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Jeudi
16 novembre 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 novembre 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2023, on the amendment to the motion regarding taxes on fuels for home heating.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to talk about something that is negatively affecting many Ontarians, including those in my riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington. That, Speaker, is the carbon tax. This poorly thought-out tax grab by the federal government is doubling down on the existing pain already caused by the inflationary spirals and the interest rate hikes that are causing so much concern and so much suffering among struggling families. People should simply not have to choose between heating and eating.

Housing costs more because interest rates are up. Fuel costs have gone up because of many things around the global economy, certainly. Adding more tax to the already increased home heating fuel cost is just adding to all the cost increases. The cost-of-living increases are bad enough, but adding a tax to that is rubbing salt in the wound. Ultimately, it's punitive. There is no option in Ontario; you have to heat your home in the winter. The idea that a carbon tax will convince you somehow to use less fuel is saying that you actually want people to poorly heat their homes. This is ludicrous.

Speaker, the last couple of years has changed something for Ontarians. There is a very simple and practical element of what should be an everyday occurrence in life across this province: that is, the enjoyable trip to the grocery store. Gone are the days when families would gather together and go to the local supermarket and actually get excited to pick out the foods that they're going to eat over the next week or so to prepare those meals for the week. Now families have to brace themselves for making hard decisions of what to feed their families—very often, unfortunately, deciding between heating their homes and eating good, nutritious foods.

The motion we're discussing today proposes that the Liberal federal government remove this carbon tax from those home heating fuels. The motion is limited to fuels

and I will get to that, Speaker, but I would be remiss if I didn't point out that most of the world views carbon taxes as completely ineffective. In fact, 75% of the nations of this world don't have a carbon tax, including some of those that are recognized or at least have reputations as being the leading champions in the climate change effort. Countries like Australia, New Zealand and Germany don't require their citizens to pay this wholly ineffective tax.

As families head out to pick up their groceries, they're constantly hit with the carbon tax. It starts with putting fuel in their vehicles just to travel to the store.

Speaker, I do need to mention the geography. The area in which you live should never be a determination as to how much excessive tax you pay. For the vast majority of people in my riding, there is no local public transit. For very small rural municipalities, transit is just not a reasonable or practical option for them, so for my residents, a vehicle is not a luxury; it's a necessity.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans.

M. Stephen Blais: Merci, monsieur le Président. Peut-être qu'on peut donner aux membres l'option pour avoir la traduction.

Je voudrais soulever une motion de procédure conformément à l'article 25(b) du Règlement, qui stipule que le député ne peut parler que du sujet autour de la question à l'examen. On a un changement à la motion pour discuter la TVH et pas seulement la taxe de carbone.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I just need a moment to consider this matter.

The member is quite correct. The standing orders indicate that we should be debating the amendment to the main motion, and I would ask all members to ensure that their remarks conform to that standing order.

The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington has the floor.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank you for that reminder. As a whole, my comments will reflect back on both the amendment and the overall tax issue.

Again, I'm not sure exactly where I was in my comments, but when you live in small towns and rural areas, in the north or the south of this province, you must have access to a car, which means you must buy gasoline, which means that with every kilometre travelled, you're paying that HST or that carbon tax.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates that with the current gas tax adding 14 cents per litre, skyrocketing over the next six years to the point where it will cost the

average driver about \$2,300 a year, almost \$200 a month—that’s a huge hit for struggling families.

So far I’ve only talked about the struggles of Ontario families putting fuel in their vehicles. As they enter the grocery store, they’re also seeing the cost of food inflated because of carbon tax and, in some cases on those groceries, the HST. Before the food makes it to the store, we need to look at the farmers, the producers who are preparing our food and producing and transporting the food that we eat. They, too, are feeling the burden of these taxes.

Brendan Byrne, the chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, wrote an article in the Hill Times. In it, he says, “Like other Ontario grain farmers, we now have access to information and technology that helps us farm more efficiently than previous generations could ever have dreamed of. Agronomic science, data, and new innovations are allowing ... farmers to grow abundant, high-quality food on ever-decreasing amounts of arable land. Some things, though, don’t change. Farmers know healthy soil is the heart of a farm business, and we do everything we can to protect it.”

The farmers are the experts on improving climate impact on their farms, and the federal carbon tax penalizes those farmers who are working hard to create greener farming. A little further in that article, Byrne states, “When innovative ways to dry grain are developed, I can guarantee farmers will be quick to adopt them. Farm fuels are a major cost, and all farmers want to manage costs. But until alternative solutions are available, taxing the fuels used for grain drying only penalizes farmers and unnecessarily increases the cost of food production.”

The grain farmers’ association of Ontario has stated, “By 2030, it is estimated that ... \$2.7 billion of carbon tax will be paid by Ontario grains and oilseed farmers.

“The concept of providing an incentive for change is only acting like a penalty for farmers who have no alternatives available to them. This is money that is coming right out of the farmers’ pocket.”

0910

Grain farmers across the country have been asking for a carbon tax exemption since the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act came into effect in 2018. The act recognizes that farmers need to use some fuels to perform tasks, and the tax was removed for farmers for some gasoline and diesel. The use of propane and natural gas, however, does not have that exemption. Not surprisingly, this tax is not applied equally, fairly, equitably or even logically.

Speaker, I reached out to one of my local farmers. Max Kaiser is an egg farmer down in Southern Lennox and Addington. For those in the House who don’t know this, almost all farmers who raise animals for our food supply are also grain farmers; they have to be. They’re growing the food to feed the animals that, in turn, provide our food. It was mentioned by Brendan Byrne that the federal government has decided that fuel costs for farmers, in some cases, are exempt from this exorbitant tax.

But get this: Max has his own drying equipment and does it himself; he is therefore exempted from some of

those taxes. But his friend Richard, who doesn’t own his own dryer, sends his corn over to Herb to dry. Herb has to pay carbon tax because he’s considered a commercial operator, so he passes that charge to Rich when he’s drying Rich’s corn. So Max’s corn is dried tax-free, but Rich’s isn’t because of who’s drying it.

I’ll quote Max, who says, “Who uses it and for what is not relevant. Ultimately it is all food! Why does it matter who is drying and who isn’t?” Max goes on to say that he’s buying about 55,000 litres of propane per year to dry his own corn. If he was paying a carbon tax, there would be another \$3,000 out of his pocket that has to be made up by the price of the food to the consumer.

He also buys another 30,000 litres for heating his chick barns, on which there is about \$2,000 worth of that tax that’s not exempt. These chicks need to be kept warm and alive so that they can, in turn, produce eggs. I don’t know about you, but I like eating eggs. As egg producers, they employ a cost-of-production pricing system, which means that those prices get reflected in the price they get paid for the eggs. This is a price that gets passed on to consumers. Egg farmers collect about 66 cents for each dollar that the consumer pays for eggs. The grain and bread sectors only collect 2% or 3% on that consumer price.

Let me quote Max again: “So carbon taxing is far more impacting grocery prices for eggs and milk, but it all affects consumer pricing.

The federal government is “lying if they say otherwise. Food and fuel are the bottom, cornerstones of the economy. And, food needs fuel too to make it happen.”

Speaker, even the Parliamentary Budget Office has reported that the carbon tax’s cost to farmers will increase by—

Mr. Stephen Blais: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 25(b) of the standing orders, we are debating the amendment which speaks to removing the HST from home heating. It does not refer to the carbon tax, nor does it refer to the price of food.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. I will just remind the member to bring it back to the amendments that we are dealing with this morning.

Mr. Wayne Gates: How many reminders does he get?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Excuse me?

Mr. Wayne Gates: How many reminders does he get?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Please, I would ask the member from Niagara Falls to come to order. I will ask the member to resume his debate.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, I thank you for that reminder and my points will come back to the egregious compounding of the carbon tax and the HST. It is absolutely all relevant on the price of food, the price of vehicles, the price of our home heating and the cost of living for all of our residents.

Coming back, according to the Canadian Energy Centre, Ontario agricultural production costs have increased 4%

because of the carbon tax, and it continues with the HST. All of these costs are being passed along to families at the grocery store.

I must come back to the statement—as families across this province are struggling with food, they should not need to continually be deciding between heating and eating.

While there are good reasons to be concerned about policy implications with a heating oil exemption, the analysis has found, according to the Canadian Climate Institute, that the effect on emissions will be negligible.

Even Enbridge estimated that the federal carbon charge will add almost \$300 to the Ontario household natural gas bill. This is the home heating bill, and we know that there is HST on top of that, and this will only continue to increase year after year until 2030.

The bottom line: The federal carbon tax, including the HST component, is not a balanced tax.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that \$8 billion will be collected from small businesses and only \$35 million returned, and that most businesses—56%—will have no choice but to pass on those increased prices caused by the carbon tax and the HST to the consumers. We've all heard different estimates—but even the Bank of Canada itself says a major component of inflation right now are these taxes.

Again, I come back to the geography. The reports are very clear that while the vast majority of eastern Canadians, Maritimers, are using furnace oil to heat their homes, only 2% or 3% of Ontarians are. Most of us in this province are using the less-carbon-intensive natural gas or propane. And yet, the federal government has crassly decided to exempt the people of the Maritimes while ignoring the people of Ontario. Trust me, I don't begrudge the discount to the people of the Maritimes. They're suffering from bad federal policy on the economy as well. I'm only asking to have that same exemption—the same recognition that we here in Ontario are suffering from the high costs and need the same exemptions that are being offered to eastern Canada.

That is exactly what the general motion, not including the amendment, is asking for—“That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.”

This is Canada; home heating is a basic necessity. Adding to the costs of a basic necessity, on top of all the increased costs for all the other necessities, including the HST, is just adding insult to injury.

It has long been said that it's very expensive to be poor. If you can't afford to buy a new \$7,000 or \$10,000 high-efficiency furnace, then you're paying more for the same amount of fuel with no improvement in your situation, but you are paying a higher level of tax. If you can't afford to buy the latest, most fuel-efficient car, then you're paying a higher level of tax. If you're struggling with your food budget, then you tend to buy smaller portions and in turn higher prices.

If you can't afford to buy a locally made product—we know that right here in Ontario, in all of our small com-

munities, we grow some of the best food. We make some of the best products. But we also know that the stuff that's shipped in by freighter from other parts of the world sometimes is cheaper, and we end up resorting to that, so we're not feeding our own economy. This tax is encouraging us to not feed our own economy. We need to continue to utilize our local suppliers. Those products coming from other parts of the world don't have the CO₂ emissions controls that we have here. They don't have a carbon tax. They aren't suffering from this.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, it's well supported that struggling with affording heat, struggling with affording adequate shelter, struggling with affording good food and nutrition—these are basic elements of the socioeconomic factors of health. This carbon tax is adding to health challenges in this province, and it's adding to the cost of our health care system. All of this adds up to: It's a horrible decision by the federal government.

0920

But I do have to mention that here in Ontario we are helping. We are doing our best to improve the situation for Ontarians, to make the cost of living better. Our government, under this Premier, has been consistent. We want to support Ontarians and help them fight inflation and high interest rates. We fought this horrific carbon tax and continue to advocate to reduce or eliminate it. We lowered the cost of driving by lowering the gas tax and removing road tolls. We lowered taxation. In fact, in this province right now, if you don't make \$50,000 in income, you don't pay any provincial income tax. This government, most importantly, has built up our economy, added 700,000 more jobs that are good-paying high-wage jobs so that the residents of Ontario can better afford the cost of living. So yes, Speaker, this government, under the leadership of the Premier, is making life more affordable for Ontarians, and all the while the federal Liberal government under Justin Trudeau is making it more expensive.

Speaker, I'll end with a little analogy. Many people across this province here have savings. Many homeowners are saving for a future renovation or repair to the house. We know that, at some point, the roof on a house will need to be replaced, so the homeowner begins to save money towards replacing that roof. However, life sometimes throws some different circumstances at that homeowner. They may need to change the amount that they're putting away each month in that savings or even take a break from it so that they can afford the necessities of the day. The carbon tax is taking far more from the people than it's giving back. Are we actually saving money to help repair the environment? Can we afford to save for tomorrow by starving or freezing today? No, that's not where Ontarians are at. Now is not the time for Ontarians to be putting money into the carbon tax while they struggle to make the decision between heating and eating. I urge all members to support this motion.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Good morning, everybody. It's a pleasure to be here to have the opportunity to debate this

fine motion and amendment to it. As many of you have heard me say, when I speak and when we look at the types of resolutions that we look at to fix the various problems that we try to fix, I always like to begin with looking at what is it that we are trying to solve and what's the problem we're trying to solve.

Well, obviously we're dealing with some significant cost increases across the board. People are dealing with inflation. They're struggling to be able to put food on the table. They're struggling to be able to pay their rent. They're struggling with being able to buy their groceries and heat their homes and put gas in their cars, or struggling to be able to get a bus pass. The struggles just are quite significant.

We are the government, and the reason why we are the government is because people have a lot of problems and they have elected us to fix those problems, because when the coalition of the Liberals and the NDP were in power, they caused all these problems. While they were causing all these problems, the people saw how terrible they were at effectively managing anything, so they decided to elect some people that they thought were going to be a lot better at managing things. I think the people have spoken, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: When you go from a supermajority into a much-larger-bigger-broader-word-than-supermajority, I think it really says to people like the member of Niagara—it ought to; the basic mathematics shouldn't be lost on that individual—to see that the people are agreeing that there are better options and that those better options are the options that they've selected and they're doubling down on those options.

So it's incumbent on us as members in this House to recognize what the people of this province—all across this province in every single riding and every corner of it—what they are saying and what they're concerned about. Right now, one of the principal concerns is affordability. It's a basic reference. So, again, back to the question, what is the problem we need to solve? And the problem is affordability. Now, the nature of the motion that is before us and the amendment to the motion is to call upon the federal government to do something. So in this case, we're calling upon our brothers and sisters in the—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I recognize the member from Orléans.

M. Stephen Blais: Merci, madame la Présidente. Si vous voulez prendre un moment pour avoir la traduction, s'il vous plaît, allez-y.

Je me lève sur une motion de procédure conformément à l'article 25(b) du Règlement, qui stipule que le député ne peut parler de sujets autres que la question à l'examen.

La motion sur la table est d'éliminer la TVH sur le chauffage domestique. Ce n'est pas une question de demander au gouvernement fédéral de changer la taxe de carbone.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I thank the member for that, and I will remind the members who are speaking this morning, we are speaking to an amendment put forward by the member from Orléans to a motion put forward by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. The original motion: “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.”

The motion that is the amendment states, “amended by removing everything after the word ‘should’ and inserting ‘in conjunction with the government of Ontario, remove the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.’” Please speak to the amendment to the original motion. Thank you.

I will recognize the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: Well, you know, as my good friend across the aisle here would certainly appreciate, the amendment that is brought forward to the original motion is all dealing with the issue of affordability, ultimately. So I will continue on the path and appreciate the needless reminder that's a reminder of nothingness, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, because that's exactly what I'm speaking to, the amendment to the motion. And so—

Interjections.

Mr. Ross Romano: The individual can try to get into procedural elements but, unfortunately, that's just not how this particular member here is going to handle this particular speech at this time, because what we are talking about, Madam Speaker—the reason for the amendment, the reason for the motion, is to address affordability. Am I right, Madam Speaker? That's what we're here to deal with. We're here to address rising costs. We're here to address the people's inability to handle those costs. And then we're here to address the amendment to the motion to try to address that challenge.

And so, again, I ask, what is the problem we're trying to solve and how will this amendment or this motion address that? I challenge myself because in order to answer that question, you have to get to the root, right? You must come to the root, and the root, ultimately, as the amendment is addressing an HST issue, the motion is addressing a carbon tax issue—which is all, again, aimed at how do we fix this affordability problem.

Well, you have to ask yourself what each one of those taxes—what they were all about. The HST, obviously, has been around for a very long time. The GST before it was around for a very long time. The carbon tax is a recent issue, and it comes about for very different reasons, so let's focus there as a starting point.

The carbon tax: My understanding—I stand to be corrected, Madam Speaker—is, somehow, a tax that was contemplated, envisioned, would solve certain environmental problems. They would produce people's environmental impact. It would protect the environment. Okay—in theory, I can understand how that works. But in so doing, we're

taxing businesses on just about everything we do—literally, quite frankly, everything, whether it's your food—you know, we're hearing people talk about what it costs to run a fan, to dry our foods off before we can put them out to market so they don't rot or mould.

0930

We're talking about how much it costs me to fuel gas in my home, and I don't even use that much. My own home—I burn a lot of wood. I just had my three sons and myself getting ready for the winter. We're prepping our woodshed. We're getting everything set. My wood cost has gone up \$10 a cord and they're telling me it's because of the cost of fuel. All of these costs just keep on growing and growing and growing.

