge interest on that, so every year the cost of that equipment, which is not the top of the line—it's often the bargain basement version that you can get anywhere. They will charge yet more and more and more. Speaker, I don't have to explain to you compounding interest, but oftentimes, this equipment will cost a tremendous amount of money, so something that would be a \$500 water heater will end up costing \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000. It just depends on the contract that these unethical businesses will force and cajole and bamboozle someone into signing.

If that weren't bad enough, oftentimes, these companies will hide from responsibility by selling off that lien to yet another company. In effect, they will distance themselves

from legal responsibility. Also, if a complaint is made, the company will say, “Well, that was the salesperson. They're no longer working with us. We apologize. But sorry, it's a contract. You've signed it.” They will then take that and sell it off to another company, who may in turn sell it off to another company. I've seen instances where it's moved six times. Guess what, Speaker? Every time that contract moves over to a new person, they attach yet more money to it, so that person is being exploited again and again and again.

CBC also had an article. This was from 2018. This was before this government was elected, so they should be aware of this. It's titled “Homebuyers Feel Duped by Hot Water Tank Rentals Included in Their New Homes”—people finding that they are locked into equipment that they never really agreed to. In this example, for instance, Nadia Mendola is “living with a contract with Enercare that lasts for the ‘useful life’ of the appliance (an average of 14 years), paying” \$56 per month. It doesn't seem unreasonable, but if she buys out the equipment, it's \$3,600, three times the cost of equipment offered in some stores.

In 2016, the Ontario Energy Group was exposed in another CBC article where Taylor Wild found that he owes \$20,000 after discovering a lien, because he, unfortunately, signed a contract with Ontario Energy Group for HVAC equipment.

It's disturbing that this government wants to talk about this issue but doesn't want to act. The evidence is very clear. The evidence is here before us.

Dennis Crawford has called the lien “the beating heart of this scam.”

A letter to the Ontario Minister of Government and Consumer Services from July 14 of 2020 requested “increased disclosure in rental appliance contracts.” This was from Anthony Durocher, the Deputy Commissioner of Competition of the Competition Promotion Branch. Does this bill, Bill 142, answer this situation, where people are being absolutely exploited, where they are being effectively tricked, having their security taken away?

Imagine that: a senior who is hoping to downsize. Maybe they're an empty nester; maybe they're somebody who simply has a home that no longer suits their needs, and they're worried about their safety. They want to go to something that's more appropriate, perhaps a condo apartment, perhaps a bungalow, something that would be a little bit more easily manageable and safer. They go to sell, and then they find that a company has taken a chunk out of their house. They've put in bargain basement equipment and charged them \$20,000 for it. It's unacceptable. It's unacceptable that we live in a province where seniors are being exploited, where people living with disabilities are being exploited and where newcomers are being exploited by unethical businesses, such as the ones I've just mentioned, and that the government just wants to talk about it.

Now, further, I also wanted to discuss today reforms to Tarion. This government, when they were in opposition, and some would say an effective opposition, talked

chapter and verse about how they would overhaul Tarion, how when they were in power they were going to do the right thing. Yet this government, once they assumed power, changed their tune completely. Just like how they were so fond of the Auditor General when they were in opposition and simply loved all of the work that the Auditor General had to do, and when they got into power, suddenly they weren't friends again. Imagine that; I wonder why.

Also, despite not overhauling Tarion, which is what they had promised, they actually created yet another regulatory authority, the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, almost to confuse things yet further for Ontario consumers. On the side of the official opposition, we've called for a public audit into Tarion and the system. We want to see an end to the industry-controlled monopoly. Within the Tarion board, many people who are supposedly consumer advocates also actually work for the building industry. We haven't seen a proper consumer advocate on the Tarion board.

Now, to turn to the recommendations for the member from Humber River–Black Creek, our critic for consumer protection, I was pleased and honoured to sign on to private members' legislation calling for the establishment of a consumer watchdog—someone who would actually look out for seniors, someone who would look out for people living with disabilities, someone who would look out for Canadians and the rest of Ontarians who might be tricked into some very shady business practices.

We see businesses, individuals and even entire industries taking advantage of consumers within this province, and this government has failed to act yet again. It can be extremely difficult for folks to pursue justice. In the example of all of these HVAC liens and the NOSIs—for consumers to actually achieve justice, they'll often have to pay a lawyer, and paying thousands of dollars to have the services of a lawyer may not get back the actual money that they are owed. It's shocking to think that people are really only able to achieve justice in this province if they have money. It's a clear separation, it's a classist separation that folks are unable to achieve justice, simply because they can't pay the lawyer fees.

Dennis Crawford has done wonderful work on this file, and I must commend him. He's a Stratford-area lawyer who has really called out the issues that have been created by government neglect, by government's ignoring the needs of people and allowed an exploitative industry to take hold and to become extraordinarily rich on the backs of people who simply wanted to improve their home.

You know, our consumer watchdog was meant to be sort of a one-stop shop where people could register complaints. It would hold the power to investigate businesses. It would also be able to uphold these consumer protection laws. You see, the contract that I showed you earlier is in contravention of consumer protection laws, but do we see the government acting on that? No. They simply want to talk about talking. Talk is cheap. The consumer watchdog would also release public reports similar to the Auditor General or the Ombudsman of Ontario. They would be

able to levy fines and other penalties against businesses that are found to not have acted in accordance with consumer protection legislation.

0920

I wanted to add some quotes from consumer protection advocates who were very much in support of a consumer watchdog. There's Ellen Roseman, who is a former consumer advocate columnist for the Toronto Star. Ellen states:

"When I started my journalism career in 1975, I decided to focus on consumer issues and advocate for people who needed help resolving problems with large companies that were shutting them out. I'm semi-retired now, but I still hear from desperate people seeking advice. Many of us find it hard to avoid losing money to misleading online pitches, service suppliers that promise refunds and never pay up, multi-page legal contracts that are impossible to understand and too-good-to-be-true credit deals full of hidden fees."

Ellen heartily supported our Bill 77, the Ontario Consumer Watchdog Act; this government voted it down.

Barbara Captijn, who is also a consumer rights advocate, states:

"The Ontario Consumer Watchdog Act is a light for consumers in the current feeble state of consumer protection in Ontario. The patchwork of legislation, regulations, and legal grey areas in the current landscape is difficult for consumers to navigate.

"This bill addresses a much-needed area for modernization, and can help fix injustices and imbalances in the current system, and could help improve the lives of everyday Ontarians."

Dr. Karen Somerville, who is the president of Canadians for Properly Built Homes, enthusiastically supported our consumer watchdog act. Karen talks about the decline in consumer protections across the board in Ontario for a number of years. She states:

"It's obvious to most that Tarion is beyond repair. And now, the new Home Construction Regulatory Authority (HCRA), known broadly as 'Tarion II,' displays many of Tarion's problems."

Speaker, while I am in support of increased protections for consumers, there is much missing from this Bill 142, Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act. I would like to see this government stop talking about talking and actually get to the work of protecting consumers, stopping NOSIs and liens against title, and making sure that they are looking out for seniors, people living with disabilities and newcomers from falling prey to these terrible schemes.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

Mr. Brian Riddell: While I agree with some of the stuff that my fellow on the other side of the aisle has said, I don't agree with everything. We have a time that we're going to be consulting with stakeholders, with the people of Ontario, which ends on December 1, to get their input. This bill has not been updated in 20 years, which is a shame for your government, the Liberals and for us. But it's being done. To counter some of the things you said,

we want the contracts to be simpler so people can understand them on both sides of the event that's happening with these people.

I've seen videos from the Waterloo Regional Police of a gentleman who was—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Question? You can ask your question; you've got 10 seconds left.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'm getting there.

Does the member not understand that we are doing something and we are going ahead and that we are consulting with stakeholders and the people of Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Cambridge for his question. You talk about 20 years of waiting; we can talk about the five years this government has been in power and has seen all of this news coverage. The problem with that is that while they talk about talking and they talk about acting, groups like Ontario Green Savings and the Green Retrofit Program Capital are still in action. They are still exploiting people. They are still taking advantage of people. And they are still signing contracts with vulnerable folks.

There is no indication from this government that they will take those liens that are currently being written and make them retroactive. Will they take away all liens for folks who have been exploited in this way? That's my question. Is the government going to do the right thing and do well by consumers, or are they just going to talk about talking?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from London North Centre for those thoughtful comments on the bill. I have a situation in my riding where 32 constituents have been waiting five years for a developer to build the homes that they have put down tens of thousands of dollars for. The developer has failed to communicate with them about timelines and has provided inaccurate information. These people who are making one of the largest purchases of their lives have been begging this government to act to protect them. They filed an appeal to the Home Construction Regulatory Authority 28 months ago, and there has been no action by HCRA, no penalties levied, no fines, and no action taken.

What does this bill do to help consumers like my constituents who are unable to get homes built or are getting homes that are built of shoddy construction in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa West—Nepean for bringing forward a terrible situation that is happening to many people across Ontario. You see, this government, when pressed about Tarion or HCRA, will often just dodge and say, "Yes, we need to stand up for consumers." But you're absolutely right: We see folks who are making the biggest purchase of their lives. They've put down a down payment. The materials costs go up, and the developer will come back to those people and say, "Well, you're going to have to give a little bit more money." We know that is against the law. We

know that is entirely inappropriate, but these people are over a barrel.

We could have a government that stands up for people, we could have a government that overhauls Tarion and we could have a government that has actual consumer protection advocates on both boards, yet they choose not to. The Premier himself has said, during the price gouging during COVID-19, that he would be some big gorilla and he would look after things, but not one action has been taken on people who do this sort of gouging or people who take advantage of folks who have signed on the biggest purchase of their life—their home. That's disgraceful.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to the next question.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member from the opposition for sharing his point of view, but we are aware that all of his examples were past tense. That means we are moving forward. This bill is to help protect the customers in Ontario to move forward. This bill has called to strengthen protections for Ontarians from unfair business practices. The bill's name is the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act.

There is one key component in this bill: consultation. My question to the member is—yes, you have a lot of great ideas. Are you going to bring your stakeholders to join this consultation to make this bill workable?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Markham—Unionville for his question, but I'm a little concerned with the way in which he's positioning it, because he said that my comments were about the past tense. I'm sure I could bring up many that are happening right now where NOSIs are being attached to title in the form of liens and that sort of thing, but what concerns me is this government. They say they are looking forward, but what about the people who have signed those contracts? Will they be looked after? Will those folks who have had their savings exploited, who have had these unethical businesses take a chunk out of their home, will they be made whole? Will this government do the right thing? Will they look after them?

You can't ignore these—you can't say, "Moving forward, all of these terrible things are bad, but to all the people who have come before, sorry; too bad, so sad." Is this government going to stand up for people who have been exploited? Yes or no?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Chris Glover: I really want to thank the member for his comments this morning.

For 15 years, the Liberals allowed these dubious business practices that exploited people, in particular seniors and people with disabilities, locking them into contracts, long-term contracts, completely unfair contracts for hot water tanks, and then this government has allowed the same people to be exploited for another five years. Yet you're saying that all of that exploitation, the liens that have been taken out on people's homes, the up to \$20,000 you were talking about—are those going to be expunged? Is this government actually going to stand up for consum-

ers, or is this just wordplay and window dressing that they're doing?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: That is a great question, to my colleague from Spadina–Fort York. The Ontario NDP would stand for the removal of all liens. They would stand for ones retroactively, because if it is found that that is done in bad faith moving forward, how can it have been done in good faith looking backwards?

Many people who reached out initially will make a complaint to Consumer Protection Ontario, but do you know what they're told, Speaker? They're told to get a lawyer. Justice comes at a price because of this government's inaction, their removal of investments within community legal aid and so many more things. It is really a disgrace.

It's horrible to think that we've seen, year after year after year, exposés, undercover investigations, and this government says now that, well, they just want to talk about it, they want to hear about it. The evidence is clear. It's clear that there aren't consumer protection advocates on Tarion nor HCRA. We need to actually think of consumers in this province and not just talk about it.

0930

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question.

Hon. Doug Downey: I've been listening intently to my friend, and he was talking about the action—they would take the action, they did take the action, they might take. He references Bill 77 that didn't pass. Outside of setting up bureaucracy, what action does that bill ask for?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the Attorney General for his question. It's interesting that he's talking about setting up bureaucracy when this government, when they were in opposition for 15 long years, promised that they would get rid of the monopoly known as Tarion, that they would overhaul it. Instead of fulfilling their promises, instead of being good to their word, instead of doing the honourable thing, they instead created yet another regulatory body, the Home Construction Regulatory Authority. They created yet more bureaucracy, using their words.

Now, had that been something that advanced the purposes and the causes of consumers, and had it protected people, had it stood up for people in the Ottawa area who were having to add yet more money to an unethical developer just to honour the contract they had already signed, maybe that would be something that the official opposition could support. But instead, we see the same systems at play again and again and again: consumers being exploited by government neglect. We see words; we don't see actions. Let's see some more actions. Let's see you stand up for seniors.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for another round of questions. We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Billy Pang: I am delighted about this opportunity to express my support for the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023. I'll share my time with my colleague for Mississauga–Lakeshore

This proposed legislation is a significant step forward in enhancing consumer protection and ensuring a fair and transparent marketplace for both consumers and businesses in our great province of Ontario. In an ever-evolving world, it is crucial that our consumer protection laws keep pace with the changing landscape of commerce.

The last comprehensive review of consumer protection laws took place nearly two decades ago in 2005. Since then, our marketplace has undergone a substantial transformation with the advent of online shopping, the proliferation of apps and new modes of conducting business. It is high time that we update and strengthen our consumer protection framework to address the challenges and opportunities presented by this digital age.

This proposed legislation encompasses a wide array of initiatives aimed at enhancing consumer protection and supporting businesses in their compliance efforts. I would like to highlight several key aspects of the bill and the potential positive impact it can have on our consumers and businesses.

One of the most important aspects of this legislation is its commitment to tackling unfair business practices. It explicitly prohibits specific unfair practices such as price gouging and taking advantage of a consumer's inability to understand contractual language. By doing so, we are sending a strong message that unscrupulous business practices will not be tolerated in our province. The bill also updates the list of prohibited false, deceptive or misleading representations, ensuring that customers are protected from false claims and deceptive practices by businesses.

The media repeatedly reported on the issue notice of security interests, called NOSIs, shedding light on the challenges faced by unsuspecting homeowners, including some in Markham–Unionville. A NOSI is a registration on the land registry system that serves to notify third parties that a lender or lessor has a vested interest in a fixture on the land. Fixtures can include essential home equipment such as water heaters or furnaces that are installed in the consumer's home.

These NOSIs are a vital part of the business landscape, allowing companies to protect their interests in goods should the homeowner default on payment, decide to sell their property or refinance it. However, NOSIs can lead to misunderstanding and disputes. Some unscrupulous businesses have misused NOSIs as leverage when consumers attempt to sell their homes or seek to refinance their properties. These tactics can force consumers to pay excessive amounts to clear the NOSI from their property title or even compel them to engage in costly, time-consuming legal battles to have the NOSI discharged.

Over the years, I have heard from constituents in my riding that NOSIs were placed on homes without their knowledge, resulting in financial burdens far beyond the value of the rented equipment.

The Personal Property Security Act allows businesses to register NOSIs on the title to land. It also provides remedies when consumers have fulfilled their obligations related to the NOSI but the business has not discharged it. However, the process has always been fraught with

complexities, leaving many consumers in precarious situations.

The proposed new legislation seeks to bring much-needed clarity and fairness to the matter of NOSIs. It aims to clarify a business's obligations to discharge a NOSI under specific circumstances, ensuring businesses follow a transparent process. It also paves the way for consumers to receive assistance from the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery in enforcing a business's obligation to discharge a NOSI.

This legislation acknowledges the vital role NOSIs play in the business landscape but is determined to prevent their misuse at the expense of unsuspecting consumers. It reinforces the need for clear and fair procedures and ensures that businesses act responsibly when registering and discharging NOSIs. This way, consumers can have confidence that their property rights are protected and they are not subjected to excessive costs or legal disputes when attempting to sell or refinance their homes.

The proposed legislation's approach towards NOSIs demonstrates this government's commitment to promoting fairness and transparency in the marketplace, ensuring that consumers are not unduly burdened by these security interests. It also represents a significant step forward in enhancing consumer protection and supporting businesses in adhering to these essential rules.

The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery is actively seeking public input on addressing and reducing the harmful and inappropriate use of NOSIs against unsuspecting consumers. I greatly appreciate this engagement with the public and stakeholders as it demonstrates this government's commitment to creating a fair and just marketplace.

This bill addresses another issue that many homeowners in Ontario have faced, that is, predatory practices by some suppliers leasing equipment to homeowners. It establishes specific rules for long-term leases of home-comfort appliances such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. These purchase-cost-plus leases are often a source of frustration for homeowners who wish to exit their contracts. This legislation establishes a 10-day cooling-off period and sets limits on termination costs for these leases, providing homeowners with greater protection.

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The proposed legislation prohibits businesses from including terms in contracts that deter consumers from publishing reviews or billing consumers in response to the content of reviews. This promotes transparency and accountability in the marketplace.

This legislation is not just about protecting consumers; it's also about supporting businesses in their efforts to comply with consumer protection rules. It introduces a single set of core rules that apply to most consumer contracts, whether for online or in-person purchases. This will simplify compliance and reduce the administrative burden for businesses.

The proposed amendments to the Consumer Reporting Act will enable consumers to assess their credit informa-

tion and credit scores electronically once a month, providing them with valuable insights into their financial health.

By strengthening consumer protection and promoting fair business practices, we can boost consumer confidence, boost economic growth and create a marketplace where all stakeholders can thrive. I urge all members to join me in supporting this legislation, which will make Ontario a better place for consumers and businesses alike.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's an honour to rise here this morning to support Bill 142, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act. I want to thank the member for Markham–Unionville for sharing his time with me today, and I want to congratulate my former colleague at the Treasury Board both on his appointment as the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and on his first bill in his important new role. I want to thank him and his team for all the work they're doing on this bill.

The minister and many of our colleagues have explained how, if passed, Bill 142 would modernize and update the Consumer Protection Act for the first time in 20 years. It includes many changes that the public and stakeholders have asked for over the last three years. Many of these new amendments against unfair business practices will help protect seniors, immigrants and other vulnerable Ontarians, who are often targets of scams, fraud and identity theft.

This morning, I'd like to focus in particular on schedule 2 and on the minister's proposed amendments to Ontario's Consumer Reporting Act. As you know, Speaker, this law, which was originally introduced in 1971, governs the collection and reporting of credit information about consumers by reporting agencies like TransUnion and Equifax. In the late 1990s, these credit reporting agencies began to allow consumers to access their credit reports online for a fee, usually between \$10 and \$20, to cover the technical costs of making credit reporting available online.

Twenty years ago, President George W. Bush and the United States Congress passed the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, to allow American consumers to obtain free online credit reporting at least once per year from each agency. Many other countries have passed similar laws because they understand that any technical costs were recovered a long time ago.

But in Ontario, the current section 12 of the Consumer Reporting Act requires the reporting agencies to provide free credit reports only after a written request, not online. There is only one physical location for each agency—Burlington for TransUnion; North York for Equifax—which is not practical for most consumers, so they would either have to make a request by mail and wait several weeks, or pay \$15 online. And since there can be differences between the two credit reports from TransUnion and Equifax, you would have to pay both. This becomes a major profit centre for the reporting agencies. If a million Ontarians requested their two credit reports online each year, it would cost up to \$30 million.

That's why, earlier in our first term, in 2018, I met with Bill Walker, who was then the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, and his staff. I was joined by my friend and a constituent of mine, Jim Aziz, an expert on international consumer reporting, who was involved in drafting Ontario's original consumer reporting act 52 years ago, in 1971. Since then, he has worked to update and modernize consumer reporting laws and regulations in over 20 countries, to meet the latest international standards. He has worked with the International Monetary Fund, the American State Department, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the UK Department for International Development, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Today, Mr. Aziz says that the amendments introduced in schedule 2 of Bill 142 will help Ontario to meet international best practices in consumer credit reporting, with many new protections for Ontario consumers. I'll take a moment now to speak about a few of these.

First, this bill would amend section 12 of the act to provide consumers with free access to their personal credit reports at least once per month online and at least two times each year by mail or by phone. As Mr. Aziz says, it is important for consumers to be able to view their credit reports, not just when they're applying for a mortgage or other large credit purchase, but all the time, to help ensure that the information in their credit reports is accurate, and to see if there is any evidence of identity fraud or theft.

As the minister said, within the last five years alone, there have been major data leaks at both TransUnion and Equifax. A TransUnion data leak in 2019 affected 37,000 Canadians. An Equifax leak in 2017 was the largest in history, affecting over 150 million people worldwide, including 19,000 here in Canada. As the minister said, since then, our government has held public consultations about amendments to the act to help consumers monitor their credit information, and to protect against identity theft.

The proposed section 12.4 allows consumers to place a security freeze on their information with TransUnion and Equifax. This is one of the best ways to prevent an identity thief from opening a new credit account in your name. I understand that the ministry has received over 20 requests for a security freeze option in Ontario, just this year alone. The security freeze has been an option in the US since 2018, and it was introduced in Quebec earlier this year.

The proposed section 12.6 would allow consumers to add a statement in their credit report of up to 200 words. This can be used to provide valuable context about a particular account. For example, if you're a victim of identity theft, or if you missed loan payments because you were laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic, a statement can help provide potential lenders with information about your history.

The proposed section 23 would provide consumers with the right to take legal action against credit reporting agencies and to seek damages when they don't comply with the act or the regulations. This should make it easier for consumers to correct false information in the credit reports.

Bill 142 would also update the penalties in the Consumer Reporting Act for the first time since 1990. The penalty for directors and officers would double, from \$25,000 to \$50,000, and the penalty for corporations would increase from \$100,000 to \$250,000. This would bring the penalties in the act in line with the laws in other sectors and ensure that consumers can hold these agencies accountable.

Speaker, last year the minister and I had the opportunity to meet with TransUnion's insurance and analytics team at our office at the Treasury Board. Clarke Cross, TransUnion's director of government relations, also attended, and I was glad to read his comments supporting Bill 142:

"TransUnion is pleased to see the government taking action to update credit consumer reporting. Through an extensive consultation process, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023, will provide people with modern and enhanced tools for managing their credit information. We're excited for changes that continue to empower consumers and help companies like TransUnion to better serve Ontarians."

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Speaker, I should note that Equifax also supports free online credit reports each month, and many of the other changes proposed in Bill 142. Together, these changes reflect the latest international standards for best practice.

Again, I want to thank our minister and his team for all their work on this bill, and I hope all the members will support this. This bill will make a big change here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the member from Markham–Unionville. These NOSIs and liens that we've been discussing this morning are unjust enrichment. Will this government cancel the bad actors' NOSIs and liens, or do Conservatives support unjust enrichment?

Mr. Billy Pang: As I mentioned earlier in this House, this is a bill to help us to move forward. Yes, there are bad actors; there are bad people in different sectors, right? But this one is talking about better for consumers and better for businesses. That means it balances the interests from both sides.