Me heating my home with wood is a little bit more environmentally friendly than using natural gas. Now, I've got to pay more money for that. Okay, I can understand that. But is it going to fix the problem? Is it going to fix the grander issue of protecting the environment? Those costs are just getting pushed on to me, the end user. The cost of that bologna sandwich is just going up, but the person who is paying for it is that end user. I used to bring my kids to Subway a lot after soccer practice. We used to always go to Subway; it was a thing. Until I went to Subway recently and a sub cost me, and a diet Pepsi—it was like \$18, for one. I mean, you multiply that out by the whole family and I'm thinking, that's a really expensive lunch, right? That's a really, really expensive lunch. Why am I paying that price? It's because of all of these costs going up, and I'm just paying for it.

So, is the environment getting protected? Did anybody stop doing anything to hurt the environment because they had these taxes? No, they're just paying more money to do the business that they're doing, and they're making me pay for it. It's a really challenging situation that now I'm just paying for and you're paying for and the member for Niagara is paying for and all of his constituents are paying for—but again, are his constituents seeing any changes in the world? Are they seeing the impact of the carbon tax fixing the environment? I'd love to know if the member actually sees a change in the environment because of all the extra costs his constituents are paying, for basic items like a fried egg in the morning.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will remind the member from Niagara Falls to come to order.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member from Niagara Falls will come to order.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would love to speak about the items that the member from Niagara is asking me to speak to, but unfortunately, Mr. Blais will try to hold me out of order for not speaking to the actual motion, which is about affordability, isn't it, Madam Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will remind the member that we do not address other members by name.

Mr. Ross Romano: Oh, did I? My apologies to the member for—perhaps the member from Niagara can help me. I would love his assistance on this.

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: Orléans; the member for Orléans.

I really, if I can, and if the member from Niagara will allow me, would love to be able to speak to the member for Orléans's amendment to our motion at this time, which of course as we all know is about affordability. I think that it's a challenging situation, though, Madam Speaker. It's a very challenging situation when we sit in this House and we look at ways that we can fix things, and yet when I look at this carbon tax, I can't fathom how it fixes the problem. Here at home, I'm challenged to see how it fixes the problem, but what I can clearly see—and I think we can all see—is how it's costing every single one of us, the end user, more for everything.

The HST does cost everything more. We've been paying for the HST now for a long time. We're all used to that. I mean, hey, I'd be happy to pay no tax. Mea culpa, I would love no tax. I don't think anyone on this side of the House would ever argue with that. But, maybe there is some argument of, like, "the end justified the means." We needed income to pay for things like health care. We needed money to pay for various items. And a lot of this revenue for the government allows us to be able to afford the things that we enjoy, as people in a free and democratic society, here in this province and certainly in this country, enjoy—and, arguably, maybe some should be able to enjoy more than others. I think that there are certainly challenges in that regard.

All that being said, this particular carbon tax—it's a tax. It's not fixing the problem it was intended to solve. So if it's not going to fix the problem that it was intended to, then maybe the feds should look at a different way of doing it. How else can we protect the environment? Let's not even talk about how the lack of this—

Mr. Stephen Blais: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Pursuant to standing order 25(b), which states that the member cannot speak to matters other than the question under discussion, I'd like to have you remind the member that the amendment is discussing the removal of the HST from home heating and does not reference any conversations with the federal government relating to the carbon tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I appreciate the member's argument, but I will allow the member from Sault Ste. Marie to continue.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I get his concern, but he should listen to what we're talking about, because what we are talking about is, in fact, the amendment to the motion. My words are clear. All of these remedies, if we can call them remedies—the HST as well as the carbon tax—are intended to solve a certain problem. The motion is intended to address affordability. The

amendment to the motion is proposing a different way to address affordability. At the end of the day, we are talking about affordability.

Both of these measures—whether the carbon tax or whether the HST—are all coming from the feds. So we're looking at the feds and saying, "Hey, guys, you've got option A and you've got option B. Option A, the carbon tax, is supposed to fix the environment, but it's just costing us all more money. Option B is a way to fill our coffers, and it's costing people more money. You should change something here." Well, let's be reasonable. The whole concept of this amendment is, which one should we ask for; which one do we want to bug the feds about? Do we want to say to the feds, "Hey, guys, stop charging people more money for something that isn't fixing the problem you're trying to fix"—the environmental concerns—or, "Stop charging people more money for this other problem, which is just trying to pay for all of our other goods and services that we have out there"?

Madam Speaker, I'll repeat what I said earlier. Personally, I'd rather have no tax of any kind. Don't tax me at all. Keep your hand out of my pocket. I think most people would agree. Nobody wants government's hands in their pockets.

But I do like the services that I have. I do enjoy having roads to drive on. Sometimes I wish they were nicer. Sometimes I really wish there were more of them. I like being able to go see my doctor. Sometimes I do wish there were more of them. Sometimes I wish there was better access to different things. But I do like what I have. I like being able to send my kids to school. Actually, I've got no concerns with my kids' schooling. They're doing really good in school. They've got nice teachers, a good team there, a good board, a nice facility. I'm quite happy with that side of things, to be honest with you. But I recognize that that costs money. So we've got to pay for that—and we are.

The carbon tax—what is it fixing? It's not fixing the environment. Is it going to change how much pollution someone generates in any jurisdiction outside of this province or country? Is it going to change any of that? No. We know for a fact that it won't change that at all. But members in various—and rightfully so—would say, "We've got to worry about our own house first. We can't worry about everybody else. We've got to worry about us." That's a fair argument, right? It's a very fair argument. It makes a ton of sense. You've got to worry about yourself first. Lead by example, right? That's really relevant. But is it going to do anything? It doesn't seem to be fixing it. It just means I'm paying more money for my baloney sandwich, for my cord of wood, for everything, and it's not fixing the problem. It's not changing anything. So why are we doing it?

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So, should we vote for the amendment? Let's tell the federal government we don't want to pay any more money. We want them to stop charging tax for all the stuff that we enjoy, those goods and services that we really, really appreciate and that we love as Canadians. Or should we

ask the federal government to stop a tax that absolutely is not fixing the problem they want to solve?

And then when you look at—I'm going to use a personal example. Here I am, the member for Sault Ste. Marie. My local steel plant—one of only three steel manufacturers in the country, all three of which are here in the province of Ontario, two in Hamilton, one in Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma Steel, greening its steel, reducing carbon emissions, a huge economic investment, a huge benefit, actually making a difference on the environment at a huge level by making critical investments that our government has made without resorting to a carbon tax, without jamming our hands as deep as we can into every single business and thinking that it's going to change anything other than them then making us pay for it.

I say we get rid of the carbon tax, Madam Speaker. To me, I would say I have really, really honestly considered the member's amendment to the motion, but personally, I'm not convinced. And as I'm speaking, I don't know, I hope I convinced a few people here today that the amendment doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a pleasure to rise to debate this motion. Before I get into the need to address the affordability and climate crisis that we're facing in Ontario right now and the fact that this government has failed to address both of those, I've got to say it's been interesting listening to the member from Sault Ste. Marie defending taxes. I've got to say, folks on the other side of the aisle oftentimes don't defend taxes. It was interesting hearing the member defend taxes, because we know taxes pay for our health care system. They pay for good education, universities; addressing the housing affordability crisis; addressing the climate crisis; basically, making life livable in this province.

They say taxes are what fund civilization. So I was happy to hear the member acknowledge that. I'm hoping that the government members, when things like gimmicks like licence plate stickers come up again—and being the only MPP in this entire Legislature to vote against that, because I wanted to see the \$2.5 billion that was lost in the first year and the \$1.5 billion we're losing each and every year actually going to helping Ontarians access high-quality health care or education, better long-term-care services, building affordable housing. So the next time the government brings up a gimmick like that, I'll be reminded of the member's elegant defence of the role taxes play in funding our government and our society.

Speaker, we are facing an affordability crisis and a climate crisis. And I would say to all members of this House of all political parties, you ignore them at your peril. We have to address both, and we can address both at the same time, but not by the actions of this government.

Think about the fall economic statement. There wasn't a single measure to address affordability in the fall economic statement, nor were there any measures to address the climate crisis. As a matter of fact, since this government took office, they ripped up Ontario's climate plan.

They cancelled 750 renewable energy contracts, costing the province \$230 million. They cancelled EV rebates, which would help people drive lower-cost cars. They ripped out charging stations to help people charge those cars at a lower cost. They changed the building code to make building retrofits—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will remind the member that we are dealing with an amendment and to speak to the amendment before us.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that, Speaker. I am speaking to the affordability crisis of both the original motion and the amended motion. If you would give me a little bit of time to get there, I'm getting there for a second—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will remind the member that we're speaking to the amendment before us. Please speak to the amendment.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Speaker.

So we have an amendment here to take the HST off home heating, to a motion to remove the carbon price from home heating. If people really want to address the cost associated with home heating, the best thing we can do is to help people avoid both of those costs: the HST and the carbon price. How do we help people do that, Speaker? We help them save money by saving energy and by helping people reduce the need to purchase fuel to heat their homes.

Unfortunately, when the current government took office, they cancelled all of those programs to help people save money by saving energy. The Ontario Greens are saying, "Let's bring those programs back." I want to give you just one example: Corporate Knights hired a number of economists to do an analysis of what it would look like if we brought in a building retrofit program in the province of Ontario—or across Canada, but I will give you the numbers for the province of Ontario. A \$5-billion investment in building retrofits would leverage \$83 billion of additional capital investment in the province, creating over 800,000 jobs, contributing \$196 billion to Ontario's GDP, reducing climate pollution by 14 metric tonnes, and saving energy consumers \$4.8 billion each and every year. To me, that's the most logical, sensible, fiscally responsible and economically responsible way to help people with home heating costs and be more effective than removing the HST or carbon price from home heating fuels. Why don't we invest in that? Why don't we actually help people save money by saving energy—not just this year, but the next year and the next year and the years after that? That's how we can address both the climate crisis and the affordability crisis that people are facing.

There has been a lot of talk about the cost-of-fuel inflation that we're facing, whether it's home heating, at the gas pumps, or whatever. If you look at what is driving it—this is according to PBO—the carbon price went up two cents last year—that's per litre; it's two cents per litre. Profits for the oil and gas companies, last year, went up by 18 cents a litre—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Gouging.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Gouging, yes—oil and gas gouging, grocery gouging; a lot of gouging out there.

I would say to your average consumer looking at heating their home, "What's hitting you harder: the two cents that the carbon price raised per litre last year or the 18 cents that went to oil and gas profits last year?" If we're going to write letters—essentially, what these motions are about is writing letters to the federal government. If we want to write a letter to the federal government, why don't we write a letter to the federal government to bring in the exact same excess profit tax, they brought in for banks and insurance companies, to the oil and gas sector? That would raise \$4.2 billion. We could then take that \$4.2 billion and follow the analysis that the Green Budget Coalition has done showing that we could actually do zero-cost energy retrofits for low-income households, including providing them with a heat pump at the exact same price, saving them far more money than either the original motion or the amended motion provides for people.

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Speaker, the point is, we have solutions. As a matter of fact, the province wouldn't even have to write a letter to the federal government on carbon pricing if we would just actually bring back the programs that would help people save money by saving energy, which, by the way, would benefit our economy and reduce climate pollution at the same time.

Speaker, the other thing that I, when I've heard the government discuss this—I see the energy minister here. I love debating the energy minister.

Hon. Todd Smith: You never ask me any questions, though.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I know. I need to start asking you some questions.

I've had to ask the housing minister a lot of questions lately, but I'll get to the energy minister soon enough.

He talks about energy poverty, and that is a real issue, but most of the measures the government has brought forward to address that issue actually disproportionately benefit high-income households—including the original motion and the amended motion; including the \$7 billion that we're spending to subsidize electricity prices in Ontario. The FAO has done an analysis, and that disproportionately benefits high-income households at the expense of low-income households. When you look at carbon pricing, it's the low-income households, according to the PBO, who receive more money back through rebates than they pay in to carbon pricing. So if the government's concern—and I think this is a valid concern—is energy poverty, we'd be much better off having income means-tested programs and/or just doing what I'm suggesting: having programs in place that would help working-class, middle-class families be able to save money by saving energy. That is the most effective way we can address the affordability crisis and the climate crisis.

I know the members opposite have talked a lot about food inflation and how carbon pricing can connect to food inflation. But if you talk to food economists, do you know what they'll tell you the number one drivers of food inflation are? The climate crisis—they usually say weather; they say there's drought in most of the major growing

areas in the world. Of course, there's conflict in the Ukraine; that's contributing. There is grocery-gouging; that's contributing. But the primary driver is the fact that we have drought and floods in the major growing areas, which is driving up prices, because it's a supply and demand issue. So if we truly wanted to address that affordability challenge, we would address the climate crisis, and we would do everything possible to protect local food supply chains. That's exactly why we need to be building homes in communities that people want to live in, on land already approved for development, so we don't have to pave over farmland to do it—so we can protect those local supply chains, so we don't have a handful of wealthy, well-connected speculators cash in billions at our expense. And when we build those homes—and this is where we need to change the building code—we need to ensure that they're energy-efficient, so that way, they can save money by saving energy; they can avoid paying HST; they can avoid paying carbon pricing, because they're using less energy. It's common sense. It's basic economics. And by doing it, we benefit our economy by creating jobs; we make our businesses—especially if our commercial, industrial buildings are more efficient, we make them more competitive, more profitable, saving money, generating more prosperity; we ensure that renters and homeowners save money, because they're saving energy. So it's a win-win-win—oh, and by the way, we reduce carbon pollution, which is driving the climate crisis.

I want to close by saying to all members of this House—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Keep talking.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: “Keeping talking.” The member from Niagara wants me to keep talking.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd love for you to keep talking.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Oh, the member for Windsor wants me to keep talking, too. There we go.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Oh, the member from Beaches—East York wants me to keep talking. You guys all need to let me talk more in this House if you like it so much. Give me a few more minutes here and there.

I want to ask members what message we're sending to young people. What message are we sending to young people? Because when I talk to young people, they have two major, major concerns. They have lots of concerns, but the two biggest concerns they have are, “How am I ever going to afford to own a home or even pay the rent, given the skyrocketing housing costs and the skyrocketing costs of rent?”

Then the second one is, “What's my future going to look like because of the climate crisis?” especially after the summer we've been through this summer, Speaker, with smoke from forest fires causing bad air quality here throughout Ontario. As a matter of fact, the lung association was just here yesterday talking about lung cancer, and they're saying that the number one driver historically has been smoking, but now it's becoming air pollution, primarily driven by the climate crisis, which is then going to put pressure on our health care system, driving up costs for people.

Young people are asking about their financial future. According to Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer, the climate crisis is going to cost an extra \$26.2 billion this decade alone just for public infrastructure if we don't start reducing pollution. Over the course of this century, we're going to have an additional \$4 billion a year in transportation costs due to climate-fuelled extreme weather events; an additional \$1.5 billion a year for costs associated to public buildings.

Young people are saying, “How am I going to afford a home or pay the rent? “They're saying, “How am I going to afford these escalating costs due to the climate crisis?” Last year alone, \$3.1 billion in insurable losses due to the climate crisis. So young people are saying, “How am I going to afford all of this?”

Then, they're looking at what we're debating right now in this House, and they're saying, “Why don't you take real action; real action to save me money? Build a home I can afford and make sure it's energy-efficient. Make sure that I have a heat pump. Make sure that I have good insulation and good windows and that I can significantly reduce my home heating costs in that home.”

Speaker, let's build homes people can afford in the communities they want to live in, that are affordable, that are close to where they work so they don't have to have long, expensive commutes. Let's build those homes so they're energy-efficient, so that we can address the real affordability concerns people have, young people especially, about what it's going to take to heat that home, and we can address the real concerns they have about the climate crisis.

We can do both. We can do it in a way that benefits our economy and creates more jobs. We can do it in a way that addresses the affordability crisis and the climate crisis. That's the debate we should be having in this House today, not a debate about sending a letter to the federal government to maybe possibly do something that, quite frankly, is just yet another attack on taking action on the climate crisis. Let's solve the problem of affordability and climate. That's the debate we need to have. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's an honour to rise today and speak to the motion. Madam Speaker, I know there is an amendment on the floor, and I can speak to the amendment as well, but before I do that, I want to move the following:

I move that the amendment be amended by deleting everything after “remove” and replacing it with “the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.”

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Calandra has moved that that the amendment be amended by deleting everything after “remove” and replacing it with “the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.”

Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate that.

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Colleagues, you will know that the focus of today and this motion has been on the carbon tax. That is what we

have been debating about. That is what is seizing the country right now, the value and the impact of the carbon tax on families; the fact that a federal Liberal government has brought forward an amendment to the carbon tax which favours one region of the country over everybody else, a decision that was plainly made for political purposes.

We saw that the member for Essex and a number of other colleagues last night were talking about why we were bringing this forward, why it was important for us to do that. It's not only just because of the fact that the carbon tax is hurting every single person; it is because of the fact that the federal Liberal government, a minister of that government, has admitted that the decision to remove the carbon tax on fuels in Atlantic Canada was based solely on politics and no other reason. So for that reason, provinces and communities across this country—our federal Parliament has been seized on what has happened with respect to the carbon tax and why it is not only a bad tax, but why the Liberals have now made it even worse, turning it into a national crisis.