Talking about unfair business practices, in this legislation, we are prohibiting unfair business practices such as taking advantage of a consumer's inability to understand the language in a contract.

So when we are moving forward, it's just like we are driving: We need a rear mirror to check the back, but most of the time, we are looking at the front. Yes, we are looking at examples so that we can enhance this law that hasn't been updated for two decades. Please invite your constituents, your stakeholders to engage in the consultation so that we can move forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Ms. Laura Smith: I was very intrigued by the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore's comments, and I appreciate

the fact that Equifax is on board with this. In my previous life, I dealt with credit reports on a regular basis, and I'm really happy to see that this is going to be accessible to the public because it does truly make a difference when people have to make that purchase and move forward with their lives, which is what we want all Ontarians to be able to do.

But speaking of this, could I ask the member exactly what kind of unfair business practices Ontarians are being targeted and victimized by? And just maybe circle around this issue of people's rating in Equifax; I'm actually, honestly, really interested. What are the most heinous and preventable offences that Ontarians are facing, as well as weak consumer protection rules, and how is this proposed legislation going to address them?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member of Thornhill for that question. As you know, before, you would have to go to the two offices—one is in Burlington; one is in North York—to get your information. But now that you can do it online, you can do it monthly. You could even prevent people from taking identity theft on you, because you could check your credit rating on a monthly basis to see how you stand out there, and that will protect you.

But not only that, you can even put a security freeze on your account. So if you look at someone that never needs to borrow money, he could freeze his account so that no information would ever be leaked.

These are all things that will protect our consumers out there, because as we know, there is a lot of identity theft that is going on right now. And you see what happens: You sometimes go to apply for a mortgage and someone already has a mortgage in your name. And even on your vehicles too—you have noticed that people have liens on your vehicle.

By doing this, that you can check your credit rating on a monthly basis for free, it will prevent or decrease theft.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have to move to the next question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened intently to what my friends in government were saying this morning. I know it's only 10 o'clock in the morning, but I move to ask a bit of a big-picture question to solicit a response from either member: What's the purpose of government?

Because for me, when I think about a debate on a bill like this, I think the purpose of government is to make sure there's equal opportunity for people to seek redress when they're harmed. That's a major responsibility. And sadly, what I've seen in the last five years as I've been in this place is the end of the Environmental Commissioner, the end of the French language commissioner.

And when we have been offering in debate the prospect of a consumer watchdog—this is what the member from Humber River–Black Creek, our lead on this, has insisted that the government take on—we have not seen that taken up. What I fear is, for people in this House and others like us in Ontario who have the means and the capacity to fight for our consumer rights, the status quo may be fine. But as the member from London North Centre said very clearly, people are going to continue to fall between the cracks.

It's an invitation to either member: There is a lot of good stuff in this bill, but would you propose a strong consumer watchdog to ensure that people who don't have the resources that people like us do in this House can fight for their rights when they are harmed?

Mr. Billy Pang: Very important questions. When I put forward my personal member's motion, it's about protecting customers. Now, this act is the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act. On one hand, we are protecting our consumers. On the other hand, we also protect businesses.

For example, protecting against business practices that frustrate customer choice to cancel a contract will help support market competition. At the same time, market competition is likely to be improved as businesses are incentivized to compete on price and quality, rather than relying on contracts and practices that lock in existing consumers. These are two examples telling us that our people of Ontario can rely on this bill to support—no matter if it's personal, home interests or businesses.

I encourage the member, again, to engage your stakeholders in consultation so that this bill can be enhanced according to what Ontarians need.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to the next question.

Mr. Will Bouma: I think I speak for all of my constituents when I say that a review of this legislation is long overdue, and changes are necessary. I'm very glad to see that our government is making meaningful changes here and to hear the very supportive comments from the opposition.

Stories of fraud and bad business practices are far too common. What makes it worse is knowing that our laws on consumer protection haven't been updated for almost 20 years. If we don't take decisive action now, we're opening the door for Ontarians to remain vulnerable and for our economy to lag due to a lack of confidence in the consumer market.

Through you, Speaker, I was wondering if the member from Markham–Unionville, because he was speaking about that during his speech, could elaborate on why our government is moving to make these changes now and what is the main reason for doing so.

Mr. Billy Pang: Madam Speaker, through you: Thank you for the question. In the past five years, I've met with a lot of my stakeholders. They have a lot of concerns about NOSIs. Some of them were seniors. They don't know English at all, not to mention contractual language. A lot of times, when the contractor is standing in front of them to show them the contract, they want initial here, initial here, initial here and then sign here. They never have any opportunity to look into the contracts themselves or by family members.

This particular legislation gives us a 10-day cool-off time. A consumer can spend 10 days to read the fine print line by line, word by word, letter by letter. That helps the consumer to understand what is going on and what is signed. So, they have 10 days to repeal that contract accordingly. This also helps the ministry to have a better

position to introduce powers through the ministry to support consumers and holds bad actors—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We move to the next question.

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the member from Markham–Unionville. My own colleague here from London North Centre was talking about the horrific exploitation that's happened under 15 years of Liberal government and the last five years of the Conservative government, where people, particularly seniors and people with disabilities, have been pressured into signing these long-term leases for hot water tanks. We've seen that people end up with sometimes \$20,000 liens on their homes when they try to sell their homes. He's called this unjust enrichment.

Your government is talking about consumer protection, but you keep talking about moving forward. Will your government expunge these liens, these unjust enrichments by these corporations, by these companies? Or will you let those consumers continue to suffer, as they suffered through 15 years of Liberal government—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. 1000

For a final response, and a not-too-long one, the member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the question. Again, don't forget: In past decades, this law hasn't been implemented because you supported the Liberals not doing that. Okay? And we are doing this and helping the province to move forward. This increases the maximum amount of fines upon conviction of offenders under the CPA.

We have proposed the new legislation. We've provided consumers with the right to accept the time-share contract, if they so choose, after 25 years have passed. This is providing consumers an exit for time-shares—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We've run out of time. Thank you to the members for the questions and answers, and we're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise today to participate in this debate on Bill 142, the government's consumer protection legislation entitled Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act. I want to start by commending the critic for consumer protection for the official opposition, the member for Humber River–Black Creek, who spoke for an hour on this bill yesterday and set out the need for strengthened consumer protections for people in this province, and also identified some of the gaps in this legislation, some of the work that still needs to be done to make sure that consumers in this province are protected.

Certainly, having this debate today in the context of an affordability crisis that has significantly challenged people in this province, especially people who are on low income—we are hearing every day from constituents, the people we represent, about concerns as to whether people will be able to make their paycheque last the week, whether they will be able to put food on the table, whether they will be able to pay their rent. Particularly, tenants who are living in apartment buildings or units that were

constructed since November 2018 do not have any rent control on the units that they occupy, so every year when the new rent is announced to the tenants, they worry about whether they will be able to continue to live in the unit that they call home.

We know affordability is a challenge. We hear also from people about their utility bills, the cost of Internet access, cellphone bills. All of this in today's economy has really created huge pressure, so consumers need to be protected, because dollars are scarce and they want to make sure that when they purchase something, they will be treated fairly.

One of the issues that my colleague raised when he spoke to this bill yesterday was about the fact that the government has moved many regulatory provisions of consumer protection legislation from bill form or from the legislation into regulations. The member pointed out yesterday that this can be a problem because it can delay the implementation of the legislation. It can delay making sure that those protections are put into place.

The PAWS Act: Many members in this place may remember the debate on that legislation for the protection of animal welfare. When the PAWS Act moved provisions from legislation to regulation, it caused considerable delay in getting the bill enacted, because there had to be the consultation done on the regulations and sometimes that process takes time and delays the enactment of the bill.

Further to that, Speaker, there's not only the concern that there may be a delay in getting these protections in place, but we have seen examples of legislation that is designed to protect consumers and citizens in this province—legislation that is debated in this House, goes to committee, gets public input, comes back to this House for third reading and actually gets royal assent, but then is never proclaimed. I want to use the example of an act called the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act. That was legislation that the Liberals brought in in the dying days of their mandate in 2018. The bill went through all of the stages required by the legislative process. It got royal assent, but it has never been enacted.

I have a situation right now in my riding in London West where people have been harmed because that legislation, the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act, has not been enacted, so the protections in that bill, even though it has had royal assent and is waiting to be put into force, are not available to people in this province. And the particular concern in London West right now—I know in ridings across this province, many MPPs will have heard this—is around elevator maintenance and repair. There is a building in my riding, 1 Andover Drive, where it's a four-storey walk-up and it is occupied by many, many seniors—vulnerable seniors, seniors with mobility issues—and their elevator is out of commission. They have been told that it could take up to four months to get that elevator repaired, and there's no legislation on the books to require the building manager or the owner to make those repairs in a timely fashion.

Seniors from that building have contacted my office and they've talked about the fact that they feel that they

“are being held hostage.” An email I received just last week says that the fact that it could take up to four months to repair the elevator is “unacceptable, grossly negligible and quite frankly feels like we are being held hostage in our apartments ... we are looking at” having to spend maybe the entire “winter being locked in.” Speaker, you can imagine for vulnerable people, for seniors who have medical needs, the impact of the loss of access to the elevator.

One senior who lives on the third floor uses a cane and can’t use the stairs. He said that he has had to cancel medical appointments that he had scheduled for an upcoming knee operation, so he’s not able to make it out of his apartment to get to those necessary medical appointments. Another tenant said that he has had to cancel a dialysis appointment because he can’t manage to get up and down the stairs. This is an important protection that people in this province need to feel assured of, and there is legislation that would offer that protection. It would require the elevator to be repaired in a timely fashion, and that protection, even though it’s on the books, isn’t enacted. That legislation is not in force.

So that is definitely what we do not want to see happen with this piece of consumer legislation. We want to make sure that when it moves through the legislative process, moves through the regulatory consultation process, once those stages are complete, the legislation will be not only passed and get royal assent but that it will be enacted for people in this province.

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Some of the provisions of this bill speak directly to some concerns that I have heard from constituents in London West. I want to talk about the issue of time-shares. I was recently contacted by a constituent who said he had signed a time-share contract in 1999 when he and his wife were in their late fifties. The duration of the contract was 50 years, which they felt was too long, but they were assured that if they wanted to terminate the time-share contract, the time-share company would buy it back from them or they could sell it on the open market.

Subsequently, they discovered that there never was a buy-back option available from the company. They said that “it is impossible to even give the time-share away for free on the open market.” They raised the concern that they are essentially on a fixed income now as retirees, yet the maintenance fees for the time-share are increasing by at least the cost of living every year. They advocated for an exit clause to be available to all time-share owners and resorts in Ontario. He says, “Over the years, we have met many time-share owners and most want to terminate their contracts.”

This bill, by putting in place an ability to terminate a time-share contract after 25 years and making that retroactive—there’s no question that that will assist many consumers in this province, like my constituents in London West who are in a time-share agreement that they want to get out of.

However, it’s unfortunate that the government didn’t strengthen consumer protections for other issues related to home ownership and property ownership. In particular, I

want to talk about Tarion. There is a real problem that the government did not do anything to strengthen the Tarion provision for new homeowners.

The organization Canadians for Properly Built Homes has been advocating for better protections for new-home owners for years. They raise the concern that the legislation that’s before us today does not address many of the key concerns that they have raised that are necessary to help purchasers of newly built homes. They argue that the government has a responsibility to ensure that the largest purchase that most people ever make in their lifetime, a home, is good quality and that it meets basic code provisions. They note that the bill fails to address the ongoing serious shortcomings of administrative authorities that are supposed to be providing consumer protection oversight, such as the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, the Ontario Builder Directory and others.

Of course, I’m very proud of the work that the NDP has been doing to push for the necessary reforms to Tarion, to push for a full public audit of Tarion and to strengthen protections for new-home buyers. I’m also very proud of the work that the NDP has done to—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member for London West. It’s 10:15, so we need to start with the members’ statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Every parent in Ontario wants our children to be able to learn in the best possible conditions. Good air quality is an important factor in the ability to learn well and ensure health and well-being. Addressing air quality in schools and child care centres helps reduce the spread of infectious diseases like COVID, RSV and flu. Good ventilation also protects against pollution and air-quality issues like wildfire smoke. It doesn’t require any behavioural changes on the part of children, teachers, education and child care workers or parents. Studies have also shown improving air quality can boost children’s test scores in math and reading.

While the Ontario government has made investments in ventilation the past few years, the government refused to set any standard for air quality or to require measurement or reporting of air quality. We have no idea what conditions are like in our classrooms and child care facilities.

We can do better. That is why my colleagues and I have tabled the Improving Air Quality for Our Children Act. Its provisions will help improve air quality in all classrooms and congregate spaces in our public schools and in licensed child care facilities. It was developed in consultation with experts in ventilation and air quality, public health experts, education and child care partners, and parents.

I hope that this government will pay attention to this broad coalition of support and do the right thing: adopt this bill to ensure our children have the best and safest learning conditions possible.

BREAST CANCER

Ms. Laura Smith: Today is the last day of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. On average, 78 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 15 women will die of breast cancer every day. With 13,000 diagnoses this year, statistically that means one in eight women—look around you, ladies—will be diagnosed in her lifetime.

Early detection can make all the difference, which is why I'm so relieved to hear that our government is connecting more women to breast cancer screening by lowering the eligibility from 50 to 40 beginning in 2024. Women aged 40 to 49 who were screened were 44% more likely to survive, and the five-year survival prognosis of stage 1 breast cancer is 99%—survival, 99%. These are positive.

And the knowledge of breast density: This category is another key piece in screening and the diagnostic process. Knowing your breast density is so instrumental in this category, so I'm proud to advise that, since July, all women in Ontario who receive a mammogram are directly informed of their density category.

Speaker, the majority of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease. Regular mammograms are so important and can improve the outcome and reduce the need for aggressive treatment.

All you need is 20 minutes. Prioritize your health, ladies. Breast health should not be just a priority in October; it should be literally something that we look at every day and—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. Next member's statement.

BAIL REFORM

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm speaking today on the issue of provincial bail reform. News story after news story, Ontarians are losing faith in their justice system. I hear from small businesses in Toronto about how the accused are released back into the community without access and pathways to housing or rehabilitation. Innocent people are getting hurt. Iconic businesses like Dudley's on Church Street have experienced smashed windows caused by people out on bail without supervision, thus threatening their staff and their business.

Risk to community safety needs to be screened properly and adequately in the courts before anyone is released back into the community. People at high risk of committing violent offences are not having past violence considered. People at low risk are being detained for far too long. Police officers and other first responders are being put at unnecessary risk, as we have tragically learned through the murder of OPP constable Greg Pierzchala.

The Premier can do more than just write letters to the Prime Minister. The Ontario NDP will continue to push for real provincial bail reform, including taking immediate action to (1) ensure timely bail hearings, compliance and enforcement; (2) restore the Ford government's \$130-million cut to legal aid funding; (3) ensure that the targeting of the most dangerous offenders does not criminalize people who are experiencing poverty, mental illness or

addiction; and (4) ensure that everyone who needs it can access adequate housing and mental health care.

We call on this government to do more than to point fingers. Start implementing provincial solutions immediately.

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HEALTH CARE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a great story to tell today about my constituent and friend Michael Greenaway. Michael had cataracts. He went to his doctor, and he got a referral. Within two weeks, he got to go to a community care clinic, one established by this government, and he went to go see the famous and expert Dr. Tayfour. Within two more weeks, Michael got his cataract surgery done. I spoke to him last week. He is recovering fine, and the total experience was very positive. Only four weeks elapsed between the time of referral and the time of surgery. That's great service. Michael is very happy with his whole experience.

I would like to remind this House that the community care clinic that Michael went to for his cataract surgery was established by this government and was opposed, and continues to be opposed, by the coalition of doom and gloom, the opposition.

I would like to thank the Minister of Health for establishing these community care clinics and taking care of my constituent and friend Michael Greenaway, and for taking care of hundreds of people like him who are getting eye care when and where they need it.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
POPPY CAMPAIGN

MPP Jamie West: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about something very interesting that happened last week in Sudbury, a tradition that has been going on for several years. Every year, behind M.I.C. restaurant, veterans—members of Legions 76, 564, and other veterans—come together to raise the largest poppy flag in North America. Last year, they weren't quite sure if it was the largest in the world in its measurements. So this year, when they replaced it, they increased the size of the poppy flag to 4.5 metres by nine metres—that's 15 feet by 30 feet—ensuring that it would be the largest poppy flag in the world.

It's a pretty exciting thing to recognize the remembrance of veterans returning from war or battle or those who have served in the Armed Forces. I say often in this House that not just those who have been on the front lines—but I think often of my grandfather, who served as a clerk, and how we have to recognize, as well, the families. When members are deployed—it's not just the soldiers themselves, but it's the families, as well, who are deployed.

As we head into Remembrance Day, it's important that we remember our soldiers.

Lest we forget.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Every year, on November 11, we observe a moment of silence at 11 a.m. to commemorate Remembrance Day, when we honour the brave men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Last week, I attended the funeral of Lieutenant Colonel Zbigniew Gondek, a Second World War veteran who fought for Poland and lived here in Canada to the great age of 99 years old. While I was there, I reflected on the immense courage and valour these men and women practised, many of them being in their early adulthood. They were willing to give their lives so that their children, parents and spouses could live in a world free from tyranny and fascism.

Today, during our moment of silence, let us reflect on the gratitude that comes with being a Canadian, and our home and native land, where we cherish freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Let us recognize our Canadian Armed Forces, who continue to promote global peace and stability. And let us renew our commitment to supporting our veterans.

Lastly, let us ensure the sacrifices of our soldiers, past and present, were not in vain.

Remarks in Polish.

Lest we forget.

JESS RANDALL LAROCHELLE

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: As Remembrance Day nears, I rise today to talk about one of Canada's heroes: Private Jess Randall Larochelle, of Restoule, Ontario.

In 2006, Private Larochelle of the 1st Royal Canadian Regiment was manning an observation post when it was destroyed by an enemy rocket in Pashmul, Afghanistan. Although he was alone, severely injured, and under sustained enemy fire, he continued to aggressively provide covering fire over the otherwise undefended flanks of his company's position. Private Larochelle's heroic actions saved many lives that day.

Private Larochelle was awarded the star of military valour for his actions, Canada's second-highest citation for bravery in conflict. However, I believe that Jess deserves our highest possible recognition, the Victoria Cross, and I am proud to join 15,000 petitioners and three living Victoria Cross recipients to call for recognition of this modern-day hero. His selfless actions are a shining example that our armed service members exhibit. I can think of no better way to observe Remembrance Day this year than to highlight and celebrate the service of one of Canada's best.

Sadly, Jess passed away earlier this year. His friends described him as quiet, unassuming and a superhero. I hope all members will join me in supporting the veterans' group Valour in the Presence of the Enemy in calling for a review to award Jess the Victoria Cross, and take time this week to remember Private Jess Larochelle.

WHY NOT CITY MISSIONS

Mr. Will Bouma: I am honoured to rise today to speak about the life-changing work being done by Why Not City Missions and the Why Not Youth Centre in Brantford. Why Not City Missions has provided homeless and at-risk youth in Brantford with a safe and inclusive environment since 2002, and has been a valuable member of the Brantford–Brant community ever since.

I was fortunate enough to attend Why Not's annual fall gala this past Saturday, where I joined board chair Mike Bosveld and executive director Karen Stewart, as well as Why Not co-founders Charlie and Sue Kopczyk, in celebrating the invaluable work that Why Not continues to do in our community. I was also pleased to learn on Saturday that Why Not reached their yearly campaign goal and raised \$1 million to pay down the mortgage and renovation expenses on their girls' home.

Because of the incredible support from the Brantford–Brant community, Why Not has evolved from a simple curbside coffee and prayer service to a youth centre open seven nights a week, a residential housing program for young men and supportive housing for young at-risk parents and their young children. I am proud to know that our community supports its own to such a great extent and that Why Not City Missions will continue to understand and fulfill the needs of at-risk youth in Brantford–Brant.

HUNGARIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I am proud to rise this morning to celebrate the second annual Hungarian Heritage Month in Ontario.

On Hungarian Republic Day, I was proud to join the Minister of Finance and many of our colleagues to help raise the Hungarian flag here at Queen's Park, and then at Toronto city hall, together with my friends Máté from the Hungarian consulate and Sándor Balla, president of the Hungarian Canadian Business Association, and some of the Fifty-Sixes, veterans of the revolution in 1956. I also attended a gala dinner and concert at the Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre in North York with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the ambassador of Hungary to Canada, Mária Vass-Salazar.

Speaker, I was honoured to receive the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, joining my friend Tamás Buday, the great Hungarian Canadian sprint canoe coach at the Mississauga Canoe Club, and I want to thank him again for helping decorate my office for Hungarian Heritage Month.

I want to thank all members again for supporting my private member's bill to recognize this month, the first of its kind in Canada to celebrate a community that has contributed so much to Ontario. Thank you.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Speaker. Today I would like to recognize the St. Catherine of Siena Roman

Catholic church, as I attended their mass of dedication on October 22 and was truly impressed.

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This new church was formed in 2017, out of the amalgamation of two parishes: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, which was established in 1958, and Corpus Christi Parish, which was established in 1962. Since 2017, the two parishes continued as sites while the new church was being built. The new church, now open on the south corner of Rymal Road and Upper Sherman, marked the closure of the two previous sites.

The mass of dedication was a beautiful ceremony to commemorate the opening of the parish. With an estimated 1,500 people attending, all 750 seats were filled, and the overflow crowd stood in back of the building and even into meeting rooms where they could watch the mass on screen. It was a tremendous turnout.

Thank you to all who played a part in the creation of this new place of worship. St. Catherine of Siena Roman Catholic church will serve as the new meeting place for Catholics to gather to celebrate their faith.

APPOINTMENT OF CLERK-AT-THE-TABLE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to advise the House of the recent appointment of a new permanent table officer. Effective October 11, 2023, Julia Douglas has assumed the duties of senior Clerk, table research.

Please join me in welcoming Julia in her new role and responsibilities. Congratulations.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laura Smith: I am very proud to welcome to the House artist, musician, cancer survivor, and founder and author of *Aggressive Positivity*, my friend Limore Twena Ziskind.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I welcome to the House Jessie Saliba, who is also celebrating her 29th birthday today.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to introduce my very good friends Bonnie Satten and Charlie Faust, who are visiting from Thunder Bay. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning. I'd like to welcome Steffi Burgi, who is an OLIP intern, starting her session in my office. We're very excited to have her and look forward to working for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am very pleased to welcome Astrid Krueger, who is joining team Ottawa West–Nepean as an OLIP intern for this next session.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to introduce Sam Demma, who is here with us today. He is the incredible best-selling author of *Empty Your Backpack*—an inspiring young Canadian. Thank you for joining us in the people's House.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today two constituents from the beautiful community of Wainfleet. We have Alfred and Ann Kiers. Welcome to Ontario's Legislature.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It is an absolute pleasure to introduce Mr. Arun Kumar from Sandeep Entertainment and Mr. Sharat Samudrala and Hema Samudrala from CutMirchi Media. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Chiefs of Ontario director of justice Jackie Lombardi, Anishinabek Nation Regional Deputy Grand Chief Travis Boissoneau and also Amanda Kioke from Attawapiskat. Meegwetch for coming.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I want to welcome four constituents from Huntsville today—great community builders as well: Jason, Chantelle, Molly and Madeleine Armstrong. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With us in the Speaker's gallery this morning is Dr. David Malkin. Dr. Malkin is a pediatric oncologist and scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children, whose current research focuses on understanding the genetic basis of childhood cancer. He and his team are developing novel and groundbreaking techniques for early cancer detection and targeted treatments with fewer side effects as part of the SickKids Precision Child Health initiative.

Welcome, Dr. Malkin. We are delighted to have you here today.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday, newly uncovered documents provided even more evidence that it was Conservative political staff, not civil service experts, who directed changes to municipal official plans that favoured very specific land speculators in Niagara, Hamilton, Halton, Waterloo, Peel, York and Durham regions.

It's clearer than ever that the Premier was looped into decisions regarding urban boundary changes from the start. So I have to ask the Premier, were these specific changes made to benefit the Premier's friends, just like the decision to remove sites from the greenbelt?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Last week, when I reversed the official plans, I acknowledged that there was in fact too much involvement of political staff in those official plans. That is why I revoked the official plans and went back to the original plans as submitted by the regions.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's very obvious that the Premier's office was more involved in all of these decisions than they have disclosed. As we start to dig, the former Minister

of Housing's chief of staff, Ryan Amato, didn't mince words. He directed senior ministry staff to "keep their mouths shut" about the changes.

These revelations bring the Premier's and the former minister's testimony to the Integrity Commissioner into question. Why is there such a discrepancy between the Premier's testimony to the Integrity Commissioner and what's revealed in these documents?

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I said at the news conference last week, I thought there was too much involvement from political staff in the former minister's office. That is why I repealed the changes that the province had made to those official plans and reinstated the official plans as submitted by the regions. I acknowledged that last week.

At the same time, we're going to continue focusing, working with our municipal partners to make sure we get shovels in the ground and homes built for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: So it was just an accident, right? A one-off? No.

Speaker, the Premier told the Integrity Commissioner that he had "no recollection" of meeting developer Sergio Manchia about removing his lands from the greenbelt. The Premier repeated that just this morning, but the documents uncovered yesterday tell a very different story. In fact, they indicate that the Premier did meet with Mr. Manchia on September 20, 2021—with the same Mr. Manchia whose staff members said the Premier "needs to stop calling."

I'm going to ask again, why is there such a discrepancy between what the Premier testified to the Integrity Commissioner and the revelations in these documents?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I said quite clearly—I've answered it a number of times—that there was too much involvement from political staff in changes to the official plans. That is why I repealed the changes that were made by the province to the official plans and why I reinstated the official plans as submitted by those 12 municipalities. There was too much involvement. I repealed them. I'm working with municipalities to ascertain which of the changes they may support over the next 45 days, but I have acknowledged right from the beginning that there was too much input from political staff. We have a provincial policy statement. That's what we should be guided by, and that's what we'll continue to be guided by as we build 1.5 million homes, working with our municipal partners to get that job done.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, Ontarians are growing increasingly concerned that this government doesn't understand the gravity of the situation they're in.

Back to the Premier: They're under a criminal RCMP investigation. Apparently, interviews are going to start this week. They've appointed a special prosecutor. The Integ-

rity Commissioner and the Auditor General had to do comprehensive probes in order for the public to get a sense of the scale of this government's dirty deals. This goes so far beyond the greenbelt. We've seen a clear pattern of preferential treatment benefiting the private interests of a select few landowners over and over and over again.

Speaker, to the Premier: How can Ontarians trust this government when a mountain of evidence shows they're only in it for their friends?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'll tell the Leader of the Opposition why they can trust us. You can look at the economy, the 700,000 people that are working that weren't working five years ago. Then you look at the housing starts, record housing starts and rental starts over 30 years. We look at the infrastructure, building the highways and the roads and the bridges and the transit. We're spending \$70 billion on transit, \$30 billion on roads. When it comes to MZOs, there's 234,000 people that have a roof over their head today that wouldn't have a roof over their heads. There's 5,000 seniors that can call long-term care home because of the MZOs that were asked by the municipalities to do. There's 150,000 construction jobs that happened because of those MZOs.

It's a tool that we aren't going to stop using. We're going to continue building homes. The 1.5 million homes, that's our target. We're going to continue doing it.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's his alibi? We have 7,000 pages of evidence, 7,000 more reasons that Ontarians have to question this government's integrity. Everything in there points to the Premier and his staff directing policy changes to favour specific speculators with ties to the Conservative Party. In one instance in Hamilton, this government copied a developer's exact request into Hamilton's official plan word for word.

To the Premier: Who runs this province? Is it the Premier, or has he outsourced the job to his speculator friends?

Hon. Doug Ford: Do you know who runs this province? The people of this province run it, the people that elected us with two massive majorities. I always say, Parliament is supreme. And what is Parliament? Parliament is elected by the people, so the people are supreme. They tell us what they want. We ran on a very clear mandate: building homes, building roads, building highways, building long-term-care homes, building hospitals. The reason we have to do this is because the Liberals, for 15 years, supported and propped up by the NDP, destroyed this province, basically put it into bankruptcy. We came in and saved the people and saved the province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this Premier and his minister testified under oath that they did not know about the changes to the greenbelt until late October 2022. Yet now, we have pages and pages of redactions due to cabinet confidentiality from September and early October. These redactions seriously call into question the accuracy of the Premier's

testimony. We know that the Premier's former minister, principal secretary and director of housing policy all conveniently provided the Integrity Commissioner with the same incorrect dates when they were living it up in Vegas with a greenbelt speculator.

Speaker, to the Premier: Why is the Premier's cabinet sitting on their hands while he is clearly giving preferential treatment to his insider friends?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just the opposite, Speaker: We're not sitting on our hands. In fact, we are getting the job done across the province of Ontario. She talks about minister's zoning orders. The Premier talked about it: Minister's zoning orders will ensure that we have the largest long-term-care home in the country built in Mississauga. You know what else it will mean? It will mean the largest hospital in the country in Mississauga.

So, the Leader of the Opposition would like us to close down 600 beds for seniors. She'd like us to stop construction of the largest hospital in the country. She'd like us to put down the shovels on the social housing that is being built within the city of Toronto. She would like us to stop the subways that are being built. She would like us to stop the GO trains that are being built across the province of Ontario. And she would like us to stop building homes for people of the province of Ontario who have one dream. The dream is to come to this province, or if you're already here, to get out of your parents' basement so that you can have the same dream as everybody else.

We won't stop. We'll get the job done.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: The jig is up. The jig is up. This should be a moment of very sober reflection for this government and instead they're doubling down.

This question is for the Premier. From official plans to the greenbelt to MZOs, we have a chaotic and speculator-friendly process driven by the Premier and his political staff. When discussing the Cherrywood lands owned by Silvio De Gasperis, Mr. Amato is quoted in these FOI documents saying the government should just do "what they asked for." At another point, Mr. Amato says the speculator is getting an "unfrozen \$3-billion asset." On another point, he says the process needs to look "as clean as possible."

If Ontarians can't trust this government's testimony under oath, why should anyone believe them at all?

Hon. Doug Ford: When it comes to the official plans, there are thousands and thousands and thousands of changes. This has been going on for decades, even when I was down at the municipality. When I directed the Minister of Housing to pull those back, we're going to work hand in hand—and as sure as I'm standing here, the municipalities are going to come back and they're going to ask for more changes, and God bless them for asking for changes because that means we're going to be building homes.

But do you know what I find ironic? No matter if it's MZOs or OPs or whatever, guess who shows up to all the announcements? The NDP shows up to the announcements, standing beside me when we're announcing a long-term-care home. This happened numerous times. I find it very ironic they vote against it, but they want to take the kudos when we actually get the long-term-care homes built.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Premier can't continue to claim ignorance about this. This is embarrassing. We now know that he had a meeting regarding the greenbelt on September 15. We have a note from October 13 saying that the decision on the York region area is "with the Premier's office right now," but "the Premier doesn't understand it's in the Oak Ridges moraine."

In document after document, we have quotes like "they're bringing it to the PO," "in conversation with PO." And PO, by the way, in case anybody doesn't already know, is the Premier's office.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Where you'll never be.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: On October 26, the minister wanted to rip off the greenbelt Band-Aid and hope developers don't "stab them in the back."

Back to the Premier: If this is how the Premier's office conducts business, when is the Premier going to come clean about his role in these shady backroom deals?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, listen, this is no different. This is an NDP that is literally opposed to everything. The Leader of the Opposition is sitting next to a member whose own riding depends on mining, and then he sits in his place and laughs because he knows he voted against miners and thousands of jobs. Behind her is a member who relies on schools and colleges and universities, and that's a member who votes against student housing. On the opposite side is a member who votes against long-term care in his riding every single day but, as the Premier said, shows up to the announcements and says, "Oh, I want to help you cut the ribbon to something that I opposed every single time."

Surrounding the Leader of the Opposition are members who vote against housing; they vote against transit and transportation in their riding. It is a caucus that is divided, and the Leader of the Opposition will do anything to distract from the divisions in her own caucus. We will move forward on building a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario because that's what the people need, and we won't let them down.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Finance. When meeting with local businesses in my riding of Thornhill, I've heard time and time again of the pressures

the federal carbon tax is putting on our economy and especially on our local commerce.

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Starting and growing a business is hard work. All businesses play a vital role in our province's economy. While the opposition Liberals and the NDP have no problem with a regressive carbon tax, it's not fair or right that our businesses are being punished.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what impact a carbon tax has on our economy and our businesses?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the hard-working member from Thornhill for that great question. Their local business owners are absolutely right: The carbon tax is driving up costs and making life more expensive for the people of this great province.

In fact, a recent study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that more than 56% of businesses would need to increase their prices immediately due to direct pressures from the carbon tax. That means that it's not just on the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. It's a tax on the truck drivers who bring in our food, it's a tax on the farmers who grow our crops and it's a tax on the local businesses that try to succeed in Ontario.

It's not fair for the people of this province to continue with this punitive carbon tax, and that's why we will continue to fight against the carbon tax, even as the Liberals and the NDP opposition members continue to vote to make life more expensive for Ontario families.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the equally hard-working minister.

The carbon tax harms the health, wellness and progress of Ontarians. The regressive tax adds an artificial barrier to the affordability of essential items. It forces small businesses to increase prices, making them less competitive, and it places an unfair burden on our producers.

Ontario companies are struggling every day to stay competitive and viable in a global market due to high inflation. In this time of economic uncertainty and affordability concerns, let's not tax Ontarians more. Unlike the opposition Liberals and NDP, our government believes in putting money back into the pockets of people by removing this harmful tax.

Can the minister please share his views on why we need to fight this carbon tax and provide support to Ontario businesses and families?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the great member from Thornhill for that question. As the member so clearly outlined, the carbon tax continues to drive up prices and make life more unaffordable, and I was really disappointed to see that the Liberal opposition members and the NDP members voted against our motion to remove the carbon tax from grocery items.

That's why I was proud to have stood alongside the Premier today to announce that our government is once again taking action to support hard-working Ontario families and businesses by extending our gas tax cut. If passed, the 2023 fall economic statement will extend the

gas tax cut to June 30, 2024, saving households an average of \$260.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one more cost-saving measure championed by our government, putting money back in the pockets of Ontario families at a time when they need it most.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. According to FOI documents, at a meeting on October 13, 2022, staff discussed the removal of Gormley lands from the greenbelt. In a meeting note, Ryan Amato said the decision on the Gormley greenbelt lands was with the Premier's office. I quote Amato: "Premier doesn't understand it's in the Oak Ridges moraine."

My question is to the Premier: Did you make the decision to remove these Gormley lands from the greenbelt? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, the Gormley lands were never removed from the greenbelt. I know this quite well, because it is in my riding. I actually, begrudgingly, campaigned in two elections to remove the Gormley lands from the greenbelt, because the town of Stouffville is having such a difficult time raising the funds needed with respect to unfunded liabilities with respect to infrastructure, because it is entirely greenbelted. But the Premier, on both occasions, told me it's not happening and rejected that greenbelt expansion.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: At a subsequent meeting on October 21, 2022, ministry staff met to discuss outstanding issues relating to certain greenbelt properties. These properties included the Gormley greenbelt lands in York region. According to the meeting note, Ryan Amato said, "They're bringing it to the Premier's office." Two weeks later, these greenbelt lands were designated for development in the ministry's amendments to York region's official plan. They got what they wanted.

The Premier previously claimed he was not made aware of the changes to the greenbelt prior to the cabinet briefing on October 27. We all remember this very well. Would the Premier, out of respect for the people of Ontario, like to correct his record?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Gormley lands were not included.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development.

The carbon tax is making everything more expensive for all Ontarians and especially those in northern Ontario. The reality is that, because of northern geography, the cost of transporting goods is already much higher than it would

be in any other part of the province. The north is a vast land where many individuals have to travel by car, and in many cases larger vehicles are needed for safety due to the many back roads and unpredictable weather conditions.

The carbon tax is negatively impacting people in these communities as they are hit hardest at the gas pumps and in the grocery stores. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on his views regarding the negative impact that the carbon tax has on northern Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: —because he's proud to stand with two leaders, Prime Minister Harper and Premier Ford, who have taken a hardline stance against the carbon tax.

There's no place in this province where that cost has had a greater burden. Think for a moment, when the Dryden Eagles want to play the Fort Frances Muskies, there's 185 or 200 kilometres. It's hockey, it's basketball, badminton, all those sports, Mr. Speaker. Think of how much more money those schools have to pay to play each other. Gas is already more expensive up in northern Ontario. That 14 cents a litre is a big hit.

But let's talk about energy, mining and forestry. A recent study at the University of Waterloo says this is a hit to Canada of \$256 billion for forestry, mining and energy combined. As one of the largest producers or users in those three spaces, Ontario is exposed in three of its primary drivers for our economy. It's time to scrap this tax.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: The carbon tax is, in essence, a tax on everything: your groceries, your gas, heating your home and so much more. It's not right that individuals and families in northern communities are negatively impacted because of this regressive tax.

You know what, Speaker? Instead of supporting northern Ontario, the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, spent more time insulting this region, calling it "no man's land."

Unlike other parts of our province, the north faces unique barriers that need to be understood and respected. The opposition Liberals and NDP downplaying the carbon tax's impact on northern Ontario is disrespectful to all of its residents. Can the minister please elaborate on the detrimental effects that the carbon tax is having on the people, communities and businesses of the north?

Hon. Greg Rickford: With all due respect, it isn't just the fact that they downplayed it; they voted in favour of this carbon tax. That's a matter of record in this Legislature and in Ottawa. In no place could this be on higher profile than the isolated communities in north Ontario.

Now, this government understood that. We put a reduction in fuel costs into the isolated communities in the last legislative session. The member from Kiiwetinoong, how did he vote against that, colleagues? These are carrying people and goods to his isolated communities. He voted

against it, as did his other colleagues who have isolated communities in their ridings. They already have some of the highest costs for groceries, goods and, importantly, diesel fuel for the last remaining communities in northern Ontario who deserve an electricity corridor.

1100

I know the Minister of Energy is listening hard to that. This carbon tax is very expensive for our isolated communities. It's time to scrap the tax.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Premier. According to FOI documents released yesterday, in an email dated November 4, the day the greenbelt changes were announced, Ryan Amato asked ministry staff for a map to make sure that greenbelt land in Nobleton could be developed. This land was not technically removed from the greenbelt, but development was enabled through the ministry's changes to York region's official plan, also announced on November 4. Mr. Amato wrote, "PO"—Premier's office—"has asked me for a picture to make sure it's captured." Why was the Premier's office so interested in these Nobleton greenbelt lands?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the best of my understanding, the Nobleton greenbelt lands were not rezoned for housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Back to the Premier: These greenbelt lands appear to correspond to lands owned by Flato Developments, owned by the Premier's friend Shakir Rehmatullah. The Integrity Commissioner's report described how Ryan Amato decided to open these greenbelt lands for development using changes to York's official plan rather than changes to the greenbelt boundaries.

Through you, Speaker, did the Premier or any of his staff direct Mr. Amato with respect to Flato's greenbelt lands in Nobleton? Yes or no?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, no changes were made to these lands, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yesterday, a freedom-of-information document gave us a glimpse into the \$8.3-billion greenbelt and urban boundaries scandal. We learned that the Premier's office, on or before October 26, 2022, was worried about the public reaction to greenbelt removals. Staff notes recorded that the minister wanted to "rip the Band-Aid off but the PO doesn't want that, he wants safeguards." While the Premier's office seems to have known what was going on in October last year, or before, the Premier himself says he didn't know anything until that November.

If the former housing minister resigned because he didn't know what was going on in his office and his head was in the sand, will the Premier step down for the same

thing? Mr. Speaker, what did the Premier know and when did he know it?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think both the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General were very clear that the Premier had no role in that. At the opposite time, though, the Premier has been very clear that we have to continue on our goal of building 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

It is no secret that when we took over government in 2018, we were faced with a province that had crippling debt, crippling taxes and crippling red tape. We are in a housing crisis because of the obstacles that the Liberals, supported by the NDP, had put in the way of building homes. Now we've started to release all of that. What we're doing with our housing supply action plans is working. We have the highest amount of purpose-built rental starts in over 30 years, and the same great news for new home starts.

Listen, we're not going to stop working to get kids out of their basement apartments and into their first homes. That is our job, and we will get it done for them.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: On October 31, 2018, the Premier stood in this House and said, "We have the most ethical, most transparent, most accountable caucus—not just cabinet, but caucus—I've ever seen in politics.... They make sure they don't make the backroom deals that we've seen in other governments."

Does the Premier consider his team's actions on the greenbelt over the last couple of years ethical?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, do you know what we're doing on this side of the House and the Conservative majority on that side of the House? We're rebuilding a province that under 15 years of Liberal government, supported by the NDP, was literally decimated. Now they finally started to come around to understand just how bad a government they were. When we brought a motion forward on the carbon tax—you'll remember this, Speaker. We have said since day one that the carbon tax would kill the economy, that it would cost every single Ontarian far too much. They disagreed with it. This Premier brought the federal government to court to stop that tax. Now we've finally seen a split in the Liberal Party. Half of them want to continue the tax, and the others want to kill the tax. They know that we're on the right page.

We will not stop ensuring that we reverse everything that that Liberal government did—cutting taxes, reducing red tape, building more homes for the people of the province of Ontario. They were incredible failures. We'll get the—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Since the implementation of the carbon tax, the people of Ontario have been paying more and more every single day for food, for services, and for transportation. They've been forced to pay much more to fuel their cars. The carbon tax is making life more expensive for millions of people in Ontario. While our government showed much-needed leadership and reduced the gasoline tax, the federal government did not. Instead, they increased fuel and gasoline costs by 14 cents, forcing individuals and families to pay more at the pumps because of this regressive tax. Doing so hurts our drivers and negatively impacts our economy.

Can the associate minister please explain the negative impact of the carbon tax and what our government is doing to mitigate this unfair policy?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: The member from Burlington is correct—and thank you, for her advocacy and the great job that she is doing.

The federal carbon tax is draining the pockets of hard-working drivers. It hurts workers who want to drive to the office and get back home. It's unfair for truckers who transport critical goods across our province. That is why I'm proud that our government opposed this harmful carbon tax. Unfortunately, the Liberals and NDP had no problem supporting this tax, all while saying no to any of the measures our government is bringing to provide financial relief to Ontarians. Let's not forget that they said no to our government's fantastic removal of tolls on Highway 12 and Highway 18. By removing these tolls, the average commuter can save \$300 on the 418 and \$150 on the 412 every month.

Unlike the Liberals and NDP and their carbon tax, our government is making life more affordable—

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: High gas prices caused by the federal carbon tax are making life more difficult for people in my riding.

The federal government has increased the carbon tax on gasoline five times so far, and they are planning another seven increases by 2030. This is wrong and unfair and will hurt many hard-working individuals and families who are already struggling.

Cancelling the carbon tax will save money at the pumps for our drivers by putting more money back in their pockets. Individuals and families are looking to our government for help during these challenging times, to provide support so that life is more affordable.

Can the associate minister please explain how removing the carbon tax will make life easier for Ontarians and how our government is making everyday life more affordable for drivers in our province?

Interjections.

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

We're in the midst of question period. The member for Waterloo and the government House leader, if they wish to have a conversation, could perhaps do so outside the chamber—if they wish.

Restart the clock.

The Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Speaker, removing the carbon tax would be a long-overdue victory for drivers in this province. The hard-working people of Ontario would no longer be overburdened when paying for gas, food, transit, and other everyday essentials.

In the meantime, we are finding concrete ways to fight against the negative impacts of the federal carbon tax, by putting more money back into people's pockets. That is why I'm proud that, under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government eliminated the licence plate renewal fee. In fact, it's because of our work on this policy alone that over \$2.2 billion went directly back into the pockets of over seven million hard-working Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, we are fighting the federal carbon tax that the opposition Liberals and NDP continue to support. Our government will continue to put more money back into people's pockets. It's time to scrap the tax.

1110

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

MPP Jill Andrew: Good morning. My question is to the Premier—

Interjections.

MPP Jill Andrew: Can you shut it so I can speak? Thanks.

My question is to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Stop the clock. I'm going to remind—

Interjections.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjections.

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

The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you, Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. This government's cut of \$5 million this year to the Ontario Arts Council and continued failure to match funding to inflation is being felt deeply across Ontario, and Toronto—St. Paul's is no exception. This year, Ballet Jörgen's funding was cut by 16%. As a result, they have been forced to cut staff and free programming that serves racialized, northern, rural and underinvested-in communities, all because this government failed to deliver adequate funding to see it continue.

My question is to the Premier. Will you commit to restoring their funding to meet inflation so that communities, for which the arts are a social determinant of health and well-being, can thrive?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: I thank you for the question. In 2023-24, Ontario Arts Council will be provided with \$60 million of operating allocation. To confirm, the previous year, it was also \$60 million. That has great impact in the community, in arts organizations across all communities. As a matter of fact, it's over 220 communities—and helping

support, through grants, 500 arts organizations and individual artists.

When it comes to the specifics of the question, since 2018, Ballet Jörgen—and I hope I pronounced that correctly—has received over \$1.4 million in support through the OAC, Ontario Arts Council; the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund; and, of course, special investments through the COVID funding.

I'd like to reinforce that what the OAC does in all of our communities is support artists, young people and helps communities thrive. That's really important across the board, including tourism.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: The government seems to care about our big eight art organizations but not so much about our small and medium-sized community arts organizations.

Back to the Premier: I wrote to the Premier and minister outlining just how important Ballet Jörgen's programming is for its dancers as well as all Ontarians, because investment into arts organizations is a guaranteed return both economically and socially. As a harm reduction strategy, social determinant of health and building block to our jobs, our economy, our tourism—the whole nine—just to name a few, our province is better for it and will pay the price without a properly funded arts sector.