Now, I can appreciate the member for Orléans wanting to distract from that with another motion. Let's talk about it. We were here last night until midnight debating this motion. Not one member of the Liberal Party felt it was important to get in their place and defend the amendment that was brought forward by the member for Orléans—not one. In eight hours of debate, the Liberal caucus sat on their hands and spoke not even once on the amendment. They didn't get up and speak on the carbon tax. They didn't speak even once. They just sat there in agreement all night.

And now, this morning, they get up in their place—the same group; the member himself, the member for Ottawa-Orléans—to defend the sanctity of the amendment that he brought forward on the HST. But a speech to defend it? No. Did any other members of the Liberal Party feel that it was important for them to get up and talk about reducing taxes? No. Have they? No. We will continue this debate, and I guarantee you, Madam Speaker, that not one more Liberal will have the courage to rise in their place and talk about either eliminating the carbon tax or the Harmonized Sales Tax.

Let's be very clear: I will give credit to the NDP. Having said that, they didn't speak either last night on the carbon tax motion, but I will give credit where credit is due. They themselves could see the damage that this tax was causing on the people of Ontario, and when we brought another motion last week with respect to eliminating carbon taxes on groceries and on inputs, the NDP voted with us—with the people of Ontario, frankly—to remove that tax.

That was a big change for the NDP. It was a big change for the NDP. What they had said, the NDP, is that after all of the huffing and puffing and talking about how important a carbon tax was, that finally—and you will know, Madam Speaker: The NDP have come a long way. They've come a long way.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton—you'll remember in the last Parliament we had a motion to protect—I think it was line 9?

Hon. Todd Smith: Line 5.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Line 5. The NDP has historically been against oil and gas, and they voted with the government to protect line 5. That was a historical shift with the NDP. And then, finally, last week they also then voted with us to eliminate carbon taxes.

Now, it wasn't just here. To give credit where credit is due, the NDP in Ottawa also, after we resolved the incorrect phone number for Jagmeet—it was actually 613-JAGMEET, not 1-800; I beg you, don't call the 1-800 number. It won't get you where you want to go.

Hon. Doug Downey: Or it might.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Or it might.

But all of a sudden, even the federal NDP realized that this is a bad tax.

Now, we have said, on this side of the House, right from day one, that the carbon tax will cost everybody, no matter what you do. It was going to cost you constantly, right? We have said that from day one. We took the federal government to court to try and stop the carbon tax, and we heard speech after speech after speech from the opposition, "No, you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong."

Now we have clear evidence of it. At least the official opposition here, whether they believe it or not, at least they understand that right now we are in a situation that the carbon tax is costing people and something has to give. So, I congratulate the NDP for supporting the motion last week. I hope that they will support—and I'm optimistic. I think that they will support this motion here today, Madam Speaker.

But let's go back to the Liberals, right? Let's go back to the Liberals. Now, I was a member federally, you all know, before I was retired by the people. I was first elected in 2008, and part of that election in 2008 was off of the success of what was the 2006 campaign—you will recall this—to reduce the GST at the time, from 7% to 6% to 5%. What did we hear from the Liberals? I mean, the NDP are consistent; I will give them this. They like to tax, right? The Liberals love to tax. The NDP like to tax, but I will give the NDP credit that they're consistent. The Liberals will make you believe that they both like to tax and don't like to tax. They try to hide what it is they want.

When we went from 7% to 6% to 5%—because that's what Conservatives do, right? We reduce taxes and give you more for that. They said that doing that would cause an absolute collapse in the economy, that it is the dumbest thing to do, that you can't do it, and blah, blah, blah—any host of reasons why you can't do it. But you know what happened? When we reduced taxes, all of a sudden, the economy started to grow. More people had more money, and they were spending more money. And do you know what then happened? We actually got more tax revenue when we reduced taxes on people, and we were able to get through a global financial meltdown, put massive amounts of investments and infrastructure in place and then we

balanced the budget federally. But we know that all changed, because then we have a Prime Minister who says that budgets balance themselves. We all know that they don't balance themselves, that governments actually have to do work in order to balance budgets.

But let's look at the record of the Liberal Party here in this place. The member from—I almost do it disservice. I would encourage all members, if you didn't listen to the speech from the member for Essex last night, give yourself an opportunity. Go look up that speech because he really laid it out. I will do it disservice, but let's look at the Liberals.

I encourage the member from Orléans, if he disagrees with anything that I'm saying, to rise in his place and standing—order me and tell me that I am wrong. And if he does that, I will sit down, Madam Speaker.

This is a Liberal Party, now, that wants to talk about reducing taxes but gave us the highest taxes literally in Canada. And what did you have to show for that after 15 years of Liberal government? Nothing. Nothing. The best they had to do was building a bridge upside down. That is the prowess of the Liberal Party. They got so bad that they started to build infrastructure upside down.

Now, we have a Prime Minister in this country who thinks that we should—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Wow, they've got a voice now, right? They won't get up and talk about it in speeches, but they'll heckle across the room, right? That is the Liberal Party of today, right? They've got nothing to offer—no value, no nothing. It is just about gimmicks and stupidity. That's what it was about. They said they would increase taxes and then they increased taxes to the highest level.

This is a government, the Liberal government, that, after 15 years, built bridges upside down; didn't build roads; didn't build transit; didn't build transportation; allowed our hospitals to crumble; didn't build long-term care; laid off nurses, for the love of God; laid off teachers; ruined the education system—

Interjection: Closed schools.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They closed schools. I mean, there's just so much, I forget the damage that they did, right? I've tried to forget the damage that they did. The best they have to offer is a gimmick of a motion to try and distract what the entire country is talking about right now, and that is the carbon tax.

You know why the entire country is talking about a carbon tax, Madam Speaker? Because things have gotten so unaffordable because of the policies of the Liberal government federally, supported, really, by Liberals here. We won't talk about the NDP for now because at least they remain consistent in bad policy, right? Which is fine, because at least I give them credit. They've never wavered from believing in bad ideas, right? But that's fine. They will campaign. I'm sure the NDP think that the ideas that we have are not so encouraging, but at least they remain consistent.

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That group over there, we have no idea what they're ever talking about. They're all over the place. One day they

want to cut taxes, but then they're raising taxes. One day they're building bridges, then they're building them upside down. One day they want transit, then the next day—they make all these grand deals, promises, and come through with nothing. They have a leader right now who wants to build on the greenbelt but maybe doesn't want to build on the greenbelt. Like, this is a party that has shown absolutely no understanding of how to govern. This is a party that will not get the confidence of the people back again.

God bless the leader of the Green Party. God bless the leader of the Green Party. He as well stands on principle, none of which I agree with, but nonetheless, he stands on—oh, I shouldn't say that; we agree quite often. That's not true.

But we stray from these things because the Liberals are so desperate to distract from their record. Look, we're not asking for a lot, right? The member for Orléans—again, I encourage him: Please, rise in your place and tell me I'm wrong. If you do that, I'll sit down. But he's not going to because he knows I'm right.

What I promised this House is this: Given the ferocity of the desire to cut taxes by the Liberals, I am going to spend the next five weeks in this place, sitting in this place every night if I have to, bringing motion after motion after motion to give the Liberals the opportunity to vote in favour of cutting taxes because I want to hold them on that record. I want to hold them to the record of that.

Look, this is a party that talks about the mean and nasty oil and gas sector. Now, the member for Essex laid it out pretty well: Who are we punishing? We're punishing Canadians. Where do you think the oil and gas comes from for the most part? From western Canada—or it should. And it should go all the way to the east coast, but it doesn't because there are NIMBY politicians even in energy, who won't have Canadian oil being delivered to Canadian homes. As the member for Essex said yesterday, the policy of the Liberals, this policy which reduces taxes only for our Atlantic partners, means that we are subsidizing Saudi Arabian oil.

Now, the rest of the country is more than happy to take transfers of billions and billions and billions of dollars from oil-producing provinces in this country. So when the oil and gas sector improves the economy of the entire country and those provinces then transfer billions to other provinces, everybody loves the oil and gas sector. But what is the best they have? Punish them even more, Madam Speaker. That it's thousands of jobs doesn't matter. Thousands of jobs—“Oh, well, we can find it somewhere else,” because according to Liberal math, the more you spend, the more you save.

We've heard this constantly. The first Trudeau told us that the more you spend, the more you save, and then he literally almost bankrupted the country. And then the second one comes and tells us the budget will balance itself and, lo and behold, that has not happened. But then we had a Liberal Party here for 15 years who did the exact same thing. They increased taxes to a level that forced our

businesses to flee the province. We were losing thousands of jobs because of the policies of the Liberals—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the government House leader, but it is now time for members' statements.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WINDSOR VETERANS MEMORIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Remembrance Week of 2023 in Windsor–Tecumseh was truly one for the books, and I am privileged to have joined incredible ceremonies across my riding. When Windsor–Essex honours its veterans, it does it right. Each of the three Royal Canadian Legions in my riding—Branch 255 in Riverside, Colonel Paul Poisson Branch 261 in Tecumseh and Metropolitan Branch 594 in Oldcastle—hosted neighbourhood commemorations of a truly unique character.

All of the Legions, our veterans and the public come together on Remembrance Day at the Essex County War Memorial in downtown Windsor, at a beautiful ceremony organized by the Windsor Veterans Memorial Services Committee. Since 1926—so, 97 years now—the committee has set out to support our local veterans and their families. Under the leadership of Paul Lauzon, the committee works hard all year, presenting 11 memorial events across Windsor. These recognize our fallen veterans and the battles in which our local veterans have fought: World War I, the Battle of the Atlantic, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, our peacekeeping and NATO missions, Dieppe, the Merchant Navy, Afghanistan and the Battle of Britain.

To the Windsor Veterans Memorial Services Committee and our local groups like the North Wall Riders Association, the military motorcyclists of Canada and the Southern Ontario Military Muster supporting every single time, thank you for your service to Windsor–Essex veterans and for keeping their legacy alive and strong.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. As you're well aware, we face a crisis around the climate. We have wildfires in Canada that are unprecedented; we've seen them around the world—flooding, drought, disruption of food supply—problems that are profound and are scheduled or expected to become far deeper.

At the same time, we have a government that is ramping up the production of gas-fired electricity. It's undermining the work that was done over a decade ago to reduce emissions from our electricity sector, and frankly, they're setting things up for electricity to be more expensive to be produced. That's a simple reality. We know that just

recently, \$4.8 million was offered to Napanee to host a gas plant. We know that these gas plants will increase air pollution, cause health problems and deepen the climate crisis.

Royal Bank of Canada and the Electricity Distributors Association of Ontario have both said that there is a cheaper, non-burning option to address this issue. That's been ignored by this government. I call on the government to abandon its investment in expansion of gas plants, take the solutions offered by the Royal Bank and by the electricity distributors, and put money in the hands of homeowners and businesses across Ontario to cut their energy use and to cut their energy bills. The direction the government is going is disastrous.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. John Jordan: Yesterday, November 15, was World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Awareness Day.

COPD is a serious and progressive respiratory disease. It's estimated that, by 2030, COPD will be the third leading cause of death in the world.

In 2021, this government introduced and passed An Act to proclaim COPD Awareness Day to help raise awareness. The Ministry of Health has taken significant action on COPD care, including increasing access to smoking cessation programs for patients in both the hospital and primary care settings, including patients with COPD; increasing access to influenza and pneumococcal vaccines among COPD patients; and investing in early detection and treatment to slow the progression of this extremely serious lung disease.

One of these vital investments has been Best Care in Primary Care program, a highly effective, made-in-Ontario, team-based, patient-centred care model. Demonstrated in peer-reviewed studies, Best Care in Primary Care has saved our health system millions of dollars, alleviated pressures on capacity and improved the quality of care for Ontarians living with COPD. Best Care has already proven its effectiveness in 200 locations in south-western Ontario and has been looking at expansion in other regions in the province.

Our government will continue to work with health providers, health teams and patients to continue to enhance initiatives like Best Care and improve the lives of those living with COPD.

I'd like to do a shout-out to Dr. Christopher Liciskai, Dr. Cathy Faulds and my friend Christina Dolgowicz for all their great work to help the people with COPD in this province.

1020

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ian Watson from my riding came and talked to me—he's a cancer survivor living with the long-term side effects of radiation treatment for lymphoma, which means that he frequently needs dental pro-

cedures. Ian was notified earlier this year that he is no longer eligible for the Ontario seniors dental care plan because his 2022 income exceeded \$22,200 by a few dollars. He's not the only one.

Gail's net income is \$22,203. Therefore, she also received a letter telling her that she no longer qualifies for the dental support. She needs dental services—and at \$22,000, she can't afford this.

Unlike the seniors copayment program, which is based on yearly income after deductions, the dental plan is based on income before deductions.

Ian is asking why this provincial government applies a different interpretation of net income for one program versus the other.

But what thousands of seniors are asking is, why is this government making it so difficult for low-income seniors to access basic dental care? Why is the eligibility income set so low?

I suppose the government has left enough patients in pain that we will have to wait for the federal government to clean up their mess.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Brian Riddell: This morning, I want to share my experience of spending Remembrance Day with members of the Preston Legion. With two Legions and three cenotaphs in my riding, it was my first opportunity, as the member of Parliament, to spend November 11 with the good people of Branch 126.

We began our Remembrance Day with a solemn march from the Legion to the cenotaph on King Street, where citizens, young and old, laid wreaths to honour our country's veterans. What was special about the march to the cenotaph this year was, along the way, on every light pole, hung a banner featuring photographs and names of veterans. The banner program was open to all Preston residents who wanted to honour a veteran, either living or passed on. A total of 66 banners were on display, and they served as an important reminder of the sacrifices of veterans who have served and continue to serve our great country. The banner program is a great way to pay tribute to our veterans, and I encourage all Legions in Ontario to do the same.

Finally, I ended my day with a dinner at the Preston Legion, where I had the opportunity to meet with many veterans who graciously shared their personal experiences with me. I was grateful to hear the stories, and I look forward to hearing many more.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Ottawa residents are experiencing significant hurdles to accessing health care. Too many of them don't have a family doctor, just like 2.2 million people across Ontario. Hospital wait times are excessive, and surgical backlogs are lengthy. In fact, some patients are waiting twice as long as the provincial average to receive life-saving surgeries. At the Ottawa Hospital,

only 13% of breast cancer patients are making it to the operating room within the targeted time.

But instead of tackling these challenges, the government is funnelling public health care dollars into the pockets of private investors. This week, we learned that the government is paying a private, for-profit surgical clinic fees that are three to four times what is provided to public hospitals for the same surgeries. And all the while, operating rooms are sitting unused in public hospitals because hospitals don't have the funding and the staff to make full use of them.

Vacancies for health care staff in Ontario are up 19% since last year, yet this government continues to treat health care workers with disrespect, appealing the court's decision on Bill 124. Thousands of unfilled positions means thousands of patients will wait indefinitely for treatment. And sometimes that treatment never comes. In 2022 alone, 11,000 Ontarians died while on waiting lists for medical services.

This government needs to start putting the health of people ahead of profits so that everyone in Ontario can access the health care they deserve.

LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. David Smith: I rise today to address a matter of utmost importance: Lung Cancer Awareness Month. Lung cancer is a disease that affects millions of lives in Canada and around the world. Lung cancer is a formidable adversary, and its impact on individuals, families and communities is profound, affecting people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life. The statistics are stark, and the reality is sobering. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Canada, claiming more lives than breast, colon and prostate cancer combined.

The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that in 2023, 85 Canadians on average will be diagnosed with lung and bronchus cancer every day, while 56 Canadians will die from lung and bronchus cancer. The purpose of Lung Cancer Awareness Month is not only to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, but to highlight the collective effort needed for collaboration and education in the commitment to foster a world where lung cancer is not a death sentence.

I'd like to thank our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, for investing in free lung cancer screening programs and more to help combat this disease.

LAWLOR PHARMASAVE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. It's always a pleasure to be in the chamber with you. In the heart of Kingston Road Village, in beautiful Beaches–East York, sits Lawlor Pharmasave, a mainstay of the neighbourhood, with pharmacist and owner Kyro Maseh and his team working tirelessly to keep our community safe and healthy.

After administering thousands of vaccines over the past few years, Kyro was forced to make the tough decision to

conclude vaccine season months early and possibly for all future seasons for publicly funded vaccines. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this year, the Ministry of Health appointed Shopper's Drug Mart, a private retailer, as the sole distributor of publicly funded vaccines. Imagine Kyro's surprise when he put in orders for 200 vaccines doses to only have 20 doses delivered. They're turning away 50 to 60 people a day.