My question is back to the Premier. Will he commit to Ontario's economic future by restoring Ontario Arts Council funding in line with inflation to meet the needs of Ontario artists and organizations who depend on it for their livelihood?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Again, thank you for the question. I believe I said \$60 million previously and for this year, and I don't think that's a cut. I just want to double-check.

I also take exception, when we're talking about impacting communities in a positive way, youth in communities, arts, artists, the cultural part of what's going on, and there's a suggestion—and I want to make sure this is correct—that, since 2018, \$1.4 million in funding isn't enough. Boy, I'll tell you what; there's a lot of organizations out there that wish they had half that money and do it mostly within the community. So I think that's a little bit of a slap in the face, but that's okay; we're big boys over here.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is for the Minister of Health.

Access to health care in the north often means travelling long distances to get to the care you need. In my riding, people often must travel to Health Sciences North in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay or southern Ontario for surgeries, special appointments and diagnostics. We rely on the Northern Health Travel Grant to make sure that no one is denied the care they need because of costs. However, my office is often and constantly hearing from constituents who are waiting weeks, if not months, on end

to get a meagre reimbursement that barely covers a portion of the cost to travel and the accommodations.

To the minister: Does she believe that people in northern Ontario have the same right to access health care as the rest of Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I do, and not only do we believe that, but we're actually making changes. Since 2018, we have expanded almost 50—49—MRI machines that will be operating in the province of Ontario in communities, closer to home. Why do we do that, Speaker? Because we want to make sure that people have access to those diagnostic tools as close to home as reasonable.

And specifically speaking on the Northern Health Travel Grant, we now have 95% of individuals who submit for a travel grant get that reimbursement within 30 business days. We have made changes that make improvements, and we will continue to do that because we have a plan and it is working.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Minister of Health: The fact of the matter is that the Northern Health Travel Grant is failing to address health inequities in northern Ontario, and this government is content to sit on the sideline while it does. A constituent in my riding, Heather Wilson from Espanola, must travel to Toronto for medical treatment regularly. She wrote to my office last spring saying, "I have had to navigate the Northern Ontario Travel Grant system. The outdated system of printing off forms, getting the referring doctor and the referred doctor to fill out these forms, and then mailing it in and waiting for reimbursement of costs seems archaic to me."

Northerners have the right to the same resources in a prompt manner, and the current Northern Health Travel Grant does not do this for northern Ontario residents. Will the minister support and pass my bill to improve the Northern Health Travel Grant so that it finally works for northerners?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I said, in fact we have made improvements. One, of course, is allowing auto-deposits so that constituents can access and get that money back.

But I want to talk about the expansions that have happened in northern Ontario. Whether it's returning the Ontario Northland for the first time and having your constituents and others access it, whether it is a brand new hospital—I had the opportunity to visit and talk to Weeneebayko hospital leadership, to make sure we are making those investments in northern Ontario—or whether it is an expansion of a community health team in the member's own riding that we did this summer, we are making sure that individuals in northern Ontario, rural Ontario and all across Ontario have better access to health care closer to home.

TAXATION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. The carbon tax raises the price on everything, especially for small busi-

nesses like those in my riding of Carleton and across the province who have no choice but to either absorb the loss or pass on the cost to customers. Business owners, especially restaurateurs, are the heartbeat of communities across Ontario and are the backbone of our economic engine. They are rightfully concerned about the financial impact that the federal carbon tax continues to have on their bottom line.

Unfortunately, the opposition Liberals and NDP continue to ignore and disrespect small businesses' concerns about the impact this regressive tax has on them. Speaker, through you: Can the associate minister please share what she has heard from small business owners and entrepreneurs regarding the impact that the carbon tax is having?

1120

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the great member from Carleton for her great work in the riding and for the question. Speaker, just yesterday, I met with Restaurants Canada to discuss the continued economic recovery of the food service industry. They made it unequivocally clear that owners are facing hardship over the federal carbon tax. For years, the NDP and the Liberals failed to stand up in this House and recognize what their constituents had been saying all along: That from the farm to the table, the carbon tax was a disaster for small businesses in our province.

Restaurants and small business owners cannot simply pass these unnecessary costs on to consumers, forcing them to cut staff instead. Meanwhile, the federal government turns a blind eye to their struggles. Speaker, this tax is the difference between doors open and doors closed. We demand better than empty words from those who champion this joint Liberal-NDP tax grab.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the minister. As we all know, small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, especially in my riding of Carleton. However, many local businesses are already feeling financial pressure due to higher costs associated with inflation and ongoing supply chain challenges.

I often speak with business owners who are concerned about the impact that the carbon tax is having on their business operations. Many of these owners are still struggling to recover and they worry about the impact increasing carbon taxes will have on their ability to continue operating. The opposition Liberals and NDP need to hear their concerns and support our small business owners by opposing this regressive and harmful tax.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please share what impacts the federal carbon tax increases have had on small businesses in our province?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the member from Carleton who works extremely hard for her small businesses in her riding. Yesterday, I also had the pleasure of speaking to representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They expressed to me that while our small businesses pay close to half the billions collected in carbon taxes each year, only a tiny fraction of

that money comes back their way. Even worse, funds intended to help small businesses with carbon costs have been taken away and thrown back into the ever-expanding taxation. All the while, the opposition parties have cheered on these policies without care for how hard they hit family businesses and people working from paycheque to paycheque.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Only this Premier and this government had the backs of entrepreneurs in this province from the start. We call on the spooky NDP and Liberals to stop grandstanding and for once stand up to their federal counterparts and demand that they—

Interjections.

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

If it wasn't Halloween, that remark might not have been acceptable.

Start the clock. The next question.

FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Good morning. My question is to the Premier. I have been speaking with First Nations leaders across Ontario and they are frustrated and confused about Ontario's ongoing consultation of the Métis Nation of Ontario within First Nations territories. First Nations affected by these decisions have asked the government repeatedly to share the evidence Ontario is using to support this recognition. Ontario still hasn't shared that evidence.

Will Ontario share the evidence as asked? Yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Speaker, the government of Ontario is guided by some legal decisions and we make it our business to engage Indigenous peoples across the province. I've never seen a leader of a political party be more accessible to Indigenous leaders, business leaders and political leaders to fundamentally change the dialogue, to create opportunities for Indigenous populations across the province, to settle treaty disputes, to settle flooding and land claims, and to ensure that First Nations communities and the Indigenous population across the province of Ontario writ large have the tools they need for greater economic prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Ontario Court of Appeal recently provided direction on consultation in the recent Whiteduck decision. The Ontario government must consult with First Nations about issues affecting their traditional territories, including when it recognizes the Métis Nation of Ontario communities in those territories. Will this government follow this decision, yes or no?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We're very proud of the fact that we have increased the number of resource revenue-sharing agreements available for Indigenous communities. It's just another example of how we endeavour to ensure that First

Nations communities have the economic tools that they need to engage in a resource-based economy in northern Ontario, and as an addition to that—to complement it, if you will—to be involved in sustainable, responsible development in forestry and in mining. These are game-changers in northern Ontario.

We will always live up to the standard of a duty to consult. We make it our business to ensure that First Nations communities across this province play an important and equitable role in all of the economic opportunities available now and in the future of this great province.

TAXATION

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is to the elder statesman of Scarborough and the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Across our province, many seniors are currently struggling to stretch their incomes. The cost of food as well as everyday goods and services keeps rising. For seniors with limited incomes, the carbon tax is creating even more difficulty and hardship. It is not right or fair that seniors should have to be worried about the extra burden that the carbon tax is placing on them.

Unlike the opposition Liberals and NDP, who support the carbon tax, our government is focused on making life more affordable for our seniors. Can the minister please explain what impact the carbon tax is having on seniors in our province?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you to the hard-working member for the important question. The federal government's carbon tax is a worry for our seniors. Every product we have in Ontario is affected by the carbon tax.

Seniors across Ontario are very concerned that taxes will keep going up and life will be harder for them. Seniors should not have to struggle to pay high costs for food, heating and the things they need. Our government is working for Ontario seniors so they can live comfortably and with dignity. That is why our government opposes the federal carbon tax.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the minister for that response. Under the strong leadership of the Premier and this minister, our government is respecting our seniors by opposing the federal carbon tax that the opposition Liberals and NDP support. However, life is simply more unaffordable today because of the imposition of the federal carbon tax. It is a harmful tax that is creating hardship for seniors by driving up the cost on everything.

1130

Seniors are also concerned that higher heating costs due to the federal carbon tax will impact seniors centres and organizations that support them.

Can the minister please elaborate on how the federal carbon tax will impact organizations that support our seniors?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Ontario seniors should not be taxed more. The federal carbon tax should be cancelled because it hurts Ontario seniors centres. Our

seniors need these programs to remain active and socially engaged in their communities. Without this support, many seniors will be socially isolated, and this will harm their health.

Our government takes the well-being of our seniors very seriously. We'll continue to support our seniors and to advocate for them.

NURSES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

This morning, in the media studio, my colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls and I were joined by Erin Ariss, the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association. She stated: "Our publicly funded hospitals and long-term-care homes are seeing their budgets drained by these greedy, for-profit" nursing "agency owners who bill obscene amounts of money."

Is the Minister of Health taking any action whatsoever to stop for-profit nursing agencies from making millions of dollars in profit at the expense of quality care in our hospitals and long-term-care homes?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: What our government is doing is expanding the health care workforce across the spectrum, whether that is residency spots that are available in every single medical school in the province of Ontario, including the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, so that we are training more physicians and ensuring that they are in the system; whether that is as-of-right rules that ensure that medically regulated professionals who want to come to Ontario and practise in Ontario have the ability to do that immediately, while their licence gets transferred.

We're making the investments to expand our health care workforce. The member opposite is concerned about something that, frankly, is less than 2%—and a tool, I might add, that is very valuable for rural and northern Ontario. So I'm happy that we're making those investments and expanding, and I will not take that tool away from northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, Dave Verch, the vice-president of CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, was also present. He said, "Agency staff are paid as much as 300% more than hospital staff, which is contributing to a staffing crisis, with stark consequences for patient care." He gave many examples of the effects of quality care—of having staffing agencies, more and more of them, in our hospitals and long-term care.

Will this government take action to ensure that health care dollars are paying for quality care, not lining the pockets of private nursing agency executives?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I am very concerned that the member opposite knows full well that every single nurse practitioner and RN is regulated by their colleges in the province of Ontario, regardless of who their employer is—and to suggest anything other than that is putting fear in people's minds, and it is wrong. So I want to be very clear with the people of Ontario: Every single nurse who

is practising in Ontario, whether it is in hospital, in our public health units, in our long-term-care facilities, in our retirement homes, in our home and community care system, is regulated under the College of Nurses of Ontario, has always been—and will continue to do so.

I am focused on expanding the ability and access to ensure that we have sufficient health human resources in the province of Ontario. I only wish the member opposite had the same focus.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The carbon tax is hurting families, it's hurting farmers and it's hurting businesses in Ontario. The carbon tax raises the price of everything, especially for small businesses, who have no choice but to either suffer the loss or pass it on to their customers. Unlike the opposition NDP and Liberals, we in this party have always known that the carbon tax would drive up costs for everybody.

Speaker, can the Minister of Energy please explain the impact the carbon tax is having on hard-working families in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: That's a great question from the member from Essex, who is standing up for his residents down in southwestern Ontario.

Absolutely—we've heard from all of our members and our ministers today just what an impact the carbon tax is having on constituents in their communities and small businesses in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board and I were talking earlier this morning about a request from Dalhousie University to ask the Bank of Canada to take a look at just how much impact the increased carbon tax was having on the rate of inflation across the country. They revised their numbers, and the figure is a staggering 0.6%. And when considering the compounding impact of the carbon tax, the Bank of Canada now contends that it contributes a whopping 16% to the rate of inflation.

The federal government has to wake up. My counterpart, the federal minister of NRCan, said yesterday that there weren't going to be any more carve-outs. They have to start being the government of Canada and treating all Canadians fairly.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: As the Premier has said, "The delivery of every product we have in this province is being affected by" one of the most harmful and regressive taxes "this country has ever seen—it's a useless tax—and that's the carbon tax."

The most concerning part about the carbon tax is that it will only get worse. The federal government and opposition Liberal and NDP want to triple this regressive tax—triple it by 2030.

I absolutely agree with the Premier's concerns about this tax, because while our government has remained laser-focused on lowering costs, the carbon tax is working against us.

Can the minister please share his views on the negative impact the carbon tax is having on so many Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Essex. The federal government is digging in on the carbon tax, as a matter of fact, at a time when affordability is the key issue at the door. We go door to door, and we talk to our constituents all the time, and the biggest thing they're talking to us about is just how unaffordable it is to live in this country these days.

Our province has done everything we can. We've removed the stickers for licence plate fees. We got rid of the tolls. We're lowering the price of gas by 10 cents a litre—so many different programs to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, but the federal government keeps digging in.

And then they announce a break for Atlantic Canada, but they are the government of Canada. I have some advice for them: If they don't make a change and provide the same carve-out for the people all across Canada, including in Ontario, they're going to end up like this bunch did, like Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals did. They'll lose party status on—

Interjections.

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

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North has a point of order.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Today marks a very important anniversary: 110 years ago on October 31, Sir William Meredith presented a report to the Ontario Legislature that resulted in the creation of the workers' compensation system, the first piece of social legislation in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It's technically not a point of order, but we appreciate the information.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: I rise on a point of order to welcome two outstanding Ontarians, Charles Taylor and Marilyn Heintz, who are visiting us from Burlington today.

Thank you for joining us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great honour to introduce the newest OLIP intern to team Thornhill: Kaitlin Gallant.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTHCARE STAFFING AGENCIES ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LES AGENCES DE RECRUTEMENT DE PERSONNEL DE SOINS DE SANTÉ

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act respecting healthcare staffing agencies / Projet de loi 144, Loi concernant les agences de recrutement de personnel de soins de santé.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: That would be my pleasure, Speaker. The bill is co-sponsored with my colleague from Niagara Falls, MPP Wayne Gates, and it reads as follows:

The bill enacts the Healthcare Staffing Agencies Act, 2023. The act provides that every hospital and long-term-care home in a municipality with a population of 8,000 or more shall develop a plan to limit its spending on health care staffing agencies in accordance with a specified timeline—leading to complete elimination within two years.

Every health care staffing agency established after the act comes into force shall operate as a not-for-profit. If a health care staffing agency receives more than \$400,000 in total from the government of Ontario or any of its transfer payments agencies, the health care staffing agency is subject to oversight by the Auditor General, the Patient Ombudsman, the Ontario Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner. The agency's employees are also included on the sunshine list.

A health care staffing agency shall not pay its workers assigned to a hospital or long-term-care home more than 10% above the existing rate in the hospital or long-term-care home for the relevant profession. The stipend for transportation, accommodation and per diem will be paid directly to the worker. A health care staffing agency shall not poach employees from hospitals or long-term-care homes.

BIRD-SAFE WINDOWS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR DES FENÊTRES SANS DANGER POUR LES OISEAUX

Mr. Glover moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to bird-safe windows / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui concerne les fenêtres sans danger pour les oiseaux.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: This bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to provide that Ontario regulation 332/12, Building Code, made under the act is deemed to include the Canadian Standards Association bird-friendly building design standard A460, which will hopefully help prevent the 25 million bird deaths that happen from window collisions every year.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board of directors has, without consultation with the affected stakeholders, closed the emergency department located in the municipality of Minden Hills, Ontario, on June 1, 2023;

“Whereas the loss of service is jeopardizing the lives of residents in the community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health to use her powers under section 9.1 of the Public Hospitals Act to immediately reopen the Minden emergency department.”

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Pause the Expansion of the Methane-Fired Electricity Generation.

“Whereas the Earth just passed through the hottest three months on record;

“Whereas Canada is experiencing the most severe wildfire season on record;

“Whereas the Ontario government is preparing investments for electricity supply for the long term;

“Whereas in light of recent reports by the RBC Climate Action Institute, Dunsky Energy and Climate Advisors and the Sustainability Solutions Group;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario to pause the expansion of methane-fired electricity generation and evaluate the role of renewable energy in the storage, conservation, distributed energy resources and municipal net-zero plans in meeting Ontario’s electricity needs.”

I’m happy to sign this and send it with page EJ.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karen Uchida, on behalf of complex spine surgery patients in Ontario and in support of Dr. Stephen Lewis, for the following petition:

“Support Access to Spine Care in Ontario....

“Whereas people waiting for complex spinal surgeries, including for scoliosis, are forced to wait years in debilitating pain for the care they need, risking lifelong consequences and deterioration in function;

“Whereas surgeons are willing and able to help, but the system puts up many barriers. Surgeons face the difficult choice of offering routine spinal surgeries—which guarantee compensation—over complex spinal surgeries, further lengthening the wait times for patients with complex cases;

“Whereas the lack of collaboration between the Ministry of Health adjudicators and providers has led to challenges in conducting fair and accurate assessments of complex cases;

“Whereas Ontario’s funding for complex cases for spinal surgeries, derived from the general funding bucket, deprioritizes complex spinal surgeries, over routine/simple surgeries;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“—address the ever-increasing wait times and make complex spinal surgeries available in a timely manner;

“—immediately improve access to surgery for complex spinal conditions by increasing and equitably funding spine care in Ontario hospitals.”

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have one more petition, Mr. Speaker: a petition to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

1510

I'm happy to sign this, support this and send it with page Isolde.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Trudy Funnell from Biscotasing in my riding for this petition.

“Gas Prices....

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to the wild ... fluctuations” in the price of gasoline, “a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

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

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers’ collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

“Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, it jeopardizes workplace safety, it destabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and employers and it removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

“Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;

“Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the Harris Conservatives;

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

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;

“To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

“To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

“To support Ontario’s workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP Bill 90, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Clara.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Bridgit Ripley from Chelmsford in my riding for these petitions.

“Make PSW a Career....

“Whereas there has been a shortage of personal support workers (PSWs) in long-term care and home care in Ontario for many years;

“Whereas Ontario’s personal support workers are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, leading to many of them leaving the profession;

“Whereas the lack of PSWs has created a crisis in LTC, a broken home care system, and poor-quality care for LTC home residents and home care clients;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Tell Premier Ford to act now to make PSW jobs a career, with permanent full-time employment, good wages, paid sick days, benefits, a pension plan and a manageable workload in order to respect the important work of PSWs and improve patient care.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it, et je demande à Danté, le page, de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Support the Gender Affirming Health Care Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam’s private member’s bill—the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act—to improve access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Beckett for the table.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Val Leclair from Val Caron in my riding for signing these petitions.

“Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways....

“Whereas highways play a critical role in northern Ontario;

“Whereas winter road maintenance has been privatized in Ontario and contract standards are not being enforced;

“Whereas per capita, fatalities are twice as likely to occur on a northern highway than on a highway in southern Ontario;

“Whereas current MTO classification negatively impacts the safety of northern highways;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To classify Highways 11, 17, 69, 101 and 144 as class 1 highways; require that the pavement be bare within eight hours of the end of a snowfall and bring the management of winter road maintenance back into the public sector, if contract standards are not met.”

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Protect” 2SLGBTQIA+ “Communities and Drag Artists.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” anti-2SLGBTQIA+ “hate crimes and harassment are increasing across Ontario;

“Whereas drag artists have been specifically targeted for intimidation by” anti-2SLGBTQIA+ “extremists;

“Whereas drag performance is a liberating and empowering art form that allows diverse communities to see themselves represented and celebrated;

“Whereas drag artists, small businesses, and” 2SLGBTQIA+ “communities deserve to feel safe everywhere in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Protecting 2SLGBTQI+ Communities Act so that” 2SLGBTQIA+ “safety zones can deter bigoted harassment and an advisory committee can be struck to protect” 2SLGBTQIA+ “communities from hate crimes.”

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and provide it to page Beckett for the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Tanya Fay from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions.

“Time to Care....

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of LTC homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the

most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of” 4.1 “hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Gurkaram to bring it to the Clerk.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers’ collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

“Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, jeopardizes workplace safety, destabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and their employers and removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

“Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;

“Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the Harris Conservatives;

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

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;

“To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

“To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

“To support Ontario’s workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP Bill 90, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I support this petition. I’ll provide it to page Beckett for the table.

1520

SUBVENTIONS AUX RÉSIDENTS DU NORD POUR FRAIS DE TRANSPORT À DES FINS MÉDICALES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Daniel et Jeannette Castonguay de Chelmsford dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Réparons les subventions aux résident(e)s du nord de l’Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales ...

« Alors que les gens du Nord n'ont pas le même accès aux soins de santé en raison du coût élevé des déplacements et de l'hébergement;

« Alors qu'en refusant d'augmenter les taux des subventions aux résidents et résidentes du nord de l'Ontario pour les frais de transport à des fins médicales ... le gouvernement Ford impose un lourd fardeau aux Ontariens et Ontariennes du Nord qui sont malades;

« Alors que le prix de l'essence est plus élevé dans le nord de l'Ontario; »

Ils et elles demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de créer un comité ayant pour mandat de corriger et d'améliorer » le système. « Ce comité ... réunirait des fournisseurs de soins de santé du Nord ainsi que des bénéficiaires ... pour faire des recommandations à la ministre de la Santé qui amélioreraient l'accès aux soins de santé dans le nord de l'Ontario grâce au remboursement adéquat des frais de » transport.

J'appuie cette pétition, madame la Présidente. Je vais la signer et je demande à Danté de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT STATUTE LAW

AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT

DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE

LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate? I recognize the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Before I begin, I just want to say how it is always an honour to rise in this House, representing the people from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and I'm sure all the members here will share in my comments that I want to send out. Thank you to my family—all of our families. We wouldn't be able to do what we do here if we didn't have the support at home.

I want to say to, particularly, my grandson Sam, who's celebrating his very first Halloween today—he's going out as Daniel Tiger: I'm sorry that Nan's not there, Sam, but have a fantastic Halloween evening.

To all those kids, be safe and have a lot of fun tonight.

I want to start by saying some of the things that the minister and the associate minister, when they talked about this debate, didn't say: This rollback of the greenbelt grab

is a significant victory for the people of the province of Ontario. This is a clear victory for all of us who worked to push back against the Ford government's snatching away of our greenbelt lands. It's significant for every citizen; for all the environmentalists; for all the housing activists; for all the regular folks who just didn't like what they were seeing, who said to me, "I've never protested anything like this before"; for all the agricultural organizations, the farmers who stood up to the Conservatives. What they saw was, really, dirty dealing when it came to the greenbelt grab. So we came together, we pushed back, and we won. That shows you the power of the people. When the people really know that they've been wronged and they stand together, there's nothing that we can't do to make this province a better place.