Lawlor Pharmacy has saved countless lives through their vaccination efforts. However, with a distribution plan that resembles sabotage, they simply cannot provide this service while safely dispensing medications. My residents are at risk because this government wants to cater to their wealthy friends and major corporations instead of small businesses that provide personal care to Ontarians. This kind of governance kills.

Kyro is a phenomenal pharmacist who knows the needs of his patients. Deals like this prevent health care workers like him from saving lives. Thank you, Kyro and his entire team at Lawlor Pharmasave, for your hard work and care to keep our community healthy.

ACROSS U-HUB

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I care about the well-being of our seniors, but I also care about our youth, as they are the foundation of our future. I rise to share my gratitude for the work of Across U-hub, a beacon of empowerment for our young community. They work with new immigrant youth, helping them to integrate into Canada and overcome the cultural barriers.

Established in 2002, Across U-hub has provided over 1,800 programs, impacting almost 87,000 in participants, both kids and parents. Last Sunday, I attended their fundraising and youth award gala, an event that celebrated not just achievements but the resilience of our future leaders. The I Believe U-can Awards were presented to five recipients exemplifying the spirit of growth, building and bridging. Their perseverance, courage, determination and pursuance of their dreams have earned them the awards.

Let us continue to support initiatives that invest in our youth, ensuring a brighter and more resilient future for Ontario.

1030

FAIRFIELD-GUTZEIT HOUSE

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, I'll ask you to picture this: a beautiful white-and-green-sided gable house. On the shores of Lake Ontario, along the historic Loyalist Parkway, nestled in the cute port village of Bath, stands the Fairfield-Gutzeit house.

This home, built by United Empire Loyalists William and Benjamin Fairfield in 1796, went through many generations of both Fairfields and others before its final family owner, Mabel Fairfield Gutzeit, bought the home in 1938 with her husband, Dr. William Gutzeit.

Then, in 1968, Mabel's estate passed the entire home and its heritage artifacts to be a museum to be shared with the community. It is currently owned by the aptly named

Loyalist township, and the treasures herein are greatly appreciated.

This home has seen and carries treasures from before the War of 1812, has witnessed the birth of our nation and this province and even hosted Sir John A. Macdonald for a picnic once.

But like all things, time has had an impact on this beautiful home. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure to attend the kick-off event as Loyalist township begins to restore the home with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I'm grateful to see that heritage sites like this get the funding to keep the history of this province alive. I'm thankful to the OTF, the ministry and this government.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Ontario's Credit Rating: Fall 2023 Update from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With us in the Speaker's gallery this morning are interns from the Parliamentary Internship Programme in Ottawa here to learn more about the legislative process in Ontario and meet their counterparts in the Ontario Legislative Internship Programme. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

Mr. Joel Harden: It gives me great pleasure to welcome some vulnerable road user champions to the people's House today. With us are Peggy Hawthorn and Bob Murphy, who made the three-hour commute from Wasaga Beach. Thank you very much. Peggy represents United Senior Citizens of Ontario—300,000 seniors.

With us as well is Robert Zaichkowski, who is the author of the Two Wheeled Politics blog; Jonathan Schmidt, one of our friends from Scarborough who advocates for cycling; Richard Oldfield, Rick Harrington, Ann-Marie Thompson—Speaker, do not try to keep up to these people on a bicycle; they're incredibly fit. Thank you for your work.

Also with us this morning is the Sayed family from Scarborough; Sharon Lee; Janice Jim; Patrick Brown; Kelsey Pietrobon; the incredible Ethan Smith-Johnson from our Ottawa Centre team—thank you for being her; and Jessica Spieker and Alison Stewart from Cycle Toronto and Friends and Families for Safe Streets.

We've got a lot of help, and we've got a great debate this afternoon. Thank you so much for making the trip out here to be with us.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I'd like to welcome Lina Di Carlo and Jeff Silverstein, who are representing the Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association. Thank you for being in the House today.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce today's page captain, Alina Wu, and her mom, Loris Wu, in the public

gallery, from my riding of Don Valley North. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: As parliamentary assistant to the minister of Minister of Health, it is my great pleasure to introduce Rethink Breast Cancer and their founder and executive director, MJ DeCoteau, in the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to welcome students and an educator from Nile Academy in my community of Humber River–Black Creek. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to the House one of my constituents, Sam Wilson, who is a water treatment operator at the Stelco Nanticoke plant and happens to be the apple of my daughter, Addison's, eye. Welcome to the House, Sam.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My real estate agent, Melyssa Hollister, is up there—she has found me two great apartments since I got elected—as well as my sister-in-law Jilda Lazer, who's here with the Rethink Breast Cancer reception. Also, my parents, Frank and Karen Quinn, are here today. I think they're here to see my sister-in-law more than me.

MEMBERS' SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Nepean has informed me that she has a point of order she'd like to raise.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, thank you very much. I would like to direct all members to the memorandum that has been placed on our desks from Tim McGough, our Sergeant-at-Arms. I want to thank the table staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and, of course, you, Speaker, for following through on my request that the safety of members in this chamber from harassment and intimidation in our members' gallery—be removed by switching the seating arrangements for visitors to our gallery. I commend you for that, I thank you for that, and I think this place will be better off for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate your kind words. Thank you very much.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier about the ongoing RCMP investigation into his government, but we didn't get much of a response. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing did say that the government would assist the RCMP, the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner in their multiple investigations of this government.

If the Premier has nothing to hide and wants to assist the privacy commissioner, then why is he sending government lawyers to block the disclosure of information about

government business that's being conducted on his personal phone?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: As you know, of course, the Premier follows all of the rules as set out by this House and by the government with respect to use of phones and all other things.

At the same time, later on today we will have an opportunity to vote on the fall economic statement. It is a statement that will continue to refocus us on cutting taxes for people, ensuring that the people of the province of Ontario have more homes built for them. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will give some thought to supporting us, because there are some very valuable pieces within that legislation that will continue to move the province forward and ensure affordability for the people of the province of Ontario. I think that is what the people of this province are focused on. I think they're a little less focused on the Premier's cellphone use.

As you know, she and all the people of the province of Ontario can call the Premier any time they like. He has put his number out there. I encourage her to do that if she needs some advice on the voting after the—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, maybe I need to call the Premier's personal cellphone to finally get an answer.

Yesterday, the Toronto Star quoted anonymous government staffers who said the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and his former chief of staff were not the real masterminds behind the sketchy \$8.3-billion greenbelt grab. They said, "Everyone knows" they "were doing what they were told."

To the Premier: Was it the Premier who told them what to do?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Integrity Commissioner already spoke about that.

As I have said, we made a public policy decision which was based on building more homes for the people of the province of Ontario, full stop. That decision was not supported by the people of the province of Ontario because the process did not meet their expectations. But let there be no doubt that we will continue to move forward with building homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

This isn't about who calls the Premier. This isn't about the greenbelt. This is about long-standing NDP ideology against building homes—because if it was any differently, they wouldn't have nominated a candidate in Kitchener who has literally voted against every single housing development in the community. She went as far as to say she couldn't support thousands of affordable homes being built because it was too close to a pickleball court. That is the ideology of the NDP. That's what this is all about, and we won't stand for it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

1040

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I really hope that the Premier will answer this time. I'm going to go back to the Premier.

This government gave preferential treatment to insider greenbelt speculators, enriching them to the tune of \$8.3 billion at the public's expense, without building a single new home. It included the Duffins Rouge farmland, which was supposed to be protected. The Conservatives' scheme undid those protections and made their insider friends \$6.6 billion richer.

The government is already three ministers down. To the Premier: How many ministers will have to take the fall before he fesses up?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Now, that is absolutely, positively incorrect. That is completely incorrect, but facts don't usually matter for the NDP.

But let me tell you about a fact that does matter: In Kitchener, where they had an opportunity, where the councillor who they now have elected to be their candidate in Kitchener had an opportunity to vote to improve and build 1,174 new units downtown, the NDP candidate said no. When it was a 10-storey, 132-unit condo development, the NDP candidate said no. When it was a 532-residential-unit development, the NDP candidate said no; \$600,000 to build affordable homes, the NDP candidate said no; 238 units for downtown, the NDP candidate said no; 211 units for pickleball, no to thousands of people living in Kitchener. That's their star candidate and that's why the people don't trust them.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: The members opposite are looking pretty uncomfortable these days. They're probably wondering who this Premier is going to throw under the bus next.

The question is for the Premier. The people of Ontario see a pattern of preferential treatment for this government. The former Minister of Health, who got the ball rolling so that private companies could profit off of our public health care services, is now a lobbyist for the largest chain of private surgical centres anywhere in the country. A clinic she actually represents is now receiving more funding to provide the same services that are delivered in public hospitals, and that's exactly what we have been warning was going to happen.

So to the Premier: Why is the province paying private, for-profit clinics as much as four times more than public hospitals for the same procedures?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know, colleagues; do you feel uncomfortable?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'm feeling pretty good today, Paul.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I feel pretty good. We're building homes in the province of Ontario. We're building new

hospitals for the people of the province of Ontario. We're building long-term care for the people of Ontario.

Now, I know that the candidate in Kitchener was against GO train expansion because—

Mr. Mike Harris: They were too noisy.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They're too noisy and they start too early.

But I don't know, colleagues; I feel pretty comfortable, and I'm feeling even more comfortable because we're going to pass the fall economic statement for the people of the province of Ontario later on today, and even more comfortable that, because of this Premier, the carbon tax has fallen off the table across the country, not just in Ontario. And do you know who agrees with us? The NDP finally agree with us. It's—

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This is a government that will say absolutely anything to avoid answering the questions of the people of Ontario, a government that is under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

The former Minister of Health would have been responsible for transferring licences for publicly funded surgical services to for-profit clinics. Under her watch, funding for one private, for-profit surgical centre—Don Mills—has quadrupled since 2018, reaching \$5.2 million by 2022-23. The same cataract surgery that costs \$500 in a public hospital costs more than \$1,200 at Don Mills.

To the Premier, and I hope he will answer this question, how is hemorrhaging public funds innovative or cost-effective health care? Tell us.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, what the opposition isn't telling people: that there were 14,000 cataract surgeries off the list of backlogs; that people can see; they can read the books to their grandchildren. That's what they aren't saying. They aren't saying 49,000 hours of MRI and CT/CAT scans last year alone paid by OHIP, not their credit card. What the opposition isn't saying: Since we've been in office, we've hired and registered over 63,000 nurses, 8,000 doctors. Last year alone, 15,000 nurses came on board. We're spending over \$50 billion renovating or building new hospitals right across this province.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They voted against it. They voted against more nurses, more doctors, building more medical universities, building more hospitals. That's what they stand for.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, nurses can't leave the public health system fast enough under this government's watch. Some 2.2 million Ontarians don't have a family practitioner in this province.

Here's what's really going on. Clearpoint is a wholly owned company of Kensington Capital Partner Ltd. That's a private equity firm. They're not health care experts or

medical professionals; they're a for-profit corporation. Their priority is to maximize profits for their shareholders. Their profits come from over-billing patients, from charging unnecessary fees, from cutting costs by compromising quality.

Back to the Premier, why does this government keep prioritizing patient profits over—sorry, private profits over patient care?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for the question. I think the member had it right when she tripped over her wording there. We are prioritizing patients. We are prioritizing patient care. We are clearing the backlog brought about by COVID. We also have a lot more demand, and we are making sure that people have access to surgeries and scans and screens as quickly as possible. That's what the people of Ontario want.

The Don Mills Surgical Unit has been funded since 1960, with licences renewed every two to five years under every political stripe of government. So the NDP renewed, the Liberals renewed and the Conservatives have renewed the licence for that centre. They have been funded the same way, on a procedure basis.

We have also added premiums to clear the backlog brought about by COVID and to get more surgeries done. We're going to continue to make sure patients get care as quickly and efficiently as possible in whatever—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

HOUSING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: The Premier continues to break his government's promise to make municipalities whole for revenue losses due to Bill 23. There was no money to do this in the budget or the recent fall economic statement. The Building Faster Fund won't come close to replacing those lost revenues and is based on shovels in the ground, something municipalities have no control over. Municipalities control approvals; developers control shovels.

The planning system is in chaos, and municipal taxpayers are facing massive tax increases. When will the Premier stop bullying municipalities and finally adopt policies that will actually get more homes built, such as ending exclusionary zoning and investing in non-market housing?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know what the member opposite is talking about, because since this government has been in office, we have seen housing starts increase year after year after year. We're not just seeing it at one

level. We're seeing purpose-built housing also increase to record levels. You know? Because of the policies of this Premier, this caucus, this government on both sides of the House. We're not doing anything against our municipalities; we're working with them. We have said that the Building Faster Fund that was brought in is about incentivizing those communities that could actually get shovels in the ground.

1050

That is what the NDP like, right? They like permits. They like process. They like focus groups. But when it comes to actually delivering, they back off, just like Debbie Chapman in Kitchener. She won't even give a permit, for crying out loud. If it's up to Debbie Chapman in Kitchener, the thousands of homes—do you know why Kitchener won't get BFF? Because people like Debbie Chapman, the NDP star candidate, won't allow shovels in the ground. Stop nominating people like that and we'll get more shovels in the ground. But don't worry, we'll get it done.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: This Premier ignored the vast majority of recommendations from his own Housing Affordability Task Force and instead wasted over a year on municipal power grabs and attacks on the greenbelt and Ontario's farmland. Municipalities are fed up, not only because of the cost this Premier has dumped onto local taxpayers and the preferential treatment for his speculator friends, but also because all this chaos is making it harder for municipalities to get homes built.

Will the Premier compensate municipalities for all revenue losses due to Bill 23 with funding based on housing targets they can actually control? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

I recognize the Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, through you, Mr. Speaker, our task force did a great job. We've implemented over 21 recommendations. But guess what? They based it on 200,000 people.

Just to inform the NDP—I don't know if they've seen it or not—over 800,000 people arrived in our province last year alone, the fastest-growing region in North America, bar none. But what they don't say is how we had the most starts in 2021, 99,566, and in 2022, 96,000.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're pouring money into housing. The Building Faster Fund is \$1.2 billion. I told my colleagues in the US who came up, the senators, congress-people and governors, that we have to pay municipalities to build. They almost fell off their chairs when I told them that—\$1.2 billion, and the smaller rural areas, another \$500 million.

I can guarantee you one thing, Mr. Speaker: We're building those 1.5 million homes as they vote against every single piece of legislation we have.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The NDP and Liberal members in this House are standing by idly as the federal carbon tax continues to hurt businesses and drive up costs for households. Rather than picking up the phone and calling the Prime Minister and his right-hand man, Jagmeet Singh, to scrap the tax, they choose to turn their backs on their constituents.

Unlike them, we will always stand up for the businesses and people of the province of Ontario. That's why, from day one, our government has opposed this terrible carbon tax. Speaker, can the minister please explain how the federal carbon tax is affecting businesses in Ontario? Thank you.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We were here till midnight last night, and I had an opportunity to speak about this very topic. I'll tell what you we said last night. When we travel around the world and talk to businesses, they ask you, "What the heck is this thing called a carbon tax and how much is it going to cost my business?" I can tell you, we have to fight for every single job that we bring here: \$27 billion in new auto in the last three years; \$3 billion in new life sciences in the last year; tens of billions in new tech in the last three years.

Can you imagine, if we did not have to sit there and explain this carbon tax, how much more business would be coming into Ontario? When they hear that number that they have to pay a tax on their fuel, on their goods, on everything they wear, on everything they consume, they realize this is becoming expensive, and that is a deterrent to doing economic development in our province.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the minister for his response. As the minister mentioned, the federal carbon tax is making everything more expensive. The Liberals and the NDP, who still support this tax, are out of touch with businesses and the hard-working people in this province. For them, the carbon tax is driving up costs across the board. It has made it harder for people to heat their homes and harder for them to put food on the table. Businesses are facing skyrocketing energy costs, thanks to the carbon tax.

We hear these concerns day after day after day, and that's why we will not stop until this tax is scrapped. Can the minister please elaborate on how the carbon tax is affecting businesses and families across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The Liberal government have never seen a tax that they don't love. We are here, showing them an example. We have reduced the price of gasoline by 10 cents a litre. They have taken the opposite approach and increased the price of gasoline by 15 cents a litre—on its way to 37 cents a litre. We have shown them lower taxes equals greater jobs in Ontario and across the country. We've lowered the cost of doing business by \$8 billion, and 700,000 men and women go to work today who didn't

go to work five years ago. That's exactly what happens when you lower costs, when you lower taxes, when you lower the price of gas. You get the economy moving. But we have this brick wall that we hit, as they increased the price of gas 15 cents—going to increase it to 37 cents.

We need them to drop the carbon tax.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Last week, two Toronto pharmacies declared publicly that they are no longer administering vaccines due to major problems with the province's new vaccine distributor. Do you know who that is, Speaker? Shoppers Drug Mart, the Loblaws chain of pharmacies. Those pharmacists reported receiving only 10% of their orders, having to cancel days of pre-booked appointments—a real headache.