We had First Nations who also acknowledged and understood what was at risk here. The Ontario First Nations chiefs wrote a letter demanding that Doug Ford's government return the land to the protected greenbelt. First Nations chiefs across the province called on Doug Ford to return the land to the greenbelt. The Chiefs of Ontario said—and they were clear that the greenbelt move violates the Williams Treaties that were settled with the province and the federal government in 2018. The Chiefs of Ontario, which represents many First Nations leaders across the province, voted unanimously in an emergency meeting to oppose the land removal, and they had this to say: "The Ontario government's decision to remove greenbelt lands did not respect obligations to First Nations, the treaties or its own policy-making process." That was from Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare. "The decisions made in a completely flawed process cannot in any way be allowed to stand." I couldn't agree more.

We had agricultural organizations, farmers, people who spent their entire lives—generations of lives—working the land and protecting the land, and see themselves as stewards of this land, who are very, very, very concerned about the loss of agricultural land.

As we have said many times in this House, 319 acres of agricultural land is lost every single day in this province, so this greenbelt grab was a risk to some of the most fertile farmland that we have—and in fact not just in Ontario, but in the country.

The National Farmers Union-Ontario had this to say: "Farmland is for those who grow food, not speculative investors. Return the 7,400 acres unjustly and irresponsibly stolen from the greenbelt."

We also had many, many environmental groups—and honestly, I just have to shout out to Environmental Defence for the work that they have done to protect what is so valuable to all of us. And we do have Environmental Defence—for the 7,000 pages of documents that we received the other day, and those documents continue to unfold. In fact, to be frank, when I was preparing my hour lead, there was so much that I wanted to add, because these documents keep providing insight, and I'm sure that we'll be hearing much more as people start to dig into those.

In a statement from Environmental Defence, when they were talking about the public giveaway, they said that this

was a breach of MPPs' promise not to touch the greenbelt; and that the bill is "a vast transfer of public wealth to a few select real estate investors"; and that it removes "strong legal protection for the greenbelt's unique Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve...."

"The passage of Bill 39 ... will enable a massive transfer of land value effectively held in trust for the public into the hands of a few well-connected real estate investors"—and we know that is true.

We have organizations like the Ontario Greenbelt Promise—and I don't know if you saw them, but there were signs everywhere, in all of our neighbourhoods, and the signs just said, "Doug Ford, keep your greenbelt promise." Those lawn signs had a significant impact on neighbourhoods across Ontario, so that people who didn't really understand what was happening now understood that this Premier had broken his promise and that our greenbelt lands were at risk.

I attended, as did members of my caucus, so many greenbelt rallies. I saw people dressed up as carrots; I saw someone dressed up as a big fish; I saw kids, grandmothers like myself—all kinds of people who came out. Unprecedented amounts of people came out because they knew what was at risk.

I want to give a special shout-out to Stop Sprawl HamOnt. I'm going to say that Hamilton needs to take credit for being ground zero on the push-back to not only the greenbelt grab but the urban boundary expansion, which is really just greenbelt 2.0. So thank you for all your work.

And really, GASP, which is Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet—fantastic work, and thank you very much. We see, we recognize you, and we have a debt of gratitude that we owe you from what you've done to save the greenbelt lands in this province.

I think that this government themselves might have been surprised by how many people actually cared about the greenbelt, and I think maybe this government is also surprised to see that when people stand up, that they know that they need to make changes—it took them a while to come back to it, but they did.

So the province of Ontario—we said no to selling off our natural heritage, we said no to cronyism and backroom deals, and we said no to a government that puts billionaire friends ahead of Ontarians and ahead of the future of our children when it comes to the environment and our green lands in this province. But it really should never have taken this—really, it shouldn't have taken people to take time off work, to take time with their families to stand on the roadside, to stand in front of MPPs' offices with signs, even though the signs were pretty fantastic. I saw some pretty funny signs, homemade signs, so that was also a great feature of these rallies. But it shouldn't have taken this for the Premier to do the right thing, to undo the damage that he had done; it shouldn't have taken this government and, really, the Premier and his ministers getting caught, which is really what happened—making backroom deals with speculators.

This whole scandal has really pulled the curtain back on a Conservative government that seems to be really all too comfortable operating in the backrooms. And this comes at a time when we know people are really hurting in the province. All of our constituents—we know they are really, really struggling. They're struggling with an affordability crisis. They are struggling with a housing crisis. People are concerned about getting timely access to health care and to treatments in this province; they're concerned about paying for treatments that are now privatized. People are genuinely concerned and hurting in this province, and really, this government has wasted so much time and so much effort and so many resources trying to implement this transfer of public wealth to his buddies. Really, we are nowhere nearer to addressing the housing crisis that people are facing. We know that the housing crisis was really something that this greenbelt grab was never about.

1530

The Premier still has a lot more questions to answer. We will keep asking the hard questions. We hopefully will get some answers in this place—although I'm not a fool; I haven't seen that so far. But we're not going to stop asking the questions.

What we have seen work is that three ministers have resigned—Conservative staff resigned. Now there's an RCMP investigation, as I said, with almost 7,000 pages of documents that tell us all roads lead back to the Premier's office. The buck that the Premier talked about stopping stops at his office.

We're going to continue on to make sure that people get accountability in this province for what has actually been the biggest scandal in the history of the province of Ontario. This is something that this government, without being insulting, should actually take to heart—and should say that they are part of a government that is now in the midst of the biggest scandal in the province of Ontario. That's saying something.

I listened carefully to the minister, and I listened to the associate minister when they did their hour lead on this bill. I have to say, the one thing that stuck out to me significantly was that the minister said that the people were not brought along in this process. Can you imagine? The people were not brought along in this process—that is the biggest understatement of this whole greenbelt debacle.

No, Minister, the people weren't brought along; they were taken for a ride. It is the developers and billionaires, friends, who were at the heart of all these decisions that were not in the interests of the people—that's who was taken along—developers and the government's speculator friends who stood to make huge profits. We know \$8.3 billion in profits from these greenbelt removals, the forced urban boundary expansion, MZOs, zoning changes, official plan amendments—all of these interferences and meddling that have set us so far back in the province, all on behalf of not the people but insiders and billionaires, making rich people even richer—and, I would just like to add, without building a single home. None of this resulted in a single home being built. It is scandalous.

Let's go back. This is such a sordid tale, and you will be forgiven if you've lost the plot a little bit. But let me just highlight. It goes sort of like this. Doug Ford got caught on video in 2018 saying that he was going to take a big chunk out of the greenbelt. It was a promise he made to developers, but he got caught. He said, "Oh, no, no. I'm not going to do this," when he was campaigning in 2018. Then, when he was elected in 2018, they had some bills that were going to try and touch the greenbelt, but they got pushback. He said, "No, I guess I won't do that." Then, he campaigned in 2022 on a promise that he would not touch the greenbelt. That was a campaign promise.

Then, when he was elected, we started to get signals from the Premier. He called the greenbelt a scam. He called it a field of weeds, that a bunch of bureaucrats in a room with crayons drew up the greenbelt. We should have known then that the Premier had the greenbelt in his sights. He was signalling that he was moving behind the scenes against the greenbelt and really trying to get public sentiment on his side by saying that the greenbelt was a scam. He was trying to malign the greenbelt, hoping that when he did make his move, the people would have bought his lines on this, but clearly it didn't work; they didn't. Then what do we have?

We had two scathing reports from the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner. I have to commend my leader, the leader of the official opposition, Marit Stiles, who I'm fully in support of. She has done a fantastic job holding this government to account. It's her actions—writing to the Auditor General, writing to the Integrity Commissioner—that helped result in these reports that have finally shed some light on what was going on in this government and in the cabinet.

The Premier has said that he was sorry—very, very, very sorry; very sheepishly sorry.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry he got caught.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: But yes, that's what everyone says. When I say this anywhere in my constituency, anywhere I go, even here—we like to say it—but just average folks, I say, "Oh, the Premier is sorry," and everyone says, "Sorry he got caught." And I bet he is sorry he got caught. I can imagine that he's sorry that he got caught.

He's now saying he's going to put the greenbelt back: "I'm going to put the greenbelt back. I'm sorry. I was a bad boy." But do you know what? He just got caught with his hands in the cookie jar, and I think he thinks that just by putting the cookies back, which may actually be half-eaten, that's the end of it—no harm, no foul, right? Well, do you know what? Not so fast. The people of Ontario aren't buying it yet.

The rest of the story that I'm about to share—I want to quote Sir Walter Scott, who is known to have written a lot of epic sagas. I would describe this as an epic saga. He said:

Oh, what a tangled web we weave

When first we practise to deceive.

Isn't that going to be the truth when we unveil some of the things that have happened in this province? There are times when this information has been unfolding that I just

think, "Is this real? Is this a political drama on TV? Is this really what's happening in the province of Ontario?"

So, absolutely, I would say that what is happening here is really just like a whodunit. It's like a mystery novel, a whodunit, and it's a mystery with twists and intrigues and hidden connections that are starting to be unravelled. Picture: We've got the sprawling landscape of the protected greenbelt lands. We've got developers and speculators with vested interests; politicians making decisions behind closed doors; and investigative journalists, like the detectives, unearthing a lot of secrets.

The plot has been thickening as public sentiment has changed, and the truth remains elusive, but we're getting to the point. Who orchestrated these land swaps? Who whispered in whose ear? Ultimately, who decided to reverse course—and really, the question is why? Why did they decide to reverse course? Why are they reversing course on something that they were so adamant about?

So yes, it absolutely unfolds like a gripping novel, and it really leaves us all wondering: Who is pulling the strings? Who is in charge of this province? Who is calling the shots? It doesn't seem to be the people of Ontario, and it certainly doesn't seem to be this government.

Think of some of the elements in a whodunit. Let me just say some of the things that we've seen. We have Mr. X. I mean, honestly, Mr. X—is this real? Is this real life? Because we have Mr. X.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: It's like a DC comic book.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's like a DC comic. I know that the minister once said that I was part of the legion of doom, but I would say this is part of the legion of dumb, if you ask me, because the things that have happened are unbelievable. There were deleted emails, there were USB keys with shape files passed over, brown paper envelopes with data. There's \$8.3 billion in speculative profits, burner phones, phone records that have gone missing. We have, as I said, the resignation of three ministers, staff resignations. And who could forget—I'd like to forget—about the Las Vegas massage trip? All of these things are straight out of a novel.

Really, even though I'm kind of making light of this, this is not a small mistake—this is not, "Oops, sorry. I apologize." This greenbelt scandal is a colossal scandal, and it's still unfolding. We talk about \$8.3 billion in speculative profits, but the cost of what this costs Ontarians, municipalities, taxpayers are still to be tallied up. There's no way this hasn't cost—all of the staff, all of the resources, all of the lawsuits, all of the legal advice—this has been expensive for the people of Ontario, and it's probably not going to get any better any time soon, I'm afraid.

Like any good mystery novel or whodunit, there's always what's called the double narrative. If you've read any mystery novels, there are the things that unfold, and then there's the underlying story that comes at the reveal. So there's one narrative that is hidden and gradually revealed, while the other is the open narrative, which often transpires in the present time of the story. So there's a double narrative, a hidden story.

1540

The double narrative, or the convenient cover story, in this province of Ontario whodunit is the narrative that this was all about housing. I don't believe it.

Caucus, do you believe this was about housing?

Interjections: No.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No. My constituents don't believe it. Nobody, not one person in Ontario is buying it. As Mayor Mel Lastman used to say, nobody is believing it at all.

MPP Jamie West: Nobody!

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You remember that, Jamie? I used to babysit for his kids. Imagine that. There you go.

Why should they believe it, when report after report, leaked documents and uncovered evidence shows otherwise?

Let's start with the government's own task force—your own appointed housing task force. And what did it say? The topline from that housing task force that made 55 recommendations, that, despite what the associate minister is saying, you haven't moved on—you're moving on them pretty quick now to cover up your tracks, but you didn't implement any of the recommendations from your own housing task force. And what was the thing that they said is most important here?

“A shortage of land isn't the cause of the problem. Land is available, both inside the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts.

“We need to make better use of land.”

Right there—land wasn't the problem. You want to build housing? It's not about land.

The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, which is a group of over 1,000 environmental groups and just average folks in the province, said, “The province's removal of 7,400 acres from the greenbelt was met with overwhelming public opposition. Data did not support the government's false assertions that the land was necessary for solving the housing crisis. The Auditor General, regional planners, and the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force concluded that more than enough land has already been designated in towns and cities to build all the needed housing for decades to come. Destroying important greenbelt lands had nothing to do with solving Ontario's housing crisis and instead seemed more focused on creating massive speculative profits for urban sprawl developers well-connected to the provincial government.” Does that not describe what is happening here in the province?

We have further evidence that this wasn't about housing and that the government was not listening to anyone but the speculators. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture spoke out and wrote to the Premier, saying, “The greenbelt doesn't need to be developed to solve the province's housing crisis....

“The housing crisis facing Ontario is real, and we understand the government's need and plan to add more housing stock to the market. We also think this plan can be achieved by building within existing urban boundaries—utilizing underdeveloped areas, reclaiming abandoned industrial lands and building up instead of out.”

“The OFA said it will remain ‘a willing partner’ with the government to find solutions to address the housing crisis without having to develop on farmland.”

So, after all of this, despite all of the evidence saying that this was not about housing, I wonder if this government and this minister finally accepts the conclusion from their own Housing Affordability Task Force that a shortage of land is not the cause of the housing crisis and carving up the greenbelt and forcing urban boundary expansions on municipalities was not ever, ever about housing. It was a land grab, a land banking exercise. We know it, you know it, and you've been found out.

But there is a housing crisis. That is what we are facing. We've lost so much time in addressing it. It's unbelievable how much time we've spent.

Miss Monique Taylor: And people are suffering for it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: And people are suffering.

Ontario's housing supply continues to stagnate, and your government's policies are failing. In fact, you don't really have any policies when it comes to addressing emergency housing, the shortage of housing; when it comes to housing encampments. What is your plan? You haven't shared it with us in the House. You are failing when it comes to actually putting a roof over people's heads. You spent a year, wasting precious time with what is now a blatant attempt to give greenbelt land to speculators. Your failed housing policies have left Ontarians without a housing supply, and that continues to stagnate while demand soars through the roof.

It's so clear that we need to build different types of housing.

Actually, this is from our housing critic, MPP Jessica Bell, who does fantastic work in this House, highlighting all the time the needs, and providing great ideas and great suggestions that this government never, never seems to take up on. Apparently, they know best—but clearly you don't, because you're not helping people with their housing. She said, “It's crystal clear that we need to build different types of homes that can house Ontarians at every stage of their lives, in the communities they want to live in.... We need to get serious about good policies that will help build the affordable homes we need and get the government back in the business of building housing.”

Recent estimates from the Canadian Housing Statistics Program revealed that the housing supply slowed last year under Ford's government, with growth rate far below the urgent demand for affordable housing. So we know that for months Ford has been distracted, handing out MZO or urban boundary expansion to his wealthy insiders, as I've described, instead of concentrating on building the homes we urgently need.

MPP Jeff Burch, our municipal affairs critic, said, “With today's news, we see how much progress Ford has really cost us. We can't afford any more of his bad decisions.” That is absolutely the case.

If there's any doubt that this government's action when it came to the greenbelt, when it came to MZO, forced urban boundary expansion, amendments to official plans at the pen of the minister—if there was any doubt that this

was about building homes or providing housing for people, the 7,000 pages of documents that we released yesterday prove my point. Not only was this government—the Premier's office was involved in this greenbelt scandal. They were never serious about housing. It was always just a cover story. It was always the double narrative.

Let me tell you, if you don't want to take it from me, I'll just read from some of those uncovered documents.

There were warnings—the government staff asked to “stick to limited messaging about housing.” Under a heading titled “Comms”—communication messaging—a handwritten note reads, “In for a rough ride. Hold the line. It's all about housing.” That's from Ryan Amato, who had this to add: “Everybody keep your mouth shut and stick to it.” So, clearly, clearly, this was not about housing; this was about messaging and a cover story.

How did we get here? I want to talk about the two bombshell reports, the Integrity Commissioner's report and the Auditor General's report. Really, if this is a whodunit and if a crime has been committed, I would just have to say that this is exhibit A—the evidence that's in the Integrity Commissioner's report and the Auditor General's report. I'm sure you've all read it. I'm sure all of Ontario has read it or knows about it. But let me just read some of the table of contents to give you a flavour of what this is all about:

It says, “Government-imposed greenbelt removals proceeded without evidence they were needed to meet housing goals....

“The selection of land sites ... was biased and lacked transparency....

“The greenbelt may not be ready for housing development in time to meet government goals....

“Government's exercise to alter greenbelt did not factor in financial impacts or costs, or clarify fiscal responsibilities....

“Government did not factor in environmental and agricultural implications into the greenbelt boundary changes....

“The public and municipalities were not effectively consulted on the greenbelt boundary changes....

“Indigenous communities and leaders say the province failed to properly consult them on greenbelt changes....”

It just goes on and on.

I would like to add to make sure that we're clear that she also said, “use of personal email accounts contrary to public service cyber security guidelines.” We know there are records that have been deleted, and our leader has written to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and has written to the secretary of cabinet to make sure that those records are retained. This is not Watergate, so I'm sure that they're busy erasing the tapes in there. What I'm saying to you is that this is serious business. It also says, “Record-Retention Policies for Political Staff Communications Needs Reinforcing”—and no doubt, that is the case.

1550

Also, let's look at—I guess if that was exhibit A, this is exhibit B, which is the Office of the Integrity Commissioner's report, again in response to a letter from our leader, Marit Stiles. This was an unprecedented report, 170

pages or so—a huge report. Let me just boil it down got you: The findings of the report by the Integrity Commissioner described the process leading to land removals as being “marked by misinterpretation, unnecessary hastiness and deception,” and said it “resulted in the creation of an opportunity to further the private interests of some developers improperly.” So it furthered the pecuniary and financial interests of some developers. That's what this process did.

The Office of the Integrity Commissioner found that Minister Clark—who, as we know, has since resigned—broke the law. The integrity act is the law in the province of Ontario. You might not like it. We brought forward an opposition day motion to strengthen this act; you voted against that. I don't know why. I don't know why you wouldn't want more integrity in the province, but that's a question for you to ask yourselves.

The Integrity Commissioner—this is David Wake, K.C., by the way—found that the minister broke the conflict-of-interest guidelines in the act, and also broke section 3, which is the use of insider information. That just does not sound great to me—for a minister of the crown to be charged with that and found to have broken the act. These are serious charges.

I know that this government also has managed to not allow us to consider a reprimand for the minister, which is part of the act. Somehow, with your use of your majority in the House, you have made sure that this House, which is accountable to the people, has not had an opportunity to consider an appropriate reprimand for breaking the law, for a conflict-of-interest breach and a breach of the use of insider information. I find that shameful, if you actually had any concern for the functioning of what is supposed to be a house of democracy.

Let me talk now about—I've talked a lot about this—the greenbelt. We know what has happened with the greenbelt, but let me just talk now a little bit about urban boundary expansions, MZOs and amendments to official plans—or, as we like to call it, greenbelt scandal 2.0, or my favourite: “Come for the wedding. Stay for the MZOs.”

Miss Monique Taylor: It used to be cake and some kind of candy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: But now it's MZOs, because 18 MZOs were handed out as wedding favours to developers who sat at the table at the Premier's daughter's wedding—unbelievable.

Miss Monique Taylor: How does that happen? Where was his family sitting?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I don't know. How would I know?

There's so much here. At the risk of getting bogged down with my own papers and getting bogged down with the government's own evidence of their own malfeasance, let me just say that looking into the issue of the MZOs and the urban boundaries was something that we as the official opposition wrote—again, Marit Stiles, MPP Burch and myself wrote to the Auditor General, and we also wrote to the Environmental Commissioner to ask about these MZOs and the process. We know that the MZOs, the urban boundary expansion and the official plan amendments

were done in the same way. The same preferential treatment, the same lack of due process resulted in all of these lands being forced into development. We know now that all of these amendments to official plans, these urban boundary expansions, these MZOs—who do they benefit? The people of the province? No. They all benefited—largely, the vast majority—99% of them fell to benefit a few developers who sat at the table at the wedding, a few developers who are connected to the Premier, a few developers who had—what was it called, the massage? It was called the good luck golden massage?

Interjection: The good luck massage.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They benefited—

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Change the name of that treatment, I would say.

So we know that this was equally as questionable a practice, and it's equally of concern to the people in the province of Ontario. It's of concern to the Auditor General, because she said that she's already looking into this—that she's going to be conducting an audit and she's going to look at other issues like the amendments. We also know, of course, that it's of interest to the OPP and the RCMP, but we'll get into that in a minute.

How do we know that the urban boundary expansions and the MZOs was a process that benefited a few? Well, we had leaked documents. We had the ministry's own documents that said that when they were considering the urban boundary expansion—not just in Hamilton, but with Waterloo, Barrie, Wellington—that the same day that they opened up lands for development, the government forced expansion on many communities, like Hamilton. Hamilton's urban boundary was forced to be expanded by 2,200 hectares, overriding what the people of the city of Hamilton wanted—and the city council. They did not follow the decisions. We received the documents that showed that the government knew that this was bad policy. The government's own documents show that they knew that doing this would cause the loss of farmland, environmental concerns—and that the costs were not to be calculated. When we talk about costs, we're talking about all those servicing fees that taxpayers have to pay, that developers don't have to pay. We're talking about sewer and water, roads, schools, hydro—all of those things that they knew that the costs were not calculated, but they still went ahead and forced the urban boundary expansion.

Who really wanted this, let's just say? The records show, in these leaked documents from the ministry's own records, that unnamed parties requested dozens of the changes Ontario made to Hamilton's plan. More than a third of those 77 changes had no listed purpose or rationale—it all just said, "Third party." So, really, my question is, is that what the province is? Are we a province that's run by Mr. X? Are we a province that's run by third parties? There are planning rules. Where is the concern for good planning that helps not just you as a government, but helps people who are trying to live their lives, communities that are trying to grow their communities appropriately? None

of that. That was all thrown out the window to serve the pecuniary interest of a few insider friends.

We're not really sure why this government has overlooked the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, but we do know for a fact that, in one instance in Hamilton, developers requests were copied word for word into an official planned amendment. They said, "Can you make this change?" The minister made this one particular amendment—very unusual. It just said, "See that piece of land there on your official plan? Can you change that for me?" "Sure thing." The minister's pen made that change.

Do you know what? These speculators weren't just any speculators, yet again. The Premier took direction from the exact same people who were at his daughter's stag and doe this time. They're the same people who were interviewed by the offices of the Legislature, the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner, because of preferential treatment in the greenbelt.

An Ancaster councillor—and this is where this particular amendment happened, which is Wilson Street in Ancaster—said, "It's entirely undemocratic for the province to accommodate for-profit interests that are in complete contradiction to the public's interest."

So, really, are we going to find out how many changes to official plans came directly, word for word, from speculators? It's really shocking.

1600

So these are the leaked documents, or this information—we don't have time for that; there's so much of it.

But I want to say, sadly, where are we now? We're in a province where the RCMP are investigating this, and we have what has been assigned a special prosecutor. Does that sound good? No.

A criminal probe and the RCMP investigation: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has officially launched a criminal investigation into the greenbelt changes made by the Ford government. The investigation centres around the controversial decision to open up protected greenbelt lands for housing development, which sparked intense debate and scrutiny.