Does the Premier see a conflict of interest in having Shoppers Drug Mart responsible for distributing vaccines to their competitors?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We are using the Shoppers Drug Mart vaccine distribution system because it is a system that is everywhere in Ontario, making sure we get vaccines to people across the province in a timely way. This is the same system we were using during COVID, and it was very successful in getting vaccines everywhere.

It's always up to the pharmacy whether they want to opt in or opt out of providing those vaccines. Sometimes pharmacies also don't order the number of vaccines that they end up needing to deliver to their population. They can adjust what their order is and get more vaccines.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, complaints against Shoppers Drug Mart's distribution of vaccines are coming from every part of the province. A pharmacist in northern Ontario reached out to me and told me that last year she was alone, so she only administered a limited number of vaccines. This year, she was able to recruit three new pharmacists to come and help her. She's got vaccine clinics booked solid for weeks on end, but no vaccines, as the distributor will only give her a percentage of what she used last year.

Speaker, public health handled vaccine distribution in Ontario for decades with no issues. They knew, they listened to the local providers. They were reliable. Does the Premier understand that handing over the distribution of vaccines to their friends at Loblaws is having drastic consequences for the health of Ontarians?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Does the opposition realize it's a new vaccine? If I could go to the factory and get all the vaccines we could for everyone in North America, I'd do it, but it doesn't work that way.

The largest distributors in the province and in the entire country are the 4,000 pharmacies which—Shoppers Drug Mart has the best distribution centre anywhere in the country. That's the reason, during the pandemic, we involved the pharmacies, and we set records around the world.

We're vaccinating over 100,000 people a day, thanks to the great partners in the pharmacies. It's convenient care close to home. That's what it's all about.

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TAXATION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. We've spent a lot of time talking about the carbon tax since the federal Liberal government announced they would be exempting only a very small percentage of Canadians from the tax, leaving Ontario out in the cold. One of the consistent themes of this debate is that there are better ways to pursue climate targets without jeopardizing affordability for hard-working families and individuals. Unfortunately, the federal government seems unwilling to listen to the feedback from the provinces.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please share his views regarding the negative impact that the carbon tax and other reckless energy policies are having on all Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, thanks for the question. When the Ontario Liberal Party was in power here in Ontario, we saw them make so many mistakes on the energy file. Admittedly, after the fact, they announced that, "Yes, we were wrong in making so many of these choices, driving up the cost of electricity in the province and driving up the cost of fuel." And we're watching in real time as their federal counterparts, the federal Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau, are doing the exact same thing.

First, with the carbon tax: We warned them that it was going to drive up the cost of everything, Mr. Speaker, and the Bank of Canada now confirms that that is the fact. We're seeing inflation rise and we're seeing the cost of everything rise. Now, we're worried that the next shoe to drop from the federal Liberal government is on the way. It's called the Clean Electricity Regulations. It is going to make our electricity across not just Ontario, but across the country more expensive and less stable.

I look to give you some more details on the Clean Electricity Regulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, through you, thank you to the minister for his answer.

It is very concerning to hear from the minister about potentially more damaging energy regulations that are under consideration by the federal government. I know that my constituents in Carleton are already concerned about the negative impact that the carbon tax is having on their

household budgets. The carbon tax is making their lives more unaffordable as it drives up the price of fuel, groceries and goods and services.

They are also concerned to see that the federal government is only looking out for certain provinces and leaving others out in the cold. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on the negative impact of additional energy regulations on Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much to the member from Carleton. Federal Minister Steven Guilbeault has shared draft regulations that are rigid, and they ignore the need for flexibility that's being asked for by provinces and territories and our electricity system operators based on their real-world experience. Here in Ontario, our Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, has told my ministry that these draft regulations would slow the electrification of our economy by compromising the reliability and affordability of our electricity system here.

Like with the carbon tax, the federal government is on the verge of making a costly and short-sighted mistake because they won't listen to their provincial counterparts and, more importantly, they won't listen to those who operate the systems. We hope that the federal government will work with us so that we can build a 100% clean grid while supporting reliability and protecting ratepayers. Mr. Speaker, if the federal government won't listen to those who operate our electricity systems, we're in for more big problems in our country and in our province.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Jill Andrew: Recently, it was announced by government agency Metrolinx that staff must meet a monthly quota for fare evasion tickets. Evidence-based research points to the harm fare quotas have so long as systemic barriers remain in place that disproportionately impact people with disabilities, mental health challenges, low income, the unhoused and BIPOC folks—folks who experience more "differential treatment" from authority due to outright discrimination and "unconscious bias."

For instance, Sam, a racialized constituent, years back was fined 240 bucks for fare evasion simply because their Presto card didn't work—a system malfunction that's happened to me too, Speaker. She wasn't believed, and the question is, why?

My question to the Premier: Why is this government implementing fare evasion quotas that may additionally harm communities, certain ones more than others, especially during an affordability crisis, instead of boosting revenue by properly funding transit to improve service and ridership?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The associate minister.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Affordability is the number one issue at the moment across the nation. In our province, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, we are making life more affordable by eliminating double fares, triple fares and making it one fare. This one-fare program will save riders \$1,600 every year per rider. The great news is our government is fully funding this program. And guess

what, Mr. Speaker? The Liberals and NDP voted against this bill, against this one, not just once; they have voted against it twice.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: These fare quotas are Metrolinx's—frankly, this government's—ploy to fill funding gaps that they themselves are responsible for. Instead, they're penalizing riders while Metrolinx has a one-million-dollar man at its helm, 59 VPs and 19 C-suite executives. That's where you find the money to help folks in St. Paul's and across the province travel.

This is also while Metrolinx's Eglinton Crosstown is three years delayed and billions of dollars over budget. Many communities across Ontario, including mine, have been left stranded when it comes to transit infrastructure. Fixing that should be the priority of this government, not propping up discriminatory practices on the backs of folks who feel it the most.

My question is back to the Premier, if he'd actually answer his own questions: Will you put an end to problematic fare-evasion quotas and put your focus on making sure Metrolinx finishes what they started so our communities can actually travel from point A to B?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, students, seniors, adults: They have asked for more affordability when it comes to transit, and that's exactly what our government is delivering under the leadership of Premier Ford. The one-fare program applies to the GTHA, whether riders are coming from Barrie Transit, Brampton Transit, Burlington, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Durham region, Grand River, Guelph, Hamilton, Milton, Mississauga, Oakville or York region. All the transit riders, starting early 2024, will save \$1,600. Our government is fully funding that, and we are on track to deliver this. The people can use this \$1,600 toward their families, toward their kids and toward their futures.

We will continue to build transit across the GTHA. We will continue to build the Northlander—that the Liberals cancelled—and we will make sure we'll bring the Northlander by 2026.

COST OF LIVING

COÛT DE LA VIE

Mr. Stephen Blais: Good morning. My question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is in the midst of an affordability crisis, and this government has had five years to act. Despite that, grocery prices are up, hydro prices are up, mortgage payments and rents are up, transit prices are up. After five years, Ontarians are asking themselves, "Are we better off?" This government has the power to act. The Premier has the power to act.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier support the elimination of the HST from home heating and get it done before Christmas?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Premier can reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Am I actually hearing this correctly coming from the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, who actually bankrupted this province, closed 600 schools, fired thousands of nurses, built 600 homes in long-term care—when we're on our way to 30,000—in 15 years, had the largest sub-sovereign debt in the entire world, the highest hydro rates in the entire world?

Interjection.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: The nerve. What we're doing: We're doing the opposite. We've never raised a tax on the people of Ontario. We reduced taxes. We got rid of the licence registration tax. We got rid of the tolls on the 412 and 418. We reduced the gas tax by 10.7 cents, and we gave a tax break to the lowest-income people in Ontario: 1.1 million people.

All they know how to do is raise taxes over and over again. We're cleaning up their mess of 15 years.

Interjection.

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

Supplementary question.

M. Stephen Blais: L'Ontario est en crise d'abordabilité. Le gouvernement a eu cinq ans pour améliorer la qualité de vie des familles ontariennes, mais des familles sont laissées de côté. Les prix des épiceries sont beaucoup plus chers. Le prix de l'électricité est beaucoup plus cher. Les paiements hypothécaires : beaucoup plus chers. Les prix des transports en commun : beaucoup plus chers. Cinq ans plus tard, les Ontariens se demandent si leur situation s'est améliorée.

1110

Le gouvernement a le pouvoir de prendre action. Le premier ministre appuie-t-il l'élimination de la TVH sur le chauffage domestique? Est-ce qu'il va offrir ce changement avant Noël pour aider les familles ontariennes?

Hon. Doug Ford: Do you know what was more expensive under their administration for 15 years? Ask the 300,000 people that lost their jobs under their administration. Then talk to the 700,000 people that can put food on their table now and that have great employment. Hundreds of thousands more people will be employed by the end of our mandate.

We've seen businesses invest unprecedented amounts in Ontario, more than anywhere in the North America. We're actually leading North America in job creation and economic development. Just two months ago we created more jobs in Ontario than all 50 states combined.

That's what they need to do. They need to get on track and make sure that they cut the carbon tax and start voting with us instead of against us—because you created the mess.

Interjections.

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

I'm going to ask the member for Ottawa South to come to order and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to come to order.

Are we ready to start again? Let's start the clock.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The carbon tax hurts our economy and raises the price on everything, from filling up our cars to heating our homes in the winter. Putting a carbon tax that raises the price of gasoline hurts our businesses and negatively impacts our economy. It hurts our farmers, entrepreneurs, businesses, families and individuals.

A month ago, the Bank of Canada reported that the federal carbon tax was responsible for a mere 0.15% increase in inflation, but now the figures have changed. The governor of the Bank of Canada now says that the correct impact of the carbon tax is actually four times higher.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how this regressive tax creates economic hardship for all Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Oakville and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member for that great question. Our government knows that Ontarians are worried about making ends meet during these difficult times. We know that now is not the time for a punitive and costly tax that makes life more unaffordable for the people of Ontario and the people across this country.

I'm of course referring to the federal carbon tax. This tax is, as the member pointed out, driving up inflation and making all areas of life more expensive. It is making it more expensive to drive to the store to get food for your family, and once you arrive it's making the food at that store more expensive.

This is why our government continues to urge the federal government to do the right thing and eliminate this regressive carbon tax. I wish the members opposite would join us in requesting that the federal government cancel this tax now.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member from Oakville—the parliamentary assistant—and the Minister of Finance for their dedicated work.

The last thing that Ontarians need is another tax. Unfortunately, the carbon tax is just that. It's another tax that essential drives up the prices of everything. We know that the carbon tax is doing nothing more than making life more expensive for people in our province and across this country. We need all members of the Legislature to fight for Ontario's interests and call on the federal government to treat Ontario with respect when it comes to providing an exemption for the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please elaborate on how the federal government's carbon pricing policy negatively impacts all Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Oakville, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Great question from the member opposite. The member is correct in saying this is a serious issue affecting all Ontarians and Canadians, and I agree—as you mentioned as well—that the Bank of Canada does not fully address the negative effects of this tax. Even the readjusted calculation by the Bank of Canada considered only the direct impact of the carbon tax on three specific products: gasoline, heating oil and natural gas.

The federal government is failing to recognize that the rising cost of consumer goods will quickly become unsustainable.

Our government opposed the carbon tax from the start, and we will oppose this useless tax until it is finally removed.

There are two approaches to take in this particular issue, Speaker: Either you cut taxes, like we've done with the gas tax, or you increase taxes like the federal government has done. We ask the members opposite to pick a side. Thank you, Speaker.

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

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Under this government's watch, we saw a public university go bankrupt, and now we have a new report highlighting the widespread financial fragility of the sector. The report has confirmed that this government provides the lowest per-student funding in the country for our colleges and universities. Compared to the rest of Canada, Ontario's per-student funding is just 44% for college students and 57% for university students.

Speaker, will this government commit today to bringing Ontario's per student funding in line with other Canadian provinces?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. I am excited to say that, after months of hard work, the blue-ribbon panel report was released yesterday, and I want to thank the members of the panel for their diligent work and also thank Dr. Alan Harrison for his leadership.

As we review the report and begin to develop and implement solutions for the future of the sector, know that our top priority is and has always been students. But we also know the value of an education in Ontario, which is why when a student enrolls in any of our colleges and universities, they know the education they will receive is strong and among the best in the world.

Over the coming weeks we will be focused on addressing the financial sustainability, institutional accountability and how we, as a collective, can support our students today and into the future. My job is to ensure that post-secondary is sustainable for years to come, so that young folks like those in the crowd today have post-secondary in the future.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Under this government, provincial grants now account for just 30% of university operating revenues, which is failing students and putting the sector at serious risk. The University of Waterloo will end this year with a \$15-million operating budget deficit. Queen's University has announced a deficit of \$63 million; Wilfred Laurier, \$11 million. The University of Guelph has reported budget deficits for three consecutive years.

Deficits mean program cuts and hiring freezes, hurting students and undermining the quality of university education. When will this government increase post-secondary education operating funding to prevent more universities from falling into deficit or even bankruptcy?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The long-term financial sustainability of our post-secondary institutions is a top priority moving forward. But as I mentioned before, the sustainability and viability of our sector is a shared responsibility. I have been clear that institutions will also need to review their spending and operating practices for any increase in funding to be considered. When our government invests over \$5 billion annually of taxpayer dollars in operating funds for our colleges and universities, we need to ensure that that money is being spent wisely. That doesn't account for the billions in tuition, including over a billion through OSAP that students and their families spend on education every year.

As we review the report, we'll be sure to review all recommendations holistically to ensure the path forward reflects the collective respectively.

TAXATION

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: This government knows things that it won't tell the people of Ontario. They know that the vast majority of Ontario households are better off with a carbon price. Not only will it help—

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Stop the clock. The government side will come to order so that I can hear the member who rightly and duly has the floor. Order.

Restart the clock. The member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: This government knows that the vast majority of Ontario households are actually better off with a price on carbon. Not only does it keep our world habitable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I gather there's a difference of opinion in the House on the matter that's being raised, but the member has every right to ask the question without being drowned out by the government side. If it persists, I'll start calling you out by name.

Interjection.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Restart the clock.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: They know that the vast majority of households in Ontario are better off with a price on carbon. Not only will it keep our world habitable, but with a climate action rebate, it actually means more money in their pockets.

This government knows that 270,000 households in Ontario use heating oil and that they are eligible for the climate price exemption. This government knows that the oil and gas industries made record profits last year: 18 cents of additional profit on every litre of gas. The carbon price was two cents.

This government knows that they have the power to do something rather than just point fingers. We put forward an amendment to motion 74 to cut HST on home heating. The government rejected it. When will the Premier tell the people of Ontario the truth?

Interjections.

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

I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary comment at the end of her question.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: With all due respect to the member for Kanata–Carleton, when I was out there door-knocking—and granted, I congratulate you, you won by 600 votes in a by-election, and God bless her—I didn't hear her ever say when she was door-knocking that the carbon tax is good. Never heard that once.

But I will do you a favour. I will call your riding, right across the board, and say you believe in the carbon tax. You believe in the 15 cents additional on a litre of gas. You believe that—the clothes that these students are wearing have gone up because of the carbon tax. The food they're eating is because of the carbon tax. Everything that moves is based on the carbon tax. It is killing this country. It is killing this province. It is making it unaffordable. That's the reason why every single Premier two weeks ago agreed to kill the carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, first of all, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair. And I'll remind the independent members not to shout down the minister who's trying to answer the question that's been put.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Restart the clock. The supplementary question.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: We put forward an amendment to motion 70 to cut HST on home heating fuel and the government rejected it. They will take endless hours to point fingers at other levels of government when they actually have tools to help the people of Ontario today. Why won't this government do what is within their power to actually improve affordability for the people of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable what we're hearing this morning from the Liberal Party of Ontario. The Liberal Party of Ontario, at every opportunity, has voted in support of a carbon tax, a provincial carbon tax and a federal carbon tax that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said is costing families in Ontario and Canada more. The Bank of Canada—it's unbelievable.

Interjections.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's a comedy show over here from the Liberals today, especially the front bench. It's like the Muppet Show. It's Statler and Waldorf over here.

It is unbelievable that they are trying to fool the people of Ontario into believing that they want to see the carbon tax reduced, when at every opportunity they voted for it to go higher. It's on its way from 14 cents a litre on gasoline to almost 38 cents a litre on gasoline by the end of the month. It's costing every Ontarian more now than before, and it's only going to get worse.

TAXATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is to the Minister of Energy.

In northern Ontario, temperatures drop to negative 30 in the wintertime. I know; I've worked in some of our most northern-most communities. Unfortunately, many people in our rural, remote and northern communities are limited in their options when it comes to home heating. It's unfair that this regressive carbon tax should punish them for the fuel they need to survive. Sadly, because of the actions taken by the federal Liberal government, we've seen how this carbon tax is creating two classes of Canadians: those who pay the carbon tax and those who don't have to.

Can the minister please explain the impact of the carbon tax on the people of our rural, northern and remote communities?

Hon. Todd Smith: There's a common-sense member right there, from down in southwestern Ontario, asking a question because he understands how much the carbon tax is hurting people across Ontario, where the Ontario Liberal member, moments ago, just said to this House that the carbon tax is good for the people of Ontario: "It's good for the people of Ontario, and they're making money because of the carbon tax."

It's absolutely ludicrous. We all know that the carbon tax is hurting the people of Canada. That's why the federal government has adjusted their position on the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. Talk to any farmer in this province. Talk to the people in northern Ontario.

If these shrinking Liberals over here—and they're down to, what, nine now?—keep up this kind of talk, they're not going to have party status in the Legislature anymore. They're not even going to have a party in the Legislature. It's time for Liberals across the country to wake up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm once again going to ask the independent members to come to order.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the minister for your work and for that answer.

Over the last few weeks, it's been very disappointing to see that even as we fight to make life more affordable, the independent Liberals and opposition NDP still support the carbon tax.

While the opposition members have no problem supporting this harmful tax, the additional financial burden it places on our farmers is unacceptable. The reality is, the federal carbon tax is producing disastrous results that are hurting our farmers and our consumers across the province. Unfortunately, our province's farmers are encountering soaring energy costs because of this very regressive and harmful tax.

Can the minister please elaborate on the effects of the carbon tax on our agricultural sector?

Hon. Todd Smith: Again, thank you to the member from down in southwestern Ontario for the work that he's doing to ensure that life is more affordable for the people of Ontario. The same cannot be said about the Ontario Liberal caucus and the federal Liberal caucus. That's why we're urging the federal Liberals to do what they did in Atlantic Canada and remove the carbon tax from home heating for residents of Ontario and residents right across the country.

The specific question was about farming and the effect on agriculture. Obviously, the price of carbon is increasing the cost of diesel for the tractors. It's increasing the cost of gasoline for the trucks that take the products to the grocery stores and the processing facilities. It has increased the cost for the grain dryers, and the propane and gas that are used in that process. Mr. Speaker, it's driving up the cost of everything, but these Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister will take his seat. The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Health.

In my riding of Waterloo, a 66-year-old constituent received a letter that it was time for her mammogram appointment by December 15, through the Ontario Breast Screening Program. She called Freeport hospital. They could only offer her an appointment on June 7. That's six months later—a six-month delay to access screening that this government has acknowledged, in its own fall economic statement, "can save lives," "can mean less invasive treatment and better outcomes." The receptionist suggested that she call Cambridge and that perhaps they could get her in. She's shopping around for a mammogram in

Kitchener–Waterloo. Unfortunately, Cambridge told her that they actually can't make these kinds of appointments for people who are already receiving mammograms at a different location—even if it's six months late.

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Can you please explain why Kitchener-Waterloo residents are not able to access breast cancer prevention care in their own community?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

I don't know the particulars of this particular case. I would be very happy to meet with the member afterwards and discuss the issue and see if there's something that can be done to make sure that this patient gets breast cancer screening in a timely way and in a convenient place. I have no information about exactly why she couldn't get it in her community.

As you know, we recently announced an expansion of breast cancer screening, for self-referral, for women 40 to 50 years of age, which is a huge advancement in breast cancer screening. We want to make sure that women are screened appropriately and get treatment when they need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an interesting answer. You need to resource these programs, because the announcements don't actually do the work; it's the people in the system who do the work.

Women aged 40 to 50 were always able to get mammograms with a referral. The real problem is that the existing sites are already booked months in advance. You can resource and address this delay, but so far, you've refused to do so.

This government stresses the importance of early detection and prevention while at the same time making no efforts to reduce our existing health care backlog.

We learned that 11,000 Ontarians have died while waiting for surgeries, MRIs and CT scans in the past year. That is your record. This government is only growing that number by forcing women to wait for life-saving mammograms.

To the parliamentary assistant: How will this government address the six-month wait-list for mammograms that women are being forced to accept? People will pay with their lives if they don't get those services.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you again to the member opposite.

The member opposite should know that the Ontario breast cancer screening program screens 700,000 every year, and it's offered at 241 sites across the province.

This government doesn't make announcements without resourcing them, so we're going to make sure—

Interjections.

Mrs. Robin Martin: —that people have the screens that they need. That is what our announcement was about. We're going to make sure that people get screening when and where they need it and that they can self-refer when

they are worried about having a breast cancer screen at the age of 40. I think that was a huge and important announcement, welcomed by the community.

We're going to make sure that we protect women's health in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the official opposition not to shout down the member who's responding to the question.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Since the implementation of the federal carbon tax, the people of Ontario have been paying more every single day for food, for services, and for transportation. They've even been forced to pay more for the fuel in their cars. The federal carbon tax makes life more expensive for millions of people in Ontario. Business owners in my riding of Essex have told me that Liberal politicians and NDP politicians who support the carbon tax are out of touch with reality. It's making it more costly to do business, and businesses have to transfer that cost on to their customers.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation please explain the negative impact that the federal carbon tax is having on people in Ontario?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member from Essex for his outstanding work and for his continuing advocacy.

We have been saying it from day one: The federal carbon tax is hurting Ontario's economy. It's only making it harder for businesses to keep their costs down and make life more expensive for families. We warned the government years ago. When you add a tax to farmers growing our food or to truckers who deliver our food, it's no surprise that grocery prices will go up.

While Canadian families and businesses struggle with the rising costs of "justinflation," now is not the time for another increase of the carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, I urge the federal government: Do the right thing. Support Ontario's families and businesses and scrap your carbon tax.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that response.

Every day, the hard-working people in the trucking industry deliver the goods that we rely on. Whether it's keeping our hospitals equipped with supplies that are needed or keeping the shelves stocked in our grocery store, our truckers are essential. High gas prices caused by the federal carbon tax are making it harder for truckers to do their job.

The federal government has increased the carbon tax on gasoline so far five times, and they're planning on doing it seven more times in the next seven years. This is wrong, and it's unfair, and it's going to hurt hard-working families across Ontario and in Essex county.

Speaker, can the Associate Minister of Transportation please explain the impact that the federal carbon tax is having on Ontario's trucking industry?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: The member from Essex is exactly correct: The carbon tax makes it harder for our truckers to deliver the goods we need. And don't just take my word for it, Mr. Speaker: According to the Ontario Trucking Association, on average, the carbon tax raises the cost of deliveries by approximately 6%. This is hurting small, mid-size and large fleets alike. A small business owner with five trucks is seeing between \$75,000 to \$100,000 in extra costs associated with the carbon tax.

The Prime Minister said the purpose of the carbon tax was to shift Canadians to other options. When it comes to trucking, there are no other options.

The carbon tax doesn't reduce carbon emissions; it only makes the cost of transporting goods, transporting our food more expensive. Let's work—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Education. Due to a shortage of early childhood educators, the High Park YMCA, in my riding, is being forced to suspend its infant care program starting in January. This has left many families scrambling for alternatives on very short notice. The staffing crisis in the childhood sector, driven by low wages, is a problem this government has been warned about for years. Now, we're seeing exactly what we feared would happen: desperately needed affordable child care spaces closing.

Speaker, families in High Park want to know: What actions will the minister take to ensure that the infant program at High Park YMCA can continue?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I think we both share an interest in expanding affordable child care in this province. We also both know that after 15 years of Liberals, where child care rose by over 400%, we left so many working parents behind. I'm proud that under our Premier's leadership we have cut child care fees by 50% for families in High Park and right across Ontario, with a commitment to build 86,000 more spaces.

Today, I'm going to be joining the parliamentary assistant, the Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity and others to announce another step forward to support the workforce, to shore up the critical ECEs who make a difference in our schools and to further respect them by increasing support to retain and recruit more of them, because we're going to need more workers as we create more spaces and as we continue to cut fees for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Across the province, we are hearing of closures, of enrolment being limited because programs cannot retain qualified educators. Ontario is one

of only four provinces that still has not introduced a salary scale as part of the \$10-a-day child care program. Without it, we will be in the child care crisis we've endured for years, with more program closures and more families scrambling.

The minister talks about respecting child care workers. Child care workers need respect; you're absolutely correct. But they want to know when this government will finally address the root of this crisis and implement the salary scale that they've been asking for, starting at \$30 an hour for registered ECEs and \$25 an hour for all other child care workers in the sector, so you can actually fill the spaces that you're building with workers and respect them with the wages they deserve.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: When we talk about the concept of respect, we have to remind ourselves that New Democrats urged the government to sign a deal with the federal government that would have left 70,000 parents out of the deal because you didn't want to respect parents who had their kids in for-profit child care. We want to talk about respect? This is a party that systematically voted against reductions in child care fees as we historically cut fees, saving families \$8,000 to \$12,000 per year.

Members opposite can point their fingers. They should look in the mirror, stand up for choice, stand up for the rights of parents to make the best decision for their kids and stand with Ontario as we deliver a better deal, billions of dollars more in funding and, yes, more flexibility so that all parents could benefit from affordable child care in this province.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Orléans has given notice of his dissatisfaction to the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the removal of HST from home heating. This matter will be debated on Tuesday, November 21, following private members' public business.

I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Perfect timing. Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice to call on the federal government to remove the federal portion of the HST and carbon tax from home heating.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice to call on the federal government to remove the federal portion of the HST and carbon tax from home heating. Agreed? I heard a no.

Same point of order? Another point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm uncertain that the Liberal members heard the point, so maybe they—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Not a valid point of order.

Interjections.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

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

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

On November 14, 2023, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved second reading of Bill 146, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

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

1150

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no. I'll look to a minister for committee referral.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

TAXATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Orléans has a point of order.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to introduce a motion that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada, in conjunction with the government of Ontario, remove the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada, in conjunction with the government of Ontario, remove the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Blais has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada, in conjunction with the government of Ontario, remove the harmonized sales tax on fuels and inputs for home heating.

Further debate? I'll recognize first the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, we are facing an affordability crisis in our province that has been ongoing for some time. Families are having difficulty paying their bills. We've seen rents go up dramatically. We've seen mortgage rates and mortgage payments go up dramatically. We've seen the cost of buying groceries to feed your family go up dramatically. We've seen utility bills, like electricity, which is regulated by the province of Ontario, go up. As a result, families across the province are having trouble paying their bills. Families are being forced to make decisions about whether they serve their kids breakfast in the morning before they go to school or whether they pay the rent. They're having to make decisions about whether they can put their kids in extracurricular activities—all because of the affordability crisis.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael
Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Pirie, George
Babikian, Aris	Ghamari, Goldie	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Gill, Parm	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Begum, Doly	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Bell, Jessica	Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bowman, Stephanie	Hogarth, Christine	Sattler, Peggy
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Holland, Kevin	Saunderson, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Schreiner, Mike
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Shaw, Sandy
Clark, Steve	Karpoche, Bhutilla	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Ke, Vincent	Smith, David
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Todd
Dixon, Jess	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Stiles, Marit
Dowie, Andrew	Leardi, Anthony	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Lecce, Stephen	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Jill	MacLeod, Lisa	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Mamakwa, Sol	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fife, Catherine	Martin, Robin	Vanthof, John
Flack, Rob	McCarthy, Todd J.	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Doug	McCrimmon, Karen	West, Jamie
Ford, Michael D.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fraser, John	Mulroney, Caroline	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Pang, Billy	

While the government of Ontario is committed to writing letters to the federal government, they have failed repeatedly to take actions that are within their purview to support Ontarians. The government of Ontario could introduce legislation to remove the provincial portion of the HST from home heating. They could go one further: In addition to that legislation, they could work co-operatively with the federal government to remove the entirety of HST from home heating. This would provide direct and transparent relief to families each and every month.

It's fine to talk about a tax that is very difficult to see. For sure, the carbon tax has had an impact on families, affordability and on prices, but you can't see it. You can't see it every day, even though it's there. HST on your natural gas bill, HST on propane delivery, HST on your electricity bill, if that's how you choose to heat your home, is something that you see every month when the bill comes in. And if we can provide relief to families—\$15, \$20, \$25 a month, in a way they can see—over the course of a year, that could be the difference between paying for soccer next spring or not. It could be the difference between feeding your kids before they go to school or not. It will make a real and observable and transparent difference in the lives of all Ontarians.

And this is action that the government of Ontario can take directly. They can introduce a law; they can pass a law. They've just done it. They did it with HST on new rental construction. They can do it for home heating as well, Mr. Speaker.

And so, in an affordability crisis, when families are having difficulty paying the bills, when they're having to make hard choices between food or their rent or paying for a utility bill or putting their kids into hockey or soccer or other extracurricular activities, this is something that this government can do immediately to provide direct relief to families.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge everyone in this House to take off their ideological blinders, see the entire picture. Take the action that you were elected to take, to do the job you were elected to do. Get it done. We can provide relief to families right away, before Christmas.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this because moments before that motion, the Liberals blocked the very same motion of this House, right? And, last week, it was the very same Liberals who voted against removing the carbon tax on groceries. It was those Liberals. It was those Liberals who put a carbon tax on the people of the province of Ontario in the first place. When we worked with, ironically enough, the opposition to remove costs on the people of Ontario for heating and fuel, it was the Liberals who stood in the way. And now, like classic Liberals, they know they're caught offside with Ontarians and Canadians, and they want to try to make people believe that they actually care about them.

This is a party that has the opportunity to call the federal Prime Minister—a Liberal Prime Minister—not just today, but for the last number of years, and say, "Remove a tax

from the people of the province of Ontario." This is a member and a party that, when we took the carbon tax to court—Speaker, we took the carbon tax to court, along with our partners in other provinces, because we said it would cost the people of Ontario, the people of Canada, billions of dollars. It was that Liberal Party that stood in the way. Do you know what they said? They said that we were crazy to believe that the carbon tax would have that type of an impact on the people of the province of Ontario. **1200**

I say to the member—he talks about a motion—I say to the member: Pick up the phone, call your federal colleagues, and tell them to remove the carbon tax first. Tell them to remove the carbon tax.

The member knows full well that the provincial government can't remove the harmonized sales tax. We actually don't have the authority to do that. Do you know who does have the authority to do that? The Liberals. That's who has the authority to do it. This member knows full well that if we wanted to remove the harmonized sales tax from heating and fuel that it would have to come from the federal Liberal government. This government here—

Mr. Stephen Blais: You just passed a bill about housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: He's screaming out: "You just passed a law." We passed a law with respect to purpose-built rentals that—we tried for one year to have the tax on purpose-built rentals and harmonize sales tax on purpose-built rentals removed. For one year we asked the federal government to remove the harmonized sales tax on purpose-built rentals. You know who didn't say a word? That group of Liberal MPPs, not one word. The 70 federal Liberal members of Parliament who sit in Ottawa didn't say a word. This is so ironic: Two of the parties in this House—well, actually, the two parties in this House wanted to remove the tax on purpose-built rentals. We fought for it. We shamed the federal government into doing that. Do you know who didn't say a word? This group of Liberal members of Parliament. Do you know who has the authority to do it? The federal Liberal government has the authority to do it.

So I say to the member opposite, if you want to pass this motion, the motion that you literally just rejected, you need to call the federal Prime Minister, the federal finance minister—the federal finance minister whose riding this is, if I'm not mistaken. This is the riding. That Parliament is not in session. I suggest the member leave the chamber for a bit, call the federal member of Parliament for his riding, the finance minister, and ask the federal finance minister to remove the harmonized sales tax from heating, because we will do the exact same thing because that's what Progressive Conservatives do. But you don't want to talk about that, right? Gimmick after gimmick after gimmick. We'll not only remove the carbon tax, we'll remove the harmonized sales tax, because that is what we have been talking about for years.

This is a Liberal Party that doesn't believe in any of this. There's nobody who believes that they actually want the harmonized sales tax. You just saw what happened. He thought we were going to say no. It's all just a game for

them. They say no. We bring forward a motion; they say, “No, we don’t really want it.” Then, they get up, they think they’re being all funny and cute, bring a motion forward, and then, their full-on expectation is that we’re going to say no, but, then, we call them out and say, “Yes. What’s the next step?” Well, the next step for us is—we’ve made it clear, provincial Premiers have made clear: Take the carbon tax off. Do you want to go further? Take the harmonized sales tax off. Call the federal finance minister and ask her to do it. She has a fall economic statement next week.

Next week, the federal government will be outlining their priorities for the people of Canada. The federal finance minister, next week, can pass the motion that I just brought to this House to have, first, the federal government remove the HST from home heating fuels. Do you know what the federal minister can also do? She can also say, “I’m removing the carbon tax.” We can do something really, really important for the people of the province of Ontario, and really for all Canadians.