And what is the role of the special prosecutor? An RCMP officer mentioned that the special prosecutor would be involved in the case. The special prosecutor's role is connected to the complexity of working with witnesses who may be bound by confidentiality—and we know that 93 NDAs were signed with Amato's work—and that one possibility is that the special prosecutor serves as an independent outside legal adviser to police during the investigation. We know that the special investigator looks, in particular, into these instances of fraud, looks particularly into interests that are exactly what we suspect has transpired here.

Miss Monique Taylor: I think they are extra-special and overachievers.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I think so too.

Quite a bit here—I've done my leaked documents, and I've made perfectly clear that the environmental damage was overlooked not only in the greenbelt, as the Auditor General said, but in the forced urban boundary expansion.

As their own document said, they didn't take into consideration the environment in any way, in any regard.

Let me just double down on the special prosecutor and make sure that I'm clear. The special prosecutor—let me see what they're investigating. Maybe the Attorney General, who I saw was here, can help me with this. Really, a prosecutor is most commonly used in Ontario, and they tend to seek out special prosecutors when there's concern that a possible conflict of interest could emerge if an Ontario prosecutor handled the case. So this is hot enough that it's taken away from the Attorney General's office and put in the hands of a special prosecutor.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to hear that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

I'm sure that as this story unfolds, we'll continue to learn more about the role of the special prosecutor. I'm sure many of us haven't had occasion—hopefully, we'll never have occasion—to get a call from a special prosecutor. It's something that I would not be looking forward to. I understand that the RCMP said they're going to begin making those phone calls.

As I said, this is—

Miss Monique Taylor: I would love to hear one of those phones ringing right now.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Again, it is the largest scandal in the province of Ontario. Is it possible that it could be bigger than big? We're going to see, when we start to hear the results of the investigation by the RCMP and the special prosecutor.

I think I have enough here for three hours, but I only have about 18 minutes left.

The other thing that I want to remark on is that this bill—really, in terms of word count, the word count related to indemnities is the biggest part of this bill. Are we surprised by that? What did we see with this government when it came to the deaths in for-profit long-term-care homes? What did they do? They gave those for-profit homes where deaths occurred—6,000 deaths in the province of Ontario. They made sure that those for-profit homes were indemnified so that families—victims, essentially—were not able to seek redress in the province of Ontario.

I understand there's a class action lawsuit being launched. I don't know if it's registered, but it's for the families of the people at Orchard Villa. Orchard Villa had the largest proportional death count in the province. That's the home where they had to call in the army. The reports from that were almost unspeakable. It's really hard to read that report. Again, the government gave them an indemnity. But that's not enough. As a parting gift, they gave them an extension, a 30-year contract, to continue to operate more beds, and for longer, in the province.

So it really is special, in Ontario, when you're a special friend of the Premier. Things just seem to work out really well for you—not so much for the families of all those people who died in long-term care.

Let's just say the dean of the Osgoode law school described the protections from liability in the bill as “broad”—no kidding.

“Ontario Won't Compensate Developers after Greenbelt Land Swap Reversal.” Do you know what? Let's say that: Do the developers need to be compensated—the speculative profiteers? I don't think so. Do the government ministers who were complicit in this need to be covered? I'll leave that question to the people of the province of Ontario. Do they deserve to be indemnified for any of their actions and wrongdoing? That's a question. I'm sure the conversation between the Premier and the developers who lost out would be an interesting one. But really, these indemnities are designed to essentially insulate all those involved in this government's change in direction.

Here's an interesting part, because the government has done this before: It not only applies going forward; it applies going backward. That's the unusual thing about this. This government has done this before. The indemnity they passed was not only for—when a court ruling said that their MZO's were illegal, they passed a bill that said, “Those illegal MZO's that we passed? They're now legal, and going forward, they'll be legal.” So they've done this before to cover themselves proactively, which is unbelievable to me—that you can go back and say, “Hey, that thing where you broke the law?” The government said, “We're covered. We didn't actually break the law, and no one can seek redress.”

Should developers sue and be compensated out of the taxpayers' pockets? Absolutely not. The people of the province of Ontario have had enough. They've paid enough. Municipalities who have incurred costs, who had all kinds of planning documents, planning exercises, years of costs ripped up, deserve to be compensated. People lost money on this—average people. They don't even know the cost. Taxpayers are going to pay for lawsuits. Taxpayers are going to pay for lost revenue. Taxpayers are going to pay for lost time, lost resources, all because of this government's failed policy, all because this government tried to enrich their donors without a care. They didn't give a fig about the people of the province of Ontario, who pay their taxes day in and day out, who are suffering to pay their bills. No, they didn't care about that, and their indemnity laws make sure that they will not be held accountable.

Finally, let me just say that if this is a whodunit, if in fact a crime has been committed—we talked about their alibi, the cover story, which was housing. We talked about the evidence, which is the Auditor General's report, the Integrity Commissioner's report, expert reports, leaked documents, the 7,000 pages that we're digging through now. That would be the evidence.

If there is a victim in this potential crime, it is the environment and the greenbelt and all that it protects. This has truly been an assault on the environment like no other. Do I need to reiterate that the greenbelt is a protected jewel for a reason? People were so upset about what you did because they care about it. They know its value. They understand its value. The greenbelt includes over two million acres of protected, unprotected, protected land. It includes some of the most valuable agricultural land in the country. People farm the greenbelt. It needs to be known; this is agricultural land.

The greenbelt generates almost \$10 million in economic activity. It supports almost 200,000 jobs. It provides \$3.2 billion a year in services like flood protection, water purification and stormwater management. It is the area that feeds us, that cleans our water, that protects us from floods, and it was poorly treated by this government—disregarded. I don't know whether you don't understand this, whether it just looked like too much profit to grab, whether it was just too hard for you to resist snatching it away, but it is a jewel, and people know it.

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I think it's important to say that the Auditor General, who produces a lot of reports, produced a report in May 2023 that talks about the state of the environment in Ontario. It is not particularly good news. What I want to start by saying is that the Auditor General and the Commissioner of the Environment had this to say—and this needs to be listened to through the lens of what this government tried to do and continues to do when it comes to the greenbelt, environmental protections and wetlands. They had this to say: "It is well worth remembering that protecting, conserving and restoring the environment requires a longer-term perspective. Whatever the politics of the day, elected governments are called upon to hold this longer-term perspective in sight. The actions they take, or fail to take, will be measured in the long run by future generations of Ontarians." Isn't that so true? This is our job. We are to be stewards of the environment for future generations in this province. I'm sad to say that this government did not take any of that into consideration.

The State of the Environment report—just a couple of highlights here are that when it comes to wetlands, which is a significant part of the greenbelt, "the natural resources ministry set targets in 2017 to halt the net loss of wetland ... in southern Ontario—where wetland loss has been the greatest." However, the ministry has not tracked the status of progress in meeting these targets, because the ministry "informed our office in ... 2021 that the targets are no longer in effect." This government took away targets to protect wetlands in the province. They didn't want to be held accountable, and they didn't want to track it. "The province has not met ... Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy ... to conserve at least 17% of land and water systems through well-connected networks of protected areas." There's a lot here on the health of the Great Lakes; microplastics are not being tracked in the province.

I think particularly a thing that I want to mention is poor Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe is one of the greatest inland lakes in the province, probably in Canada, and it continues to suffer. It says, "In Lake Simcoe—the largest inland lake in southern Ontario—dissolved oxygen concentrations, which are important for the survival of fish.... Chloride levels in Lake Simcoe—which come largely from road salt use and can be highly toxic to aquatic organisms"—and they result in algae blooms because of overloading of phosphorus. Lake Simcoe is suffering. Lake Simcoe has the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, one of the best environmental protection plans that I have seen, and this government has done nothing—not moved on that at all.

Finally, I just want to say a few things that she talks about. She goes on and talks about some of the changes that the government has made when it comes to the environment. You amended the Endangered Species Act, so now we have a pay-to-slay act in the province. You made legislative and regulatory changes to limit the work of conservation authorities and their role in reviewing the impacts of development and other activities. This is a good read—a lot of information about why the province of Ontario needs to take the environment more seriously.

Let me just say that in the minister's speech, he took great pains—and the associate minister also—to say that they're going to protect the greenbelt. Thank you. But they also said that we're going to protect the greenbelt while still making lands available for important infrastructure. Further, they said we're going to protect the greenbelt "without limiting future governments' ability to add infrastructure." What are we talking about here? Because I'm not sure, but my guess is we're talking about the unneeded, \$10-billion Highway 413 that cuts through swaths of the greenbelt, cuts through wetlands, cuts through some of the most fertile agricultural land in the province—pretty sure that's the infrastructure that this government is talking about.

I would say that the government, through the Attorney General, recently announced their intention to seek a judicial review of the federal Impact Assessment Act. It is my contention that that is because this is the infrastructure that they want to ram through, that this judicial review that was under a federal impact assessment is the number one goal of this government. And, taking no lessons from how upset people were about your assault on the greenbelt, you are going to spend taxpayer dollars again, in court.

The Supreme Court had no problem with the federal impact assessments currently under way. Wasting public money re-litigating decisions and making sure that you have your way with the environment at all costs is really I don't think what the people of the province of Ontario expect from an Attorney General. There are problems with your land tribunal. There are all kinds of problems with people seeking redress and justice in the province, so spending time and taxpayer dollars in court to fight the federal government so that you can build a highway, I would say, is not what the people of the province expect.

We also have a government that is looking to—through their EROs, through posting on the Environmental Registry, the further assault is that you are tabling four proposals that will weaken environmental oversight in the permit system for taking water, waste management and stormwater. These changes mean that the public would lose the right to participate in decisions affecting their health and safety and, worse, public oversight would be offloaded to the very same private company seeking the permit. Just like the gutting of conservation authorities and the weakening of wetland protections, this government is once again looking to enrich special interests while putting our soil and water at risk.

I asked this in the Legislature: Will this government ever, ever listen to the public instead of lobbyists and show

that by cancelling these ERO postings? I've received so many emails about this. People are upset. They understand what you're up to, and they're writing to say, "Please don't do this."

I would also like to say, when it comes to the infrastructure and the Attorney General's seeking of a judicial review, it is not lost on the people of Ontario that this is all about Ontario Place as well: special interests, private deals, a \$650-million parking garage for Therme—subject to environmental assessment, but we have the Attorney General working at clearing the path so that Therme can profit from our public lands, from our public waterway, so we can build—what? What is it we're building there? A luxury—

Interjection: Spa.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A luxury spa.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: Well, you know how much they love their spas and massages.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They like their massages, so maybe there will be a good luck golden massage there.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'll interrupt the member. I do have someone with a point of order.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I wasn't aware that Ontario Place was in the greenbelt, so I would like her to go back to the greenbelt.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the point of order. The member can continue.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. I'm surprised that the member actually knows where the greenbelt is, to be honest with you, but there we go. He knows it's not in Ontario Place. So now—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Withdraw.

You will not be surprised that the people of the province of Ontario are not the trusting sort anymore when it comes to this government, and now the government's talking about a 10-year review of the greenbelt—two years early, 10-year review. We have a broken trust with the province. You're not listening to experts. You stack your boards and your panels with insiders. This is not a government that anyone trusts with your 10-year review.

I will just quote, again, from the Integrity Commissioner, who said, "The Greenbelt Act provides that there shall be another 10-year review in 2025 to determine whether it should be revised." Again, this is from the Integrity Commissioner. "I sincerely hope that the experience of the exercise to remove lands from the greenbelt as set out in this report will be used to inform that review and any subsequent process affecting these lands." I would say that that's a warning to say, "Don't do this again. Don't use insiders, preferential treatment. Don't break the integrity act. Don't use your power to further the pecuniary interests of your insiders." That's from the Integrity Commissioner.

Very quickly, in this bill—what do we not hear in this bill? What is missing from this bill? I would start by saying that nothing here will make it better. You might sort of restore it to where it was, but it's not going to make things better when it comes to the environment. You have still

gutted the conservation authorities and their ability to apply a watershed approach to land use planning. You haven't restored that. You have done nothing to protect agricultural lands. You still have specialty crop areas that you have done nothing with. You don't have an agricultural impact assessment, which I would say you should do.

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You also continue to approve sand and gravel extraction permits within the greenbelt, and I would like to be clear that Ontario has already approved permits and licenses for 13 times as much aggregate than the province actually requires. So really, people see this as what it is, driven by speculative forces, not real need. It's just buying more land, cheap land, and sitting on it as a land grab.

There's a lot you could do, really, but it's not here in this bill because you're just putting the cookies back in the cookie jar to appease people in the province, and my guess is, they are not going to be appeased.

Listen, this greenbelt scandal has set Ontario back years on building the homes that the province so desperately needs. You ignored recommendations from your own critics, but these dealings go way beyond the greenbelt to urban boundary expansions. Now we are concerned about what you're doing with Ontario Place, with the 413. We know that this government was never serious about putting a roof over people's heads. They keep talking about the dream of home ownership, but it sure just sounds to me like a time-share sales pitch from the minister. What we need is someone to take action on renovations, demolitions, and land tribunals that only have 18 charges in the last few years. Housing encampments, shelters: That's what is seriously needed.

It's a sad tale that this government is still unfolding, and we need a government focused on what they seem to have forgotten, and that's the hard-working people of Ontario. People deserve a government that is honest and trustworthy. Imagine that I have to say that: They deserve a government that is honest and trustworthy. And we certainly deserve a government that looks out for us, for average people, and not simply their billionaire friends.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions.

Mr. Will Bouma: I apologize to the Attorney General. I noted with interest the member stated that the value of this land went up by \$8.3 billion or something like that, and I've noted in conversations with the member from Oxford that I find that number intriguing, because we hear all the time—I think the member mentioned it in her speech—that we have enough land for development. If that's the case, how could the land from the greenbelt that we put in go up in value by \$8.3 billion? Because if we had enough land, I couldn't see that going up. I'm just wondering, how could that land that we took out of the greenbelt go up in that kind of value if we have enough land? Either we need more land for development or we don't, and that's my question for the member.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This just gives me an opportunity to explain how land banking works in this province, how speculative profit-making works in this province.

Just before the government made their decision in November 2022, developers in Hamilton were buying up land at extraordinary interest rates and at high costs. Also, we had a tree farmer in Hamilton that had absolutely no interest in selling his land who had three speculative developers come to buy his land. Why is that? Because they knew that this land would be rezoned for profit, not to build housing that people need, not to build housing that people can afford but for profit.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question. Member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you as well to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. This is an issue that I think is resonating across the province. We’ve had a concern over the greenbelt where the Premier has been caught several times trying to carve it up—Happy Halloween, by the way. But the Premier has been trying to carve up the greenbelt and each time when he gets caught, he promises not to do it again.

Now, ever since we’ve come back to talk about this, the House leader has been promising this bill that we’re talking about here, saying, “We’re going to have regulations.” Basically, what he’s saying is, we’re going to have regulations to protect the Conservative government from the Conservative government on this. I feel like the Conservative government, and the Premier primarily, does understand why Ontario is so upset. So if the member could break it down—the way I see it is, that you’ve got a kid who got caught with his hand in cookie jar several times and now he took a big bite out of the cookie and wants to put it back and pretend that all is forgiven and it’s no big deal.

And so if the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas can just elaborate on why the people of Ontario are so upset and so angry at this Conservative government.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Because they know that they were lied to. They know that the Premier made a promise and that that promise was broken.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I’ll ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Withdraw.

They know that what the Premier said couldn’t have been further from the truth. They know that the Premier broke a promise when he campaigned. They see through this. People aren’t stupid. I think the Premier thought that the people of Ontario were going to buy all of his lines and that they were stupid. And they’re not stupid. They work hard for their money; they work hard to feed their families; they put trust in their government and that trust has been broken. They know it and they see it and that’s why they’re so incensed.

The fact that people are so cynical with governments, the fact that people don’t have trust in their government to do the right thing, is precisely because of the kind of actions that this Premier took.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Hon. Doug Downey: I have a question. I heard the member—and she’s at her best when she sticks to her notes, because I heard her talking about the Supreme Court decision. She’s taking the line that Minister Guilbeault is taking that this is some sort of friendly suggestion from the Supreme Court of Canada.

But then I got thinking about it and the member is happy to defer to the federal NDP on important matters that affect Ontarians. So maybe they are willing to just cave on jurisdiction that is set out in the Constitution, Madam Speaker. But that is not my question. My question is this: If she’s so against building highways and so against building homes—I have a simple question. If we were to review your expenses, do you travel on the 407?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know, this is the question from the Attorney General for the province of Ontario. That is the question that we get. I would be curious about your expense accounts and the Premier’s expense accounts, but that’s not what we’re here to discuss.

So my question to you is, why do you feel so free with the taxpayers’ dollars to go to court? You lose almost every single time. Never mind asking me to show your expense account; what I would like you to do is reveal to the people of the province of Ontario how much you have spent on government lawyers. Not you, by the way: the people of the province of Ontario. How much have they spent?

You are free with their tax dollars to pursue things that are in your personal interest and the Premier’s personal interest, but my question to you is, how much are you willing to spend to pursue your interests?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I think it’s unfortunate for the government to bring up the 407 highway considering that the last session of this government wrote off \$1 billion that that 407 highway owed to taxpayers.

But moving on: Look, I want to change the channel because this debate is clearly becoming very frustrating for the government members, and very awkward. So I want to bring up a rising consumer issue that’s happening. In the last five years, we’ve seen a huge and dramatic increase in the cost of brown envelopes, and you can’t find them anywhere anymore. The issue is that, in fact, some consumers are reporting as they get back to us, that the cost of brown envelopes today are somewhere near the cost of Lysol wipes during the pandemic.

I just wanted to know if the member has heard about this disturbing trend.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, I did hear that, during the Gomery inquiry, the cost of brown paper bags skyrocketed, so that may be a parallel there.

But what I want to say about the 407 is people can’t afford to drive on the 407. Your \$10-billion highway through the greenbelt runs parallel to the 407. So if the former Conservative government had promised that these fees were just to pay off the cost and people could actually afford to drive on the 407, we wouldn’t need this unnecessary highway—which, by the way, if you look at who

owns land around the 413? The same developers with preferential treatment. If you see all those interchanges where this government wants to put Home Depots and Tim Hortons, they're going to be owned by the same developers that receive preferential treatment.

You want to talk about the 407? Take the tolls off of it. You've relieved them of their fees anyway, so take the tolls off it and let people drive on the highway that they paid for.

1630

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I'm going to change the dial as well. I think I heard the member from Sudbury say that they support the bill. We've heard the Leader of the Opposition as well as the housing critic say that they share our goal of increasing supply and building the homes that we need by 2031. So I'm going to dial back to a time when the member from St. Paul's said building more homes may not necessarily be the answer. Now, the member from her party is saying that building more homes is the right answer but that the taxpayers should pay a minimum of \$150 billion to build a maximum of 25,000 homes a year. So my question to the opposition is, what's their plan to build 1.5 million new homes by 2031, and how much will it cost the taxpayers?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Let me start by saying, do we support a bill that returns the greenbelt lands—the greenbelt lands that you essentially absconded with—back into the hands of the people of Ontario? I agree with that.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Really, honestly, there is one quality for the member from Brantford—Brant, and that's his loud clapping, I would have to say. But, you know, this is a government that doesn't take housing—what is your housing policy? You're the government. We have proposed time and time again an Ontario homes plan. We've talked about making sure that the people that have homes stay in their homes. We talked about real rent control. We've talked about the end of renovations and demovictions.

Not everybody—maybe in your caucus—but not everybody in the province of Ontario can afford a single-family home, four bedrooms, four-car parking garage. That's not what most people can afford in this province. So our plan is to make sure everybody in the province, whether it's a small co-op apartment or whether it is a large home, can afford it. But your government has—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's all the time for questions and answers. We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm pleased to rise to speak about Bill 136, the proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. And I would like to say here that I would like to share my time with the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

As stated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we are following through on our commitment to fully restore these lands and provide enhanced protections

to the greenbelt moving forward. In order to achieve this, the government of Ontario is introducing legislation that would, if passed, restore all properties that were redesignated or removed within the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine areas in late 2022. That being said, we have not wavered in our commitment to build more homes for Ontarians.

Ontario's housing affordability crisis, mired in the current federal government's National Housing Strategy underfunding the province of Ontario by roughly \$480 million, is taking a very heavy toll on all Ontarians. It's becoming increasingly difficult for Ontarians to live happy and healthy lives due to decades of inaction, and it is our duty to fix this crisis. That is why our government refuses to leave Ontarians out in the cold and why we continue to fight for Ontarians trying to achieve the dream of home ownership.

It would indeed be a disservice to our children if they are forced to move out of this beautiful province simply because they cannot afford a home. We need to foster the growth of future Ontarians, and the first step is to allow them to remain in Ontario. That is why I am proud to represent a government that stands firmly behind its promise to build one and a half million homes by 2031.

It is also our goal to work with all of our partners to help municipalities build new homes as soon and as efficiently as possible. Municipal governments across Ontario want to build homes for their people, but countless layers of red tape are making this impossible. We have embarked on an ambitious mission, and we will confront the housing crisis head-on. Our commitment is unwavering, and our goal is clear: to build at least one and a half million new homes by 2031. This is not just an arbitrary number; it is a promise to the people of Ontario that affordable housing is our priority. It is a staunch commitment to ensure that everyone living in Ontario has access to safe, affordable and comfortable housing. It is my belief that with the legislation currently being proposed by our government, including Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, and Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, we can create a province where home ownership is a realistic and achievable goal for all Ontarians, and anyone will be able to find a place to call a home.

On our path to achieve this goal, we are proposing to keep the 9,400 acres that our government added to the greenbelt in 2022 under greenbelt protection. These include lands in Paris-Galt moraine and in urban river valley areas. This proposed legislation also reinstates the protections provided for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve easements and covenants, thereby recognizing the importance of this agricultural land and ensuring its sustainable use for the present and for the future generations that will occupy the new homes our government promises to build. Returning these lands to the greenbelt is a pledge to our children and to our grandchildren that our government will protect the natural beauty of Ontario, its fertile soil and the diverse ecosystems that call it home. We are preserving the very essence of what makes our province such a desirable place for people to live.

Speaker, I want to be clear: If this proposed legislation is passed, our government will be responsible for making the greenbelt the largest that it has ever been, securing sustainable agricultural land to enrich the lives of present and future Ontarians.

Restoring the protections and policies of the Greenbelt Act in its entirety includes the need for a review every 10 years, as was mandated by the previous government when the legislation was originally introduced and passed. In our commitment to restoring the protections and policies of the Greenbelt Act in its entirety, we must not forget the importance of periodic review. Decennial reviews of the greenbelt lands will act as insurance to the people of Ontario moving forward that their voices will be heard and policies surrounding the greenbelt-protected territories will be refined to serve the evolving needs of our society.

Speaker, I would also like to make it clear that in order to effectively preserve the greenbelt lands, our government will be in direct contact and in constant engagement with Indigenous communities and municipalities situated in and around the affected areas.