But I bet you they are not going to do it, right? It’s because of the pressure that we have constantly put on, day after day. You’ve heard the Minister of Energy, every single day, answer questions from colleagues in this House, calling on the federal government to remove the carbon tax—day after day. Day after day, for over a week now, every single question from members of the Progressive Conservative caucus has been based on removing the carbon tax. They get all frustrated about it, right? The Liberals get all frustrated about it. I’m not going to attack the NDP, because they, for once, saw that we had to do something. They might not necessarily believe that we need to—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know that the NDP probably value a carbon tax, right? I get it. We don’t. We think it will cost everybody—not “we think”; we know now that it costs everybody massive amounts. It has been proven. The federal budget officer has proven it. The Bank of Canada has admitted that it is costing families. We have the Liberal member from Kanata-Carleton saying that it doesn’t, when everybody else says it does, and that the carbon tax is good.

So let’s go that extra step further. You want to remove the HST? Great. Are any of my colleagues here against removing HST from home-heating fuel? No, because do you know what? You all said yes when we brought a motion forward to do it. Most of this House also said yes when we brought forward another motion to remove it from the carbon tax. Do you know who’s against that? The Liberals are against that. The NDP are in favour of it. Progressive Conservatives are in favour of it. Liberals are opposed to it.

And again, there is one person in this country—one person—we can pass this motion right now, and I hope we will, but even when we pass the motion, do you know what happens tomorrow? Nothing. Do you know why? Because there’s only one person who can actually make this happen, and that is the finance minister of Canada, the federal

Liberal member of Parliament for this riding. That federal finance minister, next Thursday, can do this.

Now, we have been calling for this. To my understanding, as well, the NDP have also been calling for this federally, if I’m not mistaken. I know that federally, the NDP and the Conservatives in Ottawa have been calling on the federal government to do this very same thing for literally years. And at no time has this group of Liberals ever stood in this place and asked a question to do that, not once. In fact, they go the opposite direction.

So today, in a desperate, blatant move to distract from the carbon tax chaos that they have created, pitting one region against the other, they then tried to seek a motion after the House just literally dealt with it. We brought a motion forward at the conclusion of question period to call on the federal government to remove the portion of HST and carbon tax from home heating. The Liberals denied unanimous consent.

Then, the very same member pops up and delivers the same motion, thinking, “I’ve got them. There’s no way they’re going to do this. They’re going to say no, and then I can leave the chamber. Woohoo, I’ve done a good job and I can blame them.”

But do you know what? When it comes to cutting taxes and reducing fees for the people of the province of Ontario, every single time, Progressive Conservatives are going to say yes—every single time. Do you want to debate this until midnight? We will be here until midnight, like we were last night. We will be here until midnight on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and every single day until December 14, fighting for the people of the province of Ontario to reduce their fees, to eliminate the carbon tax.

And do you know who won’t be? Do you know who will never get up and ask a question? Do you know who will never get up and give a speech? It’ll be the Liberals. They had hours last night to debate this—hours—but they’re the party of gimmickry and stupidity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to caution the member on the intemperate language that he’s using—and to conclude his remarks.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I’ll withdraw, because you’re right. You’re right, and everybody’s right. You know, Speaker, you’re right: It’s not stupidity; it is a deliberate attempt to confuse people, because that is what Liberals are all about. They don’t care about affordability for people, because if he did, if the Liberals did, they wouldn’t be putting a motion like this now. They wouldn’t have doubled—what was the cost of the plans that they brought in on hydro? We’ve talked about this a million times: You had to heat or eat.

We absolutely stopped that when we got elected in 2018. Do you know who has brought that back? A federal Liberal government, with a carbon tax that nobody can afford. And now we have a federal environment minister who threatened his own Prime Minister: if you do anything else to put more money in the pockets of the people of Canada, he will quit.

1210

That's where the Liberals are right now. Imagine this: You have a radical environment minister in Ottawa who is threatening the Prime Minister of Canada to quit a minority government if he puts any more money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario. That's where the Liberals are at, Mr. Speaker, and this member knows it. So I say to the member that it has been clear. Progressive Conservatives have said since day one, when we stopped gouging people for electricity—this Minister of Energy has put more money in the pockets of Ontario than the Liberals did over 15 years of government. Over 15 years of governing, and this minister has done more.

We took them to court. They said we were crazy to do it. We said it would cost the people of Canada and Ontario, that it would hurt jobs. They said, "No, you're wrong." The Bank of Canada agrees with us, the budget officer agrees with us, and then here you are—when we are debating a motion to remove the carbon tax, knowing that they have been cornered. They never expected the NDP to—now, it shouldn't have been a shock, because relentless pressure from Progressive Conservatives here and Conservatives here across the country forced the federal NDP to do the right thing and vote to scrap the carbon tax on not everything, but focused on what is hurting Canadians the most. And where were the Liberals? They joined up with a separatist party in Ottawa to block putting more money and making life more affordable.

Now, I'm not going to speak for the NDP, because I'm sure they will, but I don't think the NDP's position is that a carbon tax should be cancelled forever. But they have come to the recognition that life is very expensive right now, we believe in part because of the carbon tax. They obviously agree, because they want to get that off, to remove that. But at the same time, it is the policies of the Liberals which have brought us here: out-of-control spending, a Liberal legacy here and in Ottawa, which raises interest rates for the people of the country. We've said this time and time and time again.

On top of that, they put a carbon tax. On top of that, they increased taxes. On top of that, they stopped pipelines from being built across this country because they don't want people to have access to cheap oil and gas. Do you know what you could have in eastern Canada? You could have natural gas going from the west to the Atlantic provinces. Do you know who has stopped that from happening? Liberals. Liberals have stopped that from happening, because they would rather import dirty oil from Saudi Arabia and give it a tax cut. Do you know why? All of their seats in Atlantic Canada were at risk, and they didn't want to lose them. They don't care about your affordability. They don't care what the carbon tax is costing you. All they care about is their seats.

And to make matters even worse, they had a federal Liberal cabinet minister go on national TV and say that was their plan. And then she had the temerity to go on to say that if you only elect more Liberals, then maybe you, too, can get the tax cut. So it's not about making life more affordable for people. It's not about a change in attitudes

on carbon tax. It's not about the HST. It's about electing Liberals. They will turn themselves and tie themselves in a knot, because all they care about and all they have ever cared about is electing Liberals. Nothing they have ever done has been about building the province of Ontario. Nothing they have ever done has been about building our country. All it's about, always, is electing Liberals, because for them, getting into office is what it's about. Accomplishing something never crosses their mind.

Now, imagine this, Mr. Speaker. The temerity of this member—I challenge the member to come out with me. We'll get Chrystia Freeland on the phone. I don't know what her number is; it's certainly not 1-800. I will get on the phone with him, because it is his federal colleague. If he wants to call on that federal minister to eliminate the HST and the carbon tax in this Thursday's federal economic statement, I'll be happy to continue to essay for that. Welcome aboard, because that's what we've been talking about for five frickin'—there's a school that's being built, I know, in North Bay that's called Fricker. It's in the community of Fricker, so I think I can say that. That's what we've been talking about for five years, right?

The classic Liberals say, "Oh, oh, never thought that the Progressive Conservatives would want"—imagine the Liberals here, right? Imagine this. They get up on a motion to cut taxes and they think, "We got them. There's no way he's going to want to spend time in the legislative session"—it's not that hard, right? We just passed the fall economic statement with nobody dissenting. Imagine. When is the last time a government—well, it has happened twice, and both on Progressive Conservatives. In the last session of Parliament, our budget we brought forward was passed unanimously. Right now, the fall economic statement passed 95 to nothing. Not one person voted against the priorities of this government moving forward.

What are those priorities? The same as they've always been: cutting taxes, removing red tape, helping build the province of Ontario. And 100% of the people who voted in this House agreed with that agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Look, as I've said, we are focused on putting more money back into people's pockets. If that means cutting the HST, we call on the federal government to do it. We could pass that motion right now and we can deliver this over to Chrystia Freeland's office. I know the Leader of the Opposition will probably join me in going over to Ms. Freeland's office and demanding that it be in the fall economic statement.

It has taken them years to come to this conclusion, but they haven't come to this conclusion because they had the best interests of the people of Ontario at hand, Mr. Speaker. They've come to this conclusion because they fear they might not win the next federal election. Well, that train has already left the station.

And now you have a Liberal Party who is going forward with a leadership race that literally nobody cares about or has interest in, but they're hopping over themselves. You have two people who are running in that election—really, not even two; every single candidate in that election supports the carbon tax. Every single candidate in that

Liberal leadership election supports having taxes on fuel. Nobody believes anything that comes out of their mouths when it comes to cutting taxes.

So I will gladly support this motion. I am very certain that Progressive Conservatives will pass this motion, because this is what we have been talking about since 2018. So I challenge the member, not only on this motion, but on the motion that we have before this House, brought forward by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kings-ton, to vote in favour of removing the carbon tax as well—and not just on home heating; on everything, Mr. Speaker. He will have many opportunities to do so, because I can guarantee the members of the Liberal Party that this side of the House is going to continue to focus on the carbon tax and the cost that it is having on the people of the province of Ontario. We will have many a motion where he will be able to rise in his place and finally show people that they actually care about the people of the province of Ontario. So I encourage him to vote—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House. I've got to say, it's tough to follow the government House leader. On a performance level, I will never come close.

But I am quite surprised about the motion. We're in support. We are in support. We have lobbied for a long time to take HST off of home heating. That isn't new for the NDP. The thing that surprises us and disappoints us is that this Legislature keeps focusing on things that another government should do, and doesn't focus on the things that it has the power to do itself.

This game-playing that's going on here—quite frankly, Ontarians don't care about the game-playing. They care that they're getting to the point where they can't afford to heat their house and eat at the same time. That's what they care about. That is what they care about. All this “he said,” “she said,” “they said”—they don't care.

1220

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's right; they don't.

Mr. John Vanthof: They don't, and they shouldn't.

So this motion asking the federal government to remove the HST from home heating—it's pretty straightforward, something we could support. We will support. Pretty simple. But what we really should be doing in this Legislature is looking at things that we could do immediately—immediately—to help people with their heating bills; help them to be able to afford the latest technology—heat pumps—so they can actually reduce the cost of heating their homes and reduce the impact on the environment, because that's something that both squabbling parties over there, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have seemed to have forgotten.

Now, the Conservatives never really cared about the environment, and we know that. And you know what? I can respect that. They're open about that. The Libs, they pretend to care. They really do pretend to care. But we'll go back to the federal government. The federal govern-

ment says the carbon tax is supposed to help the environment, and then they say, “But some people should pay more than others.” That's defeating the whole purpose, because everybody has to buy in.

And just for the record, Speaker, we've never been in favour of the carbon tax. We are in favour of a program that puts pressure on the use of carbon to reduce the use of carbon throughout the province, throughout the country. We support cap-and-trade. And people say, “Oh, there's no difference between cap-and-trade and the carbon tax.” That's not accurate. I'm going to explain cap-and-trade from a dairy farmer perspective.

Interjection: Oh, no.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, cap-and-trade. Every dairy farmer under supply management in this country has a quota of how much milk they produce, and that quota is based on how much milk is needed in the country. More milk is needed, more quota is issued. Less milk is needed, less quota is issued. That's how it works. Cap-and-trade: Every carbon-producing industry, carbon-producing entity gets a carbon quota, and they all know that every year that quota is going to go down so we can actually slow down and reduce the overall production of carbon.

Some industries will have an easier time of making big changes, and they'll have credits because their production of carbon will go down quicker than the quota they're allotted. They will be able to, yes, sell those credits. And some industries won't be able to adapt as quickly, and they might have to buy those credits. But overall, the production of carbon will go down. Because as governments, we have to worry about home heating, absolutely, but we also have to worry about what's going to happen to our kids and our grandkids. So overall, we have to reduce the production of carbon.

Now, the funny thing about the current Conservative government talking about the carbon tax is that the only reason we have a carbon tax in Ontario is that they cancelled the cap-and-trade system. That's the only reason we have a carbon tax in Ontario, because they can't tell the difference, and they won't tell people the difference. They use stickers on gas pumps, and they go to court because, perhaps, they don't know the difference themselves.

Let's all agree that the number-one issue in all our constituencies right today is affordability. Let's agree. Let's agree, okay? But let's also agree that a big issue that is looking over the whole planet and Ontario is that the climate is changing and we have to look at what we can do to slow that down. Let's all agree on that. Let's all agree on that. So, let's come up with programs that actually work.

Now, the federal Liberal government has basically said, “Well, we don't think our program works because we're making carve-outs.” So that tells you that the carbon tax program isn't working—isn't working. One of the things in the cap-and-trade program that the former government put in, that this government scrapped—there was a fault in it, a fault that we identified: that cap-and-trade wasn't going to work for everyone either. Because some people in places like where I live, where there's no public trans-

portation, it's really cold, there's a lot of—it's a great place to live, Speaker. I highly recommend Timiskaming–Cochrane as a place to live, but you have to like winter sports.

But there was a fault with cap-and-trade, and that's why we proposed to take 25% of the proceeds from cap-and-trade and direct it to areas and sectors that would not be able to compete—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Great plan to level the playing field.

Mr. John Vanthof: To level the playing field.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That would work.

Mr. John Vanthof: That would work. It would work.

You know what? Guess what? Guess why Quebec doesn't have a carbon tax.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Tell us, John.

Mr. John Vanthof: Any reason? Any reason?

Interjection: They have cap-and-trade.

Mr. John Vanthof: Because they didn't scrap their cap-and-trade program. That's why they don't have a carbon tax. That's why they're not spending millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars challenging the federal government in court on whether or not the federal government has the right to make a backup carbon tax scheme if the provinces don't have any of their own. We had our own, and the Premier said, "Ah, cap-and-trade, carbon tax—we don't want any of it," and as a result we have the federal carbon tax.

It should actually be the Ford carbon tax. It should. It should be the Ford carbon tax, because that's what it is.

Now, I listened to government members and ministers tell me that they're doing these fantastic things—you know, green steel and electric cars. Great. Great. Put some horsepower behind those programs so you can actually show that you're reducing carbon and then you will be able to get rid of the carbon tax. Put some work behind it instead of rhetoric. The Liberal Party—or the kind-of-Liberal Party, potentially-Liberal Party, maybe-never-again-Liberal Party—they're all rhetoric right now too, but so are you. The Ford government on environmental issues is pure rhetoric. They're following their federal cousins; "Axe the tax" is the only thing they can think of, and that's what they're doing.

They want people to think that the only thing that is going to make life more affordable is eliminating the carbon tax. That's not true; it's not. There are many things that could be done right now in this province by the current government—maybe by the next one if the current government doesn't do it. Make actual changes so that things like heat pumps, things like super-insulating your homes, things like putting top-quality windows in so you reduce not just the use of carbon but reduce the price of heating for the people in this province. Make long-term reductions so that they can improve where they live, for those people who actually can afford to live here; so they can make long-term improvements on their energy efficiency; so that they can actually benefit.

1230

Because there are ways, Speaker, to actually benefit, for people to benefit from making changes so that they burn less carbon. The biggest benefit is for their kids and grand-

kids—that's the biggest benefit—but there is an immediate benefit too, and it's called a lower heating bill. A lower heating bill—imagine that. Imagine if a government member stood up and said, "We are going to do this. We're going to fund heat pumps. We're going to fund insulation"—all kinds of things. Who knows what they can come up with? But that is not their answer.

Their answer is, "We're going to send a letter to the federal government." Send a letter. Put it in big block letters, because, you know what, the stickers didn't work. And now they're angry and confused when sometimes you're not supportive of the letter, or you are supportive of the letter.

This government has been in power for five years—

Interjection: Five and a half.

Mr. John Vanthof: Five and a half years—and they have, to their credit, fought against the carbon tax which they created for that whole time. So they create the carbon tax; they didn't like cap-and-trade. Do you know what? Cap-and-trade wasn't perfect. We tried to make it better. We tried. But they didn't like it, so they cancelled it, knowing full well that cancelling cap-and-trade, cancelling any type of program to reduce carbon, was going to make the province fall into the federal carbon tax. They knew that going in, people.

Let's make that clear: The Ford government cancelled cap-and-trade so that Ontarians would have to pay the carbon tax, so that they could complain about the federal government. Basically, that's what it is. They're helping Mr. Poilievre—who I don't understand. I don't understand this whole dynamic, because Mr. Poilievre doesn't like the investment bank, because the Liberals created it. So the Progressive Conservatives go, "Oh, give it to us."

And do you know what? Ontarians who can't afford their heat and can't afford their mortgage payments—and in my part of the world, can't afford to drive to work—do you know what they all really want right now? What they all really need is a new provincial-sponsored bank. That's what they want. That's really what they want. That's their top priority.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, I really enjoy being heckled by the government House leader, especially when he's not in the House.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll come in the House now.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay.

Let's make this pretty simple and clear: We are in favour of this motion directing the federal government to take HST off heating. We've been in favour of this for a long time—2011? This has been a long-standing policy for us, especially in places in northern Ontario—all of Ontario, but this province is so big and so varied, many people don't realize the challenges that people face. I don't come from Toronto. I didn't realize that there—coming from northern Ontario we think everything down here is just great, until you get here. And there's huge challenges in Toronto—huge—but one of our biggest challenges in northern Ontario is no public transportation because of our distances per capita. We realize that.