Moving forward, we will ensure that this review is conducted with the utmost integrity and impartiality. It will be led by a panel of non-partisan experts, individuals who have dedicated their lives to the field of conservation, agriculture and environmental protection. These experts will have Ontario's best interests at heart and will carry out their duties with the utmost diligence, with a singular focus on the betterment of our province through agricultural preservation and the sustaining surrounding regions.

To close, the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, is a testament to the enduring commitments of our government. It will ensure that greenbelt lands are protected and secured in the most robust fashion they have ever seen, allowing the Ontarians who will eventually occupy the 1.5 million homes this government will get built to be fulfilled by the natural beauty of Ontario: its fertile soil and its diverse and wonderful ecosystems. Additionally, the agricultural utility afforded by the reinstatement of the protections provided for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve easements and covenants will be appreciated by present and future Ontarians who will have the pleasure of enjoying homegrown foods grown in prime Ontario farmland.

Our government remains steadfast in providing the tools required by municipalities to build more homes in our ever-growing province. And with this legislation, if passed, they will be able to do so, all while respecting Ontario's historic green space.

Finally, our government remains open to further feedback on the proposed amendments, as evidenced by our postings on the Environmental Registry of Ontario and the Regulatory Registry.

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The Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, is another step in allowing us to continue to build a more affordable and sustainable Ontario.

Speaker, I've been working with the Premier now for five years, and once in a while, the Premier is not afraid to take a step back, to change direction and even to apologize

when we make a mistake. I think that's one of the most gratifying things about having the opportunity to work with this government. Yet so often, you will see governments and even Prime Ministers change direction, but they don't apologize.

I remember looking at my wife once and saying, "Why do you put up with me?" Please, no one say anything—and she said, "Because when you apologize, I can tell that you mean it." And I think that's also true of our Premier: He can look into the eyes of the camera, into the eyes of 15 million Ontarians, apologize and mean it, change direction and do what's right for the people of Ontario.

And with those remarks, I will close.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, and good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise for the second reading of our government's proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023.

Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Associate Minister of Housing, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for all your hard work on this legislation.

As stated by my colleagues, our government is introducing legislation to restore all 15 areas of land that were removed or redesignated from the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine at the end of last year. The restoration of these 15 parcels of land is important to constituents across the 10 local municipalities of Vaughan, King, Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham, Pickering, Ajax, Clarington, Grimsby and my hometown of Hamilton.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this time to reiterate the important pieces of this proposed legislation that would, if passed, benefit all Ontarians. Not only would this legislation keep the 9,400 acres that were added to the greenbelt in 2022, but the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, would enhance existing protections to greenbelt land. These protections would ensure that any future changes to the boundaries of the greenbelt can only be made through an open, public and transparent process that would require approval from this House.

The requirement of a review every 10 years, along with an enhanced review process, will result in any changes to the greenbelt to be based on the decisions of the people of Ontario. The review will be led by impartial, non-partisan experts in conservation, agriculture and environmentalism and will also include engagement with Indigenous communities and municipalities. Once final, these experts' recommendations will be provided to the Auditor General and the Commissioner of the Environment for consultation to ensure the process was indeed fair.

If this legislation is passed, the greenbelt will be larger and better-protected than it has ever been. The act would restore protections previously provided by the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005, recognizing the importance of this agricultural land and ensuring its sustainable use for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, this Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act follows through on our government's commit-

ment to fully restore these lands and to provide enhanced protections to the greenbelt moving forward. Our government is following through on ensuring that any future changes to the greenbelt boundaries can be made only through the open, public and transparent legislative progress. Our government also remains focused on following through with confronting the housing crisis by building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

Relating to the proposals that I've already outlined, the legislation would also include measures to strengthen the province's immunity from landowners attempting to seek damages based on government actions related to the greenbelt. The intent of these measures is there should be absolutely no impact to taxpayers for restoring these parcels of land to the greenbelt, regardless of what has been said or what has been done by government officials.

Madam Speaker, in the past 10 years, house prices in Ontario have almost tripled. Home ownership has become beyond reach for many first-time buyers. Recognizing this crisis, our government has adopted one of our clear mandates as building more homes for the province. As the member for Perth–Wellington stated, our government developed a Housing Affordability Task Force comprised of industry leaders and experts. The task force consulted with municipalities, with industry and with the public to identify measures to address the housing supply crisis and to get homes built faster.

The Housing Affordability Task Force published its report in February 2022. Overall, the report sets out 74 recommendations. Madam Speaker, of this number, 23 are fully implemented, 14 are in progress and the remaining 37 are under review. The first recommendation, to set a goal of building at least 1.5 million new homes over the next 10 years, has been adopted by our government as the core of our housing strategy. All of our housing initiatives, Madam Speaker, such as introducing legislation and re-examining processes, are focused around this goal of 1.5 million new homes.

Since we were elected in 2018, our government has made this mandate of building more homes a top priority and put forward numerous measures to increase the housing supply, as my colleague the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London discussed earlier. Madam Speaker, we have encouraged increased density through Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. We introduced measures that encourage the creation of up to three units on most urban residential lots, enabling additional housing options on lots where neighbourhoods already exist without lengthy planning approvals and development charges. We have worked with municipalities to remove red tape and to speed up the process. This is reflected in 2021 and 2022, as those years saw the most housing starts in over 30 years, with close to 100,000 homes built each and every year. We have announced the expansion of strong-mayor powers to heads of council who have committed to housing targets provided by the province.

We are also proposing to revise the definition of “affordable residential units” through Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, to reduce the cost of

building much-needed affordable units. The proposed changes would affect the collection of municipal development-related charges related to affordable housing. Madam Speaker, a revised definition of “affordable residential units,” taking into account local incomes and local market factors, would determine which residential units should be eligible for municipal development-related charge discounts and exemptions. Both rental and ownership properties that meet this new “affordable residential unit” definition would be eligible for discounts and exemptions from municipal development-related fees

We are also further incentivizing municipalities to build more housing through our housing targets and the new Building Faster Fund. This three-year, \$1.2-billion fund will provide up to \$400 million per year to municipalities that meet or exceed their annual housing targets. The fund can be accessed by the 50 municipalities who have been assigned a housing target, and a portion of the funding will also be reserved for small, rural and northern communities not yet assigned a target.

Madam Speaker, this legislation, if passed, would help combat the current housing crisis by allowing and encouraging more homes to be built right across the province. We are following through on our commitment to build 1.5 million new homes through increased density on urban residential lots, the removal of red tape throughout the building process, revising the definition of “affordable homes” and providing discounts and exemptions to homes that meet this new definition. This legislation would also restore and provide enhanced protections to the 9,400 acres of greenbelt land moving forward.

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Madam Speaker, we're following through on our commitment that any future changes to the boundaries can only be made through an open, public and transparent process. Our government remains steadfast in reaching our goal of 1.5 million new homes by 2031. We cannot ignore that we are in the middle of a housing supply crisis. Decades of inaction, burdensome red tape and NIMBYism created Ontario's housing supply crisis, and we are seeing its effects. Too many people in Ontario are struggling to find an affordable home. Too many Ontarians have been priced out of the housing market, through no fault of their own. Our government is fighting back, and we will continue to fight for Ontarians. We're going to do that by working together under Premier Ford's leadership, by working together with municipalities and by updating processes that get housing built faster.

Since the beginning of our mandate, we have put forward numerous measures that help increase the supply of housing. We've done this by:

- encouraging increased density through Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act;

- working with municipalities to remove red tape and to eliminate duplication in the planning process;

- announcing the expansion of strong mayor's powers to heads of council who have committed to the housing targets provided by the province;

—proposing to revise the definition of “affordable residential units”; and

—further incentivizing municipalities to build more housing with housing targets and the new Building Faster Fund.

These are just a few of the many measures we have taken to build new homes and to prepare for the growth that we know is coming.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We’re going to move to questions.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I address this to either member who has spoken. I have heard this bill referred to as “the bill stop the Conservative government from doing what they tried to get away with,” and I must say I agree with that description, but I have a very serious question. Across my riding I’m seeing communities struggling to get housing built because it’s too expensive to bring in materials and workers, so commercial builders are not going to do any building in these communities. What I want to know—certainly they’re not going to be able to meet any arbitrary targets that the government is setting—what is this government doing to address the high need for non-market housing in every single community in my riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for the question. I think one of the things we have to talk about is the carbon tax. Has there ever been one piece of legislation in this country that has done more to raise the cost of life, of living, of building, of eating, of heating, of purchasing clothes? Nothing has driven up the price, the cost of living more than the dreaded carbon tax. For years, this opposition party and its federal counterpart have supported the carbon tax, and we just saw today from the Bank of Canada, that it is an almost 18% increase in the cost of inflation due to the dreaded carbon tax. You ask me how could we build more affordable homes, how could we make life more affordable? We could ask you to join us in convincing the federal government to finally shed the carbon tax.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question.

Mr. Billy Pang: This question is for the member for Brantford–Brant. As this member can understand, the previous government, propped up by the NDP, built a very strung structure which is called a structural deficit. For this bill, we are talking about building more homes for Ontarians. Can the member let us know how this bill can reverse the course of the previous government, propped up by the NDP?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question from the member. And it’s true, Madam Speaker: We’re going to have to find another place to put those 50,000 homes that were going to go into the greenbelt now. I think that’s a reality that we all have to face and our communities all have to face too. Sometimes I wonder about this megacity that we will be constructing around the GTHA and how that will connect through the greenbelt lands that will be protected, but we are absolutely committed, both to en-

vironmental protection and to building homes for everyone.

We’ve heard suggestions about how government should just build everything. There was a Conservative Premier who tried that once, and I think that proved the fact, when Bill Davis tried that experiment, that government-built social housing just doesn’t work.

And I heard the mayor of Toronto asking for \$550,000 per dwelling unit in order to build social housing in Toronto when I have people who could do that for \$250,000 locally in the private sector.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We’ll move to the next question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The public at large is very confused as to why this government, number one, is not answering questions in the Legislature directly when it comes to the greenbelt that our leader has been asking. Today, a reporter, Jeff Gray from the Globe and Mail, asked the Premier, “Why was your staff running around so concerned about those lands which are owned by a man identified as your friend, or co-owned by, Shakir Rehmatullah?”

This is the Premier’s answer; this is why people are confused why he won’t answer real questions. He said, “I had a great meeting, by the way, with Mayor Chow. What a wonderful person she is.” This is not respectful; this is not transparent.

So I want to know, if all these facts weren’t uncovered by the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General and now an RCMP investigation, would this bill be before us, or was the government just going to tear up the greenbelt regardless if facts weren’t uncovered by the—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. To respond, the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question. Unlike the opposition, the Premier actually has 15 million friends in the province of Ontario. So I understand how difficult it is for them to understand that you have conversations with so many people and you try to do what’s right for everyone, especially when you have willing partners in the private sector that are willing to help.

And what’s interesting—and I’m sure the members in the opposition can check their own email inboxes, but I can tell you that no one in Brantford and Brant is talking about the greenbelt. What they’re talking about is affordability. What they’re talking about is getting rid of the carbon tax. What they’re talking about is decreasing interest rates on their homes so that they can afford to stay in our community. They want to be able to buy cheaper food. I know the NDP doesn’t understand any of those things, because they think that the government should take care of you from the cradle to the grave, but the people in my riding want the opposition to speak to Jagmeet Singh and ask him to remove HST.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the member from Brantford–Brant. Earlier, the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas spoke about housing being stagnant. I

believe that's the word she used, "stagnant." To that end, the member has voted against every initiative that this government has put forward to build new housing.

I'm wondering, can the member clarify for this House the accurate state of housing starts that this government has achieved?

Mr. Will Bouma: I think that's an absolutely great question, because the narrative of the NDP is really simple: Only if they can tax it, if they control it, if they make you completely beholden to them and hold you down will it work. We need to release the province of Ontario, and we have. You know, it's interesting that they say that—

Interjection.

Mr. Will Bouma: She did. She said that housing was stagnant, and yet we've seen the highest rate of housing starts in three decades. We've seen the highest rate of purpose-built rentals in three decades. I know that's difficult for the members in the opposition to understand, that by actually decreasing burden, by decreasing taxes that you can actually make things better, but it works, Madam Speaker. Hopefully they can take a page from us and move forward on doing things positively for the province of Ontario.

1700

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, we're taking 7,000 pages from you. We'll find out what you're up to.

Thank you for your alternative facts, but here's a fact: The province—you guys, not the federal government—charges a carbon tax. You charge a carbon tax on grain, oilseed mills, sugar manufacturers, fruit and vegetable processors and mill processors. It's the province's responsibility for the carbon tax and, in fact, your emissions performance standards that you collect currently is going to earn about \$2.5 billion. It's in your financial statements. What are you doing with the \$2.5 billion in the Ford carbon tax that exists in Ontario? What are you doing with that to help people ease their bills, to help people put a roof over their head? It's your tax. What are you doing about it?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's always fun to debate my colleagues from the city of Hamilton, but we clearly don't support a carbon tax. We clearly do not support a carbon tax and, clearly, you do not support the carbon tax either. The member prior from Thunder Bay–Superior North also suggested we need to find ways to make life more affordable. It's staring us in the face. We could get rid of the carbon tax today if you would join us lobbying the federal government, join us lobbying your federal counterpart and actually do something that will have a tangible impact on the people of this province.

People in Ontario cannot afford groceries. They cannot afford to buy clothing. They cannot afford to fill up their car. They can't because of an unnecessary carbon tax you continue to support. Join us and let's—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's all the time for questions and answers.

We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House and, actually, it's always a pleasure to listen to debate in the House. I actually enjoy that. Today, the bill we're debating is An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations—Bill 136.

Speaker, I hope I have your indulgence before I start my debate—something big and bad happened in my riding yesterday, and I'd just like to take a minute to talk about it. It might not seem like a big thing to everyone, but to us, it is. Yesterday, Gay Lea Foods announced the closure of Thornloe Cheese by putting a notice on the door.

Now, Thornloe Cheese is emblematic for our riding. We saved it once from Parmalat, and we kept the quota and transferred it to northerners, and then that's how Gay Lea ended up getting it. It's one of the biggest issues we have faced, and just putting Gay Lea on notice that we're going to fight for that quota again. Because Gencor, the company that had it before, and Gay Lea did a great job at marketing the cheese and showing what northern Ontario is capable of, and we're not just going to wave goodbye. Just putting Gay Lea on notice. We want to work with them, whether it's with them or with another cheesemaker, but we're not letting Thornloe go easily or at all.

I see some nods, and I really appreciate that support. It's amazing. I don't know how many shares I've had when I put out the press release. Gay Lea didn't even put out a press release, and we were just shocked. And I'm a Gay Lea member. I'm a shareholder in Gay Lea, and I strongly support Gay Lea all the time because they're a co-operative, and co-operatives are supposed to be more cognizant of the community. Well, they weren't cognizant of our community, and we're going to fight back.

Interjection: Good job.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you. I appreciate the indulgence of the House, and certainly yours, Speaker.

The bill is Bill 136. I've been in the Legislature for a while, and it used to be that when we'd report articles—we use articles, newspaper articles, to prove our point, right? And the Liberals, when they were in government, would use the Star, and the Conservatives: "Oh, the Star is so Liberal," and the Conservatives would use the Sun, and it would be, "Oh, the Sun is so Conservative." And—well, we don't actually have a paper in the NDP, but—

Mr. Will Bouma: PressProgress.

Mr. John Vanthof: I knew you were going to say that, but I'm not going to say that.

But anyway, and then social media came along, and now we've got this—you know that nobody trusts mainstream media, and that's a big problem, because media play an important role. But it's hard. It's hard now to find a media source that everyone agrees with on an issue. But I think I found one that everyone will agree with or disagree with equally.

I think I'm going to quote the Beaverton, date line, September 25—I don't have the date right. Date line, September: "PC government introduces legislation to protect greenbelt from ... PC governments." I think that's about the best description that we could have of this bill. We're supportive of the bill, but come on; let's just go back a little bit. I listened to the other speakers. So, we have, in 2018, the Premier promising developers to open up the greenbelt. And then, oh, not opening up the greenbelt, and then, oh, opening up the greenbelt, and now locking the door, supposedly. Really. And it truly is the PC government protecting the greenbelt from the PC government or from the friends of the PC government. That is what's really happening here.

So this government often talks about red tape, and do you know what? There is red tape in Ontario, and we should all look at where we can save red tape, but red tape is all through regulation. It keeps people safe, it makes sure that everybody abides by the rules, but what happened with the greenbelt is red tape got replaced by the brown paper envelope—it did—and the brown paper envelope isn't good for society overall; it isn't, and you all know it.

And I say this often, because people know that I am—I'm going to get myself in trouble here; it won't be the first time. I'm on the right of the left. People must be so disappointed, especially in rural Ontario, who voted for Conservatives all these years and now have a Conservative government and thought that they would be listened to. And now, all of a sudden, many of the rural members—the members as well must be so disappointed, because—

Mr. Will Bouma: Nope.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm glad the member of Brantford—Brant isn't, because the way I see it, they're all implicated in what's happening with your government.

Now, let's be upfront: My speech today—

Mr. Will Bouma: Was made up on the fly.

Mr. John Vanthof: Of course it's made up on the fly; I can't read my notes to save myself.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, the Minister of Energy—he's one of my favourite people here. Now I've lost my train of thought.

What I find most interesting about today's debate is that a lot of the points of the debate about why you're putting forward this act are the same points that we put forward while you were trying to carve up the greenbelt: save farmland, how important the farmland was, how important it is—all those points are the same points.

1710

Now I remember what I wanted to say. My speech isn't going to really change what's going to happen. Let's be clear. The government has got far bigger problems than what I am saying—far, far bigger problems. Before this government, I didn't even know there was such a thing as a special prosecutor. I didn't know the RCMP had a special unit to investigate possible threats to democracy. I didn't know such a thing, but they are, and those 7,000 pages and who knows what else is coming up, Speaker. It's not my

speech that's going to cause the members of this government the problem; it's those investigations.

Now, the Premier said he was sorry. You know what? I'm willing to accept that. I just don't know what he's sorry for. Sorry for promising it the first time, then backing away? Promising it the second time, then getting caught and backing away? The government House leader says the public didn't like it—100%. Neither did the Auditor General, how it was done, or the Integrity Commissioner, how it was done. Many of the things that members are talking about today on how it's going to be done are how it should have been done in the first place—should have been done in the first place. And that is a huge problem because what Ontarians are still wondering is, has the government actually changed course, or just changed course where they're getting caught? That's the question. And it's a very, very serious question because it's two different things, changing course because you believe it or changing course because it just got too treacherous. That's a world apart.

The government House leader, who I respect—I actually enjoy his company some days—said that there was too much political interference when he took over the file. So, how many of you were involved in that political interference? Or was it just the Premier involved? And how many of you are going to take the fall for that political interference? You can laugh at me, and some of you motion that I should go to the other side. I'm the happy person on the right because I know for sure I wasn't at any of those meetings. I know for sure I wasn't briefed on any of the things that happened. I know for sure. How many of you do? And that is a serious issue because it's going to follow you. It's going to follow you. I know many of you personally. I respect you all. Many of you didn't sign up for this. Many of you didn't.

So, we are going to support this bill, but has the government truly changed? Or just changed because you got caught? And if you will remember—some of you may remember—actually, I hope you don't, because it wasn't my greatest moment in this House. But when this government was first elected and you were so—oh, I get it, you were you elected and you were going to do things differently, all the "For the people" signs. I remember your first throne speech. I came in and there was a brass band here. I think brass, or was it—I'm not a musician. But there was a band up there and they were playing the theme song from the Game of Thrones.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I remember that distinctly, because I walked in here and I was looking for the arrow slits, because I thought maybe you'd made some other changes. And I remember distinctly thinking about that. I can't remember what bill we were talking about, but it has to do with this bill—that this government, that government at the time, and I think still that the government—I was wondering if that was going to be their theme song, from the Game of Thrones. You know how our government had its theme song? And no, it wasn't, because this government is too big for a theme song. It needed a theme band;

it really needed a theme band. I still hold that. And I have some lyrics from the same band that I suggested should be the government's theme band, and I'm going to read them into the record. It's a great song. Some of you may remember this: 1980.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I'm not going to. I'm a bad singer. I'm going to have to back up a little bit. I'm not going to keep you in suspense. The theme band that I suggested when this government was first elected and the song I suggested was "Making it Work" by Doug and the Slugs. And I'm going to read another song by Doug and the Slugs, which still should be the theme band for this government. It's very apropos and it fits perfectly with Bill 136:

Too bad that you had to get caught,
That's not like you to lose face.
So sad that you're not as smart
As you thought you were in the first place.

Baby, I could use some of your persuasion ...
To wipe away (... wipe away)
the taste of your machinations....

It's over,
Kaput except for the tail spin....
Save the dialogue ...
for the old men in the pool room....

Try it once, well I'm not so sure,
Try it twice and you're by my door....

So sad that you're not as smart
As you thought you were in the first place.

Too bad, too bad, so sad:

Too bad that you had to get caught,
That's not like you to lose face.
So sad that you're not as smart,
As you thought you were in the first place.

The money, no more than insulation.
(Too bad, insulation, too bad, insulation)

And this is a great line:

The getaway, (get get a-get a-get a-get away)
I watched with fascination....
The hideaway, Woooo! such imagination.
(Too bad, imagination, too bad, imagination) ...
I used it with no hesitation

This is a very serious issue; the song, maybe not so much. Doug and the Slugs—very appropriate. May Doug rest in peace—and I mean the real Doug, the singer.

But at this point, you've got an RCMP investigation—

Interjection: A special prosecutor.

Mr. John Vanthof:—a special prosecutor, and actually, all this time, you could have put to much better use focusing on the things that people really need, on housing. One of the members mentioned the housing task force, talked about it a bit. The task force—I believe it said that we didn't need to use the greenbelt to have adequate housing, so you could have listened to the task force, but you decided not to. The question is, who decided not to? Who decided to change the boundaries? Who decided to carve up the greenbelt? Who decided that agricultural land and the greenbelt—eh, we can take it or leave it? Who decided? That's the question that, unfortunately for you, the RCMP might be the ones deciding.

1720

Your issue isn't the next election. That's quite a ways away. Your issue is who's going to take the fall, because there's going to be a fall. There have been a few falls already, but there's going to be bigger ones; there's going to be bigger ones. Who do you want to take the fall for? And the question is, are they going to take a fall for you? I think that's a very serious question that the members of the Conservative government have to ask themselves. It's great, the all for one and the one for all, but who's going to take the fall for you—for you, or for whoever is directing you? That's a really important question.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Comments through the Chair, please.

Mr. John Vanthof: And I hope tonight and the next few nights they actually spend some time thinking about it, because the RCMP usually do get their man or men or people or persons. Saying sorry and fixing this issue doesn't make it go away; it doesn't.

Thank you very much for your indulgence, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The first question from the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Madam Speaker, I appreciated the member's—he doesn't have a great singing voice, but I appreciated the poetry, John, you brought in the House this afternoon.

I was just curious—it's wonderful to hear that the opposition is ready to support us, and I heard it inferred from the previous member that they also feel that the carbon tax is inappropriate as a cost driver for the families of Ontario, so they're coming around. It took them five years to get to agreeing with us that we need a million and a half homes in the province of Ontario, and I just want to clarify that. I understand that the NDP is supporting this piece of legislation. Does the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane truly support the fact that we need a million and a half homes in the province of Ontario?

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciated the question from the member from Brantford—Brant. I thought he was going to ask the carbon tax question, but he asked about supporting homes. Yes, we need more homes in Ontario, and the number I think in the last election we all agreed to was a million and a half. We didn't agree that we should carve up the greenbelt to do it. That was you on your own. But we all want people to be adequately housed in this province.

When you created the housing task force, we were encouraged that maybe you would actually follow the

recommendations. Our question is, why didn't you? We all want housing to be built. Why didn't you follow the recommendations of your own task force?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: As this debate is happening, in the 2018 election that I won, I'll never forget a conversation I had with a guy who described himself as a partisan Conservative. He voted Conservative his entire life, and during that campaign when the Premier started talking about opening up the greenbelt, he got off. He said, "I'm no longer part of it."

I know that the Premier walked it back at the time he was running for Premier, and this guy said to me, "You know what? Now that he's said it, I believe it's going to come back. I don't think he's going to give up on it." We saw that happen in the last session. We talked about it, then you didn't do it and then, all of a sudden, he did. Now he's retracting.

A question was asked—well, actually this is something where the member was going when he said, "What made the Premier stop? What made them change course?"

My question is, do you believe, outside of all the negative attention—and I don't mean just from rank-and-file people questioning it. Do you think they would have eventually realized this was a bad course and changed the decision, or did they have to be brought there kicking and screaming?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to my colleague. He always asks tough questions, and that is a tough question. But it was interesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs walked back the boundary changes just before this big freedom of information dump. That was kind of telling, that each time they're about to get caught, they walk it back.

You know what? I can't directly answer that question, but boy, actions speak louder than words. And each time, with the RCMP, the Auditor General, the Integrity Commissioner, then they start backing up. I think that speaks for itself.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Will Bouma: I enjoy my conversations with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I may have the numbers wrong, I apologize, because I just heard it in passing, but I watched the news conference from the mayor of Toronto with some interest last week, stating, I think, that she could build 68,000 homes at an average and all she needed from us and the federal government was \$36 billion or something like that. And doing some quick math, that's about \$550,000 a unit.

I know there are private sector companies that will build tiny homes for around \$250,000 a unit, fully furnished and delivered and built on-site. I'm just wondering, since we're talking about housing, how the member feels about the government taking control of all housing construction in the city of Toronto and the implications that will have to the taxpayer—the money they will have to tax them—in order to make that happen?

Mr. John Vanthof: I am not going to comment on the mayor of Toronto's comments. I would comment, though, on what we've proposed for housing.

The private sector builds houses. We're not opposed to that. There are segments of the housing stock that the private sector is not going to build by itself. I'm a private sector person. Private sector builders need to make a profit and there are certain types of housing stock that they can't make a profit at. With that type of housing stock, the government needs to help because with social housing, starter housing and all those things, a lot of them aren't going to get built unless the government gets involved.

Should the government take over housing construction? No. But does it need to be involved? Absolutely.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you as well to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. I want to start just by thanking him for his comments about Thornloe Cheese. We were all caught off guard, and it is just really great cheese, so thank you for bringing that up today.

Early on in your debate, you referenced the Beaverton headline and it was basically that this is a bill to protect the Conservative government from the Conservative government. And that's what I think about every time I hear the Conservative government talk about this bill. They talk about how important the greenbelt is and how we need to protect these lands and how agriculture is important, but these were all things the NDP were saying while they were carving it up and while they were ignoring the people of Ontario saying they don't want this to happen. In their 12-point plan, basically the first seven steps were to ignore what the people of Ontario want. And then, once they're finally caught and the evidence is overwhelming to come back, now they want a cookie for presenting a bill to protect them from themselves.

Does this make any sense to you, to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane?

Mr. John Vanthof: I thank the member from Sudbury for the question. I like the cookie analogy because they got caught with their hands in the cookie jar—actually, that's not what they got caught with. What they got caught with is opening the cookie jar for their friends to get their hands in and going around the process. That's what they got caught with.

Now they're trying to slam the cookie jar shut and say, "Oh, oh, that won't happen again. And all the other things that we're doing? Oh, no, we're not doing anything like that with the way the rest of the government runs." Quite frankly, I think Ontarians don't believe that anymore. They don't.

1730

When the Premier held his press conference this morning, his answers were so off the wall, it wasn't even evasive; it was just from another planet. People don't buy that anymore.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The next question.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank, as always, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for his phenomenal comments. I really enjoy—

Mr. Will Bouma: Phenomenal?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Phenomenal—I very much find them informative and entertaining, in both camps.

So I'd love to get your take on this, to the member opposite: The member for Rosedale mentioned with respect to the Housing Affordability Task Force that "Doug Ford's own Housing Affordability Task Force fails to address or provide recommendations to make rent more affordable for everyday Ontarians." Given that, and given your reference to it in your comments about being reliant on the recommendations from this task force, which of the other task force recommendations would you support?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's actually a really good question, and I appreciate your listening. I don't have the task force right in front of me—I support the task force's recommendation that, actually, shortage of land isn't the main barrier to building more housing in Ontario, despite what the government says. I very much support that. And this bill proves it, because if shortage of land was it, then you're definitely not going to be able to reach your targets.

Is the task force perfect? I don't think so, but they provided some very good recommendations, and one of the biggest ones, you chose to ignore.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour to participate in the debate on Bill 136, the protect the greenbelt from the Premier act—oh, I mean, the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, or, as the previous member said, the protect the greenbelt from the Progressive Conservative Party act.

I think there are many ways we could name this bill, but the one thing that is clear is the people of Ontario are outraged. They are outraged and in the midst of a housing crisis. Instead of having a government focused on building homes that ordinary people can afford in the communities they want to live in and on the land already approved for development, the government prioritized land grabs so a handful of wealthy well-connected government insiders could cash in at a minimum \$8.3 billion in windfall profits.

I just want to say to the people of Ontario, thank you for saying no. Thank you for standing up, farmers, citizens, community organizations, environmental groups, local city councillors—standing up and saying no to opening the greenbelt for development. This is what people power looks like, Speaker.

I want to say thank you to the journalists who investigated, investigated, investigated and learned about the massages in Vegas and all the other shady practices that were happening around this. By the way, I said earlier today at a protest on Ontario Place that if the Premier wants a fancy massage, he shouldn't go to Ontario Place; he should go to Vegas—because we should be protecting Ontario Place too.

I also want to say thank you to the officers of the Legislature—the Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor General—

who provided the guardrails of democracy to protect from the corrupt process that led to this decision.

And thank you to the RCMP for agreeing to investigate this, because the people of Ontario deserve honest answers to how a government could waste so much time, money and effort not building homes but creating a process that led to \$8.3 billion in windfall profits for wealthy well-connected elites.

The Premier said he was sorry for breaking his promise, and that's what has brought us Bill 136. But I ask, is he sorry that he got caught breaking his promise? Is he sorry that the well-connected wealthy insiders who are his friends are not going to be able to cash in \$8.3 billion now? Is he sorry that he broke his promise? Or is he sorry that the government has failed to actually focus on building houses?

I can tell you that in the months leading up to Bill 136, the Premier compared the greenbelt to Communist China and North Korea. He repeatedly, over and over again, attacked the integrity of the greenbelt. He said it was drawn up with crayons. He called it a scam. So Speaker, does he really want to protect the greenbelt? Because I can tell you, the only scam was the suggestion that the greenbelt lands were needed to address the housing affordability crisis.

We've had the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force, we've had planners, we've had professional planners, we've had the Auditor General all say that we already have enough land approved for development in Ontario to not only build the 1.5 million homes we all want to build, but to build two million homes. So why aren't we focused on actually building those homes?

While we're looking at Bill 136, let's take a moment to think about why these greenbelt lands are so important, because I think in the course of the debate around the corrupt process that led to this decision, we've actually forgotten why these lands were so important. First of all, the greenbelt was designed through a collaborative process led by experts, professional planners, hydrogeologists, farmers, scientists, academics and community leaders. A whole host of folks looked at how we can protect the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO heritage site; the Oak Ridges moraine, which is critically important to filtering the drinking water for the entire greater Toronto area; and some of the best farmland in all of North America, particularly the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

The forests and wetlands of the greenbelt are vital to protecting us from the climate-fuelled extreme weather events we're facing right now. As a matter of fact, it provides billions of dollars of ecosystem services free of charge each and every year. It provides employment for economic activity of well over \$3 billion each and every year. The extreme weather events it protects us from are things like the \$3.1 billion of insured damages that Canadians faced last year because of the climate crisis, and according to the IBC, that's likely three times as much when you look at uninsured assets. They protect us from the \$26.2 billion that the Financial Accountability Officer has said we're going to have to pay to protect public infra-

structure in the next seven years this decade alone because of the climate crisis.

They also protect, particularly in the DRAP, some of the best farmland in all of North America. That farmland is vital to our food security at a time when global events, conflict, supply chain disruptions and climate-fuelled weather are creating spikes in food prices around the world. If there was ever a time that we needed to protect our local food supply, our local food supply chains and our farmland, now is that time—the very farmland that is the asset base that contributes \$50 billion to Ontario's food and farming economy, employing over 800,000 people in this province.

That's what people are wanting protected. That's why these greenbelt lands are so valuable, and it's why it's so valuable that we also push back against greenbelt 2.0—the abuse and misuse of ministerial zoning orders, the enforced boundary expansions—because we simply cannot continue to lose 319 acres of farmland each and every day. That threatens our food security and it threatens our food and farming economy.

1740

This sprawl agenda that led to the desire to open the greenbelt for development and require municipalities to increase their boundaries also makes the housing crisis worse. We have great, good documentation showing that the cost of sprawl development is 2.5 times higher than actually building homes within existing urban boundaries. Why, Speaker? The cost of water lines, sewer lines, hydro lines, transit lines, roads, libraries, parks, schools—all of that is incredibly expensive.

As a matter of fact, the city of Ottawa conducted a study that showed that when you build through sprawl, it costs each taxpayer in the city an additional \$465 per person per year, but when you build within existing urban boundaries, gentle density, missing middle, you save \$606 per person per house per year. That's \$1,000-per-person-per-year difference. We simply cannot, on a financial and economic basis, afford the government's sprawl agenda.

That's exactly why we not only need to protect the greenbelt, but we need to be looking at things like creating a food belt to protect prime farmland, and it's also why we need housing policy that's going to build homes within existing urban boundaries. That's exactly why I've put forward bills like Bill 44 and Bill 45 that would make it legal to build multiplexes and four-storey walk-up apartments; that would make it legal—remove all the red tape—to build six-to-11-storey apartment buildings along major transportation corridors, so we can increase housing supply in the most affordable way, that protects our farmland, protects our wetlands, protects our green spaces.

It's also why I've put forward bills that truly protect the greenbelt, that close some of the loopholes that the previous Liberal government left in the greenbelt, like my Bill 111, No More Pits or Quarries in the Greenbelt Act, so we can say no to the Caledon mega quarry that would blast a hole on hundreds of acres of farmland; like my Bill 110, No More Highways in the Greenbelt Act, so we can say no to the super-sprawl 413 that would pave over 2,000 acres of farmland, 400 acres of the greenbelt, traverse 85 wetlands

and threaten 100 waterways within the province. If we're truly going to protect the greenbelt, then those provisions should be in Bill 136, Speaker.

In addition to increasing market supply—and I've put forward a number of solutions around increasing market supply, including the two bills I've talked about. Also, I'm going to continue to push this government to replace the \$5.1 billion they've taken away from municipalities, money that's required to build the servicing so we can actually build 1.5 million homes, so people can turn the water on, flush the toilet and have the services they need. We're also going to need non-market supply as well, Speaker.

We're also going to need a government that's going to step up and support non-profit co-ops and supportive housing spaces in this province. Some 93% of the deeply affordable homes in Ontario were built before 1995. What happened in 1995? The provincial and federal governments got out of housing. We need government to be a partner with the non-profit and co-op sector again.

Finally, Speaker, we're going to have to take action to get speculation out of the housing market. I mean, we saw a government try to benefit speculators by opening the greenbelt for development. We need to get speculators out of the housing market, Speaker. Nearly one third of Ontario's housing wealth is owned by speculators. Speculators are driving first-time homebuyers out of the marketplace, which is why we need things like multi-residential speculation taxes, vacant home taxes and other measures to protect first-time homebuyers in the province—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

We're going to go to questions, and the member for Brantford–Brant is very eager to ask the first question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. I've been meaning to ask the member from Guelph this question because it's been troubling me since I first heard the statistic and he brought it up in his speech. The 319 acres per day of farmland that's going out of production in the province of Ontario. It's a federal statistic. I've asked lots of people this question and I haven't received an answer, but I know with his insights, he'll be able to answer because he left us with the impression in his remarks that that's going into housing. If you quickly do some math, if you average 12 housing units per acre, which is not many, but just 12 per day on 319 acres, that's 1.4 million homes in a year. So if that 319 acres is accurate, we're building 1.4 million homes a year. We're not. So I'm wondering if the member could help me understand the 319 per acre per day that's going out of production if that's not going into housing?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member from Brantford–Brant's question. When you lose 319 acres of farmland every day, it's to multiple types of development. It's to highways; it's to commercial development; it's to business development; it's to housing development; it's to quarries. Like, there's a whole host of ways in which farmland is being taken out of production.

If you look at the Ontario Farmland Trust based out of the University of Guelph, 319 acres of farmland is being

lost each and every day in this province. That's equivalent to the size of the city of Toronto. That's exactly why we need the kinds of solutions I'm calling for, for gentle density and missing-middle housing, along with smart single-family housing development to ensure that we build homes in a way that's smart, that protects farmland.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. Next question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to go back to the reporting that happened, the interview that happened today. Rob Ferguson from the Toronto Star is asking the Premier, "Just wanted to follow up on Jeff Gray's question from the Globe. He was asking about a property, I think it was up in Nobleton, and then you said you weren't aware of it being removed and then you said no, you didn't do it. So those are kind of like two different answers."

Here's what the Premier answered: "Just a message to everyone out there tonight, drive carefully, drive slowly. The kids are going to be out there, trick or treating and having a lot of fun, and we'll be out there. I was thinking, I'm going to dress up as a media person tonight. I don't know if it's Colin D'Mello or who, but maybe I'm just going to dress up as my buddy Colin."

These are non-consequential answers. Does the member believe that the Ford government is taking the serious greenbelt criminal investigation seriously, or do we expect this kind of nonconsequential answers during an investigation under the RCMP on the greenbelt?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I would say that the question-and-answer session with the Premier today was certainly not an answer session, because no clear answers were given, and I believe the people of Ontario deserve answers. They deserve to know why the government has failed to focus in on building homes that ordinary people can afford in the communities they want to live in, on the land that's already approved for development, and why they focused instead on opening the greenbelt for development against local opposition, expanding urban boundaries against local opposition, which has led to the allegations around a corrupt process that led to a corrupt decision that has not led to building homes that people can afford.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Okay. So I was pretty conservative; I said 12 units per acre. That includes a lot of roads, a lot of infrastructure, a lot of business, because I actually talked to an almost professional planner about this number, and I said if you include all the infrastructure, all the commercial, all the other things that support that, what's a good number and he came back to me with the number of 12 units. But let's say it's half. Let's say it's six, including the infrastructure, the commercial and everything else. That would still mean that we're building 700,000 dwelling units per year in the province of Ontario. But I mean, we've hit 100,000. So where's the rest of that 319 acres actually going? I need to know.

He's a Green member—Mr. Green, according to the Premier—and I want to know his explanation for that 319 acres. I just saw a statistic that the OFA actually took 35

years of information to get that 319 acres, but I need a real answer to the question. It's been bugging me because we should fix the housing problem in a couple of years if it's 319 acres a day.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, I would advise the member to look at Canadian census data. The Canadian census data clearly shows that if you look over the last few decades, we were losing 173 acres a day in Ontario.

Interjection: It's 319.

1750

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Now that has moved up to 319 acres, for a whole variety of uses. I mean, Highway 413 alone, if they build it, that's going to be 2,000 acres right there. Right there, that one highway alone is going to be 2,000 acres. I can't argue with census data. I cannot argue with census data. The census data clearly shows we are losing 319 acres a day to all forms of development: business development, commercial development, highway development. There is a whole host of reasons. So I would suggest to the member—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. You're done with the time for your answer.

Next question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaking of Highway 413, a \$10-billion highway through the greenbelt, my question to the member is, you've spoken against this and you said it's going to be an ecological and financial disaster. I agree. It was under the federal Impact Assessment Act. We have the Attorney General that is now going to court to get a judicial review on the opinion of the Supreme Court, even though had no problem with the federal impact assessment already under way.

We also heard the Attorney General was curious about my Highway 407 bills, but Highway 413 runs parallel to 407. Why do we need this highway when people have already paid for the 407 and we can just take the tolls and save the greenbelt, save farmland, save our wetlands?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a great, great question. I appreciate the member from Hamilton asking this question. So here's what's so infuriating about wasting 10-plus billion dollars on Highway 413 that experts clearly show will save drivers 30 seconds to a minute in their commuting time: We have a highway 407 that's just parallel to it, that's underutilized. As a matter of fact, an airplane landed on it.

So if the government was fiscally conservative, if we had a fiscally responsible government, they would pay for truck tolls on the 407. According to Transport Action Ontario, you could pay for truck tolls on the 407 for 30 years and not even get to half the cost of what it would take to construct the 413. So why not go with the fiscally responsible approach and utilize our existing assets to their full potential?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Last question.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the member from Guelph, you know, I really appreciate your comments. Coming from my municipal background—I served for eight years in the Tecumseh committee of adjustment, which was really finding minor variances when the planning law didn't really match the situation at

hand. I think there was a reasonable argument that there were some lands within the greenbelt that, when you look at them, development on four sides just with one undeveloped parcel in between, that would be reasonable to allow that remaining parcel to become developed.

I'm wondering if you would share that perspective that there could be lands within the greenbelt that are suitable for development, particularly when they're already serviced.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The challenge with responding to that question is that the vast majority of the land that the government wanted to open for development was the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, some of the best farmland in all of North America, none of it serviced. As a matter of fact, the local municipality said it would take decades to service that land.

So why don't the government agree with me and pass Bill 44 and Bill 45 so we can quickly increase housing supply right now in an affordable, responsible way? I heard the member opposite ask another member some recommendations that they would support in the housing task force. Two of the key recommendations in the housing task force to increase housing supply was to get rid of exclusionary zoning, and get rid of the barriers to missing-middle housing. Those are what my bill accomplish, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgoin: Ça me fait tout le temps plaisir de parler en Chambre et surtout d'un projet de loi qui est assez intéressant, il faut le dire : la Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.

Ce qu'il y a d'intéressant avec ce projet de loi, c'est que c'est pour protéger la population de l'Ontario contre son propre gouvernement—contre son propre gouvernement. Alors, vraiment, il passe un projet de loi—c'est ça ce qui est ironique là-dedans. C'est assez ironique—merci, là. Ce gouvernement passe un projet de loi pour se protéger contre eux autres. Après ça, on se demande pourquoi le monde est cynique quand ça vient envers les politiciens.

Je ne suis pas sûr, si on traiterait avec un projet de loi de même, s'ils ne s'étaient pas fait pogner—comme ils disent en bon français—avec les deux culottes à terre. Je ne suis pas sûr si le gouvernement de l'Ontario serait—on traiterait d'un projet de loi de même quand on voit toute la corruption qui s'est faite en province.

Quand qu'on voit que, à plusieurs reprises, le premier ministre—je pense que même mon collègue de Timiskaming l'a dit deux fois. Il a dit qu'il ne toucherait pas à la ceinture de verdure. « On ne touchera pas à la ceinture de verdure. » Une fois qu'ils sont élus, qu'est-ce qu'ils font? Ils touchent la ceinture de verdure. Après ça, une autre élection après—puis si on se souvient, en 2018, c'est ça qu'ils disaient. Là, on arrive en 2022, et le même

gouvernement dit : « Non, non, on ne touchera pas à la ceinture de verdure. » Devinez ce qu'ils ont fait. On a touché à la ceinture de verdure. Puis, après ça, qu'est-ce qui est arrivé? On sait ce qui se passe, comme c'est là.

C'est un gouvernement qui se fait poursuivre. Il y a une investigation criminelle contre un gouvernement—écoutez, comment je te dirais ça? On ne voit pas ça. C'est un précédent—

Une voix: Incroyable.

M. Guy Bourgoin: Exactement : un précédent incroyable qu'un gouvernement se fasse investiguer pour des procédures criminelles. Je suis content que je ne suis pas sur votre bord de la Chambre.

Puis on entend ce gouvernement dire : « Oh, vous votez contre tout. Le NPD, ce côté de la Chambre, vous votez contre tout. » Bien, je vais vous dire de quoi : je suis content d'avoir voté contre, parce que si on avait voté pour, imagine-toi ce qu'ils nous diraient aujourd'hui : « Bien, vous avez à chialer—vous avez voté pour. » C'est ça qu'ils nous diraient.

Pourquoi on a voté contre? Ce n'est pas dur à savoir. Pourquoi? C'étaient exactement les mêmes craintes qu'on voit, comme c'est là. Parce que si vous nous aviez écoutés, si vous aviez pris le temps d'écouter—parce qu'on vous a fait des recommandations. Chaque projet de loi, on amène des recommandations, parce que dans chaque projet de loi, il faut le dire, il y a de bonnes choses, mais des fois il y a des pilules empoisonnées. Quand on parlait des projets de loi qu'on voyait sur la ceinture de verdure, on se posait des questions, parce qu'il y avait des choses qui ne faisaient pas de sens.

Puis là, aujourd'hui, le projet de loi 136—ils disent la même affaire qu'on disait. Ils prennent nos paroles et les mettent pour dire : « On est obligé de faire ça parce que c'est la ceinture de verdure. Ce sont les meilleures terres agricoles au monde. On doit faire tout pour protéger ça. » Mais c'est ça qu'on disait quand on passait et qu'on a voté contre, pour dire : « Écoute, qu'est-ce que vous faites là? »

Leur propre comité recommandait de ne pas—pas besoin de toucher à la ceinture de verdure. Il y a du terrain en masse. Il y a en masse de place pour bâtir des maisons ou des foyers pour les personnes. Mais on sait, par exemple, que—quand on dit “location, location, location”—on le savait que, quand ils bâtiraient dans la ceinture de verdure, l'argent était là et leurs amis en ont profité. On sait aussi, aujourd'hui, c'est pour ça qu'ils font face à une investigation criminelle, parce qu'il y a du monde connecté au premier ministre directement—qui ont été aux noces—qui ont bénéficié de tout ça.

C'est quoi le numéro, 18? Dix-huit—

La Présidente suppléante (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Je suis désolée. Je dois interrompre le député. Il est 18 h. It is now time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,

Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
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	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kemaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of 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
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	