But we're a vital part of this province. You know they're always talking about the critical minerals strategy and mining and stuff. Do you know where most of that comes from? It comes from northern Ontario, the future of this province. I think a lot of people will agree a big part of the future of this province comes from northern Ontario. But the people who live there face unique challenges, and one of them is the cost of living, which is higher. The day-to-day cost of living is higher, and the farther north you go the higher it gets. My colleague from Kiiwetinoong, when he gets the opportunity to speak on this, will detail the costs of living—I live in central Ontario, actually. For people who live in northern Ontario, the costs are astronomical.

So, we're in favour of this motion. We hope that the government puts forward policies that they actually can enact to help people—that they actually show that the things that they talk about, the green steel, all the announcements they make regarding electrification. Let's show us that they're going to prove that they're actually going to reduce the amount of carbon, and then we can use that proof to get off the carbon tax program. Wouldn't that be—right? If you don't like the federal carbon tax and you do want to do something to recognize climate change and do your part to control climate change, come up with a better program—come up with a better program.

There should be lots of horsepower on that side to come up with a better program. There should be lots of horsepower on that side to show that you can reduce your carbon output. There should be lots. But to date, the government's focus has been on taking the federal government to court and losing and costing money and challenging the federal government on their right to put on a backstop program if the province doesn't put one in. That was a loser right from the start. That was a loser right from the start. But that wasn't, Speaker—I'm going to close on their first salvo, so after they cancelled the program that they had instead of fixing it, knowing full well that they were going to now force Ontarians to pay the carbon tax—and this will go down in infamy—their solution to pollution was stickers on gas pumps.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I will be sharing my time with the member from Beaches–East York today.

I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I couldn't disagree with most of what he had to say. And it really is about making life more affordable for people here in Ontario. It is about doing what's within our own powers to do to influence affordability here. And there is a lot that we can do. And having a government that would just prefer to write letters—to write letters—instead of actually taking the power of government to be able to make a positive difference in people's lives—and that's what I think politics should be about.

1240

Politics should be about working together to make people's lives better. Is it always going to be perfect? No, it's not. There will be days when it's challenging and we disagree and we want different than the path that we're on.

But we talk about it. We actually come up with solutions by actually talking to each other and saying, "There is a way forward here. We can do what's right for the people of Ontario and we can address climate change at the same time." And we get attacked from both angles because we try and do both.

It's important that we address climate change, but it is important that we actually make Ontario economically healthy for the vast majority of people. This is within our power here in the province. We do not have to look to the federal government to do something. There are things that we, right here in Ontario, can do.

I agree on cap-and-trade. It was a program that the Liberal Party did implement many years ago that was cancelled by this government. And if you look at it, the other provinces that are not subject to the carbon tax here, as we are in Ontario, it's because they have implemented similar kinds of programs. So the fact that we didn't have a carbon-reduction program here in Ontario—it ended up being cancelled—that's what makes us susceptible to this carbon pricing.

There are many ways of reducing our uses of carbon in this country, in this province, but there are many ways to reduce emissions. And I agree, I think we should be putting far more effort in conservation. I think we should be putting far more efforts in energy retrofits. Okay? That's where we need to go. Conservation is the way forward. Use less. And there's a way that we can do it and we can get the people of Ontario on board to do exactly that: by helping them pay for energy retrofits. We know it makes a difference. We've seen programs. We have the data, we have the evidence, and we have the statistics that actually show that energy conservation is probably the most economical way to actually reduce emissions. Right then and there, we know. But we have nothing.

Some of the energy conservation programs that had been put into place by previous governments, when this government got elected, they cancelled them. They cancelled the rebates for electric vehicles. They cancelled charging stations. They cancelled renewable energy, when now, today, renewable energy from solar and from wind is actually cheaper. And if we had carried on and we had implemented those programs—if we had kept them—we would have been far further ahead.

We know that, right now, when it comes to affordability, people in Ontario are hurting, and I think people right across the country are hurting. Inflation hurts. We were lucky, actually, as a country, to come through COVID in a relatively good position compared to some of our G7 counterparts, who have suffered far greater inflation than Canada has. Canada still has the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 countries. We have done good work. And now, just like the rest of the globe is dealing with inflation, people here in Ontario are dealing with inflation.

It's so important that we have these kinds of discussions to determine what is the right way forward. Are we always going to agree? I'd say no, we're not. But I think that working together with the federal government, instead of trying to wedge the federal government—if you went to

the federal government and said, “Let’s work together on this and let’s make it better for the people of Ontario. You cut your part of the HST and I’ll cut my part of the HST, and we’ll make this happen, give people a break,” I think the federal government would be willing to have that conversation.

Will it be an easy conversation? No, it won’t. But is it a conversation worth having? Yes, it is. And so it’s not always about—I agree, I hate the sloganeering. I hate the sloganeering. I hate what politics has become, because it should be better.

Interjection.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I’m reminded by my colleague—at the very beginning I said that I was splitting my time. Did you hear me? He thinks you might not have heard me, that I’m splitting my time with the member for Beaches–East York.

Interjection.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay, good.

I think it’s really important to actually work together with various levels of government. There’s a saying, that it’s important for you to talk with people you agree with, but it’s even more important to talk with people whom you don’t agree with. And I think there is room to find common ground. That’s the thing with any kind of turmoil, with any kind of conflict: The first thing you have to do is find some common ground, and I think there is common ground. We all want Canada and all of our individual provinces to thrive. We want the people of Ontario and the people of Canada to be able to have a good life and live a good life and actually look forward to the opportunities enjoyed by our children and grandchildren.

That’s why we have to have these difficult discussions. We can’t just expect other orders of government to do all the heavy lifting they’re doing. We need to work together and, each of us, take responsibility and do whatever heavy lifting we can do. That’s what leadership is. Leadership is about working with a team and being able to find that common ground and be able to make things happen for people.

I think that it’s really important that we have these kinds of discussions. I’m really glad that this is an opportunity to have this, because we need to get all of this on the table.

Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment to offer. I would like to move to amend the motion by adding at the end “for Ontario.”

Anyway, thank you to my colleagues for listening. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mrs. McCrimmon has moved a motion to amend the motion by adding at the end “for Ontario.”

The member for Kanata–Carleton still has the floor.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I’d like to hand it over to my colleague from Beaches–East York.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I’m sure we all would like to be eating lunch, but we are now here dealing with a very important issue.

I’ll start by giving you a bit of a quiz. Stegosaurus, triceratops, raptors, Conservative government: What would these all have in common? If your answer was “dinosaurs,” you are absolutely correct, and you will get a prize from me later.

You may get a prize if you actually get on board with the rest of the world and accept the fact that we are in a climate emergency and it needs to be dealt with. We are leaders, and we are here to lead, supposedly. But what I’ve seen for the past few weeks is, extraordinarily, games being played. I’m used to this; I was at city hall with some of the members here, and there was the shiny bauble—always the shiny bauble over here: distract, deflect. And I believe that the House leader even accused us of having, what was it, a desperate move to distract. These are the words of the House leader, that we over here, on this powerful side of the House, are just using this as a desperate move to distract.

Well, what is before us and has been before us in Ontario is an RCMP investigation, a criminal investigation, but are we talking about that? Are we talking about preserving our greenbelt? No, we are talking about a million other things just to distract the public. For the House leader to say that—they’re masters at distracting and deflecting and not doing our job to protect Ontarians, which is what this idea from the marvellous member from Orléans had to bring forward. That’s what Ontarians want to see.

1250

We are in a climate emergency, and what are we doing about it? We’re fiddling while Rome is burning. We have seen—and we’ve been warned by the Financial Accountability Officer, by the Auditor General, by a million experts with a ton of reports sitting on the shelves collecting dust. We commission them, we ask for them, and they get delivered with powerful, important facts for us to read and learn and heed the advice of, and what do we do? We let them sit on a shelf instead of actually doing strong climate action.

If this government actually had an environmental plan, a climate action plan, we wouldn’t be here; we would actually be out doing the work. The work would be done to protect Ontarians instead of just arguing back and forth here, like a Ping-Pong game.

But no, this government’s solution to solving the climate emergency is electric vehicles. Okay, that’s helpful, but you haven’t secured the supply chain and you haven’t engaged Indigenous communities. And you have a report, the climate change impact assessment report, that got released in the dark of the night, stealthily, and that sits on a shelf somewhere, and a park that was already a park and just had a name on it. That’s the answer. That is the answer for Ontario’s climate emergency. That is how we’re going to keep Ontarians safe.

A while ago, I brought forth a private member’s bill that I thought was pretty benign for climate action, and many, many of the members over there supported it—said they did, and I believe them—on flooding awareness and emergency preparedness, and what happened? Even the environmental minister at the time was on board, but then

at the last minute the rug got pulled out from underneath, because climate action does not matter to this government. That is going to leave us woefully behind.

If they're worried about money now, we have been warned about the high cost of inaction. You've seen that already with this government. They're so worried about this pollution pricing, but yet they don't think twice about blowing money in court, fighting things they can't win and that are ridiculous—again, dinosaur mentality. They don't think about cancelled projects, all the renewable energy projects. Why are we not focusing in on renewables and conservation? It's not rocket science. Come on. Education, as well—conservation, which you would know creates green jobs, creates sustainable jobs.

I have encouraged you in the past to grow a spine and to get behind strong, brave and bold measures. I've offered you transplants from my spine, but you have not taken me up on that. You just continue to be in the dark, heads in the sand, dinosaur mentality, and you're not leading.

We could be doing strong retrofits, deep energy retrofits of our buildings and our houses. We could be investing in subsidies and giving out incentives for heat pumps. The entertaining member from Timiskaming mentioned insulation and energy audits of your homes. This is the way to save Ontarians money, if you really cared—because you know what? We can't tackle affordability on a non-livable planet, right?

The member from Guelph mentioned this morning that we can deal and we should be dealing with the climate emergency at the same time as the affordability crisis. They are part and parcel together, connected. They are not separate. They are not in silos. And if you think that—I can't even say it; the word “dinosaur” just keeps coming to me repeatedly.

You don't have a plan. You have reports, this climate change impact assessment sitting on a shelf. We have heard nothing about it. What was inside it? Was it that damning, that alarming that you can't reveal? Why not share it? Why commission it? Why say it's one of your key planks for your climate action when it's collecting dust, as we said?

The other thing the House leader mentioned was “the radical environment minister in Ottawa.” You know, if that's his definition of radical—I mean, I don't think—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Super radical.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Super radical—I don't think that environment minister is undergoing a RCMP criminal investigation. I would think that's pretty radical.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You really want to go there?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. I just—like, the shiny baubles that have been thrown around—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's ridiculous.

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. I mean, the history is taking care of people and protecting them from what's coming down the pipe. It's a \$9-billion price tag on the BC floods. It's \$5 billion in Alberta. That's coming to

Ontario. We're going to be faced with extreme heat, we are going to have deaths, and we are doing nothing to prevent it. What are we doing? We're displaying shiny baubles—

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, the renewable energy contracts would have helped, right? And so would conservation and education and strong leadership, which we don't have.

I'm running out of time, but I do have an amendment. Before I forget, I do want to—I've had enough, actually, of the dinosaur mentality and I just really hope that in 2026 people wake up and look for real leadership, because we don't have that right now with our government. So I have an amendment: I would like to amend the amendment by adding at the end “'s families.” So “'s families” is the amendment, okay? And I'm going to send that with page Martel, who is getting a great education today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. McMahon is moving an amendment to the amendment by adding at the end “'s families.”

The member for Beaches–East York has the floor.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I hope you will support my amendment and also support the marvellous member from Orléans, because we actually care about affordability, but we also care about the climate emergency, which are part and parcel together. As we mentioned, we can't tackle affordability on a non-livable planet, and the sooner you all wake up to that—I mean, your residents are telling you; you're just not listening. And you know what? You're wasting money on everything you've done, you're wasting money on those renewable contracts you cancelled, and you say you're open for business? You gave away—you turned businesses away and companies away—

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

MPP Jamie West: I believe I have about a minute so I'll try to be as quick as I can. Do I have the whole 20 minutes or I cut out one minute? Okay—

1300

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The time being 1 p.m., pursuant to standing order 10(b), I am now required to deem the debate on this motion adjourned and begin afternoon routine.

Debate deemed adjourned.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 16, 2023, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. John Jordan: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Mr. Jordan from the Standing Committee on Social Policy reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024:

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services: vote 701, ministry administration: \$94,092,300; vote 702, children and adult services—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Social Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON JUSTICE POLICY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Ms. Ghamari from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to His Majesty for the—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL
POLICY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Ms. Scott from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Mr. Hardeman from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries and offices be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024:

Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade: vote 901, ministry administration: \$23,140,900—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Ric Bresee: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): MPP Bresee from the Standing Committee on the Interior reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal year ending—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on the Interior will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF
GOVERNMENT BILLS

PLANNING STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Mr. Calandra moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Official Plan Adjustments Act, 2023 and to amend the Planning Act with respect to remedies / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur les modifications apportées aux plans officiels et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire en ce qui concerne les recours.

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 Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Speaker. I'll wait until the one-hour lead.

IMPROVING REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION DES BIENS IMMEUBLES

Miss Surma moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux infrastructures.

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): And would the Minister of Infrastructure like to briefly explain her bill?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This bill, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, if passed, represents the next step in our plan to establish a framework, in part, to allow Ontario to act holistically and create efficiency in the management, decision-making and execution of realty activities. This will ensure alignment with government objectives, like building more housing units, including affordable housing and long-term care.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 141

Mr. Trevor Jones: I move, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 141, An Act respecting life leases, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent-Leamington, has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 141, An Act respecting life leases, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm very proud to introduce a petition this afternoon brought forward by many neighbours,

including Richard Oldfield from Bowmanville, who I was just having lunch with, as an active transportation advocate. It reads:

"I Support the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we're seeing an alarming rise in road accidents involving drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, road worker," first responder "or cyclist;

"Whereas currently, vulnerable road users in Ontario are not specifically protected by law. In fact, Ontario's Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, often facing only minimal fines;

"Whereas this leaves the friends and families of victims unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government's responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to their loved ones;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

"—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;

"—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible; and

"—pass Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act."

Speaker, I am proud to sign this petition and send it with page Jessy to the Clerks' table.

1310

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: On behalf of my constituents in Parkdale–High Park, I'm proud to present this petition titled "Protect Vulnerable Road Users," and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas vulnerable road users are not specifically protected by law;

"Whereas Ontario's Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, facing only minimal fines;

"Whereas the friends and families of victims are unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government's responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to a vulnerable road user;

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

"—direct the government of Ontario to commit to reducing the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

"—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;

“—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible; and

“—pass the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.”

I really hope the members of the Conservative Party will support the bill and pass it.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition, and I want to congratulate the MPP Joel Harden for the excellent work that you’ve done on this very, very important bill and this petition.

“I Support the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we’re seeing an alarming rise in road accidents involving drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, road worker or cyclist;

“Whereas currently, vulnerable road users in Ontario are not specifically protected by law. In fact, Ontario’s Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, often” only facing “minimal fines;

“Whereas this leaves the friends and families of victims unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government’s responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to their loved ones;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—reduce the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

“—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;” and

“—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible; and

“—pass Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.”

I fully support this and I will add my signature to the thousands that have been collected by the MPP Joel Harden for Ottawa Centre.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Hold the CEO of Metrolinx Accountable for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT Delay,” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has been under construction for 12 years, with no end in sight;

“Whereas this public-private partnership project has cost Ontarians \$13 billion so far, without any indication of what the total cost will be;

“Whereas hundreds of small businesses have been forced to shut down and tens of thousands of people’s daily lives have been disrupted;

“Whereas the CEO of Metrolinx has failed to deliver on this project...;

“Whereas the CEO of Metrolinx, despite being supported by 59 vice-presidents and 13 C-suite executives, cannot seem to hold CrossLinX accountable;

“Whereas the CEO of Metrolinx’s salary has doubled to almost \$1 million;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately terminate Mr. Phil Verster from the position of CEO of Metrolinx.”

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’m proud to present this petition. Signatures were collected by Hugh Armstrong, a resident of Toronto Centre. The petition is 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, Dunsy 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 and storage, conservation, distributed energy resources, and municipal net-zero plans in meeting Ontario’s electricity needs.”

I’ll affix my signature to this petition and return it to the table with page Shahan.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Pause the Expansion of Methane-Fired Electricity Generation.” It reads:

“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, Dunsy 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 and storage, conservation, distributed energy resources, and municipal net-zero plans in meeting Ontario’s electricity needs.”

I want to thank Parkdale-High Park 4 Climate Action and Green 13 for the signatures on this petition. Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government assisted in the preservation of 123 acres of ecologically significant lands at Upper Cedar Creek in Harrow and Hillman Sand Hills near Hillman Marsh in Essex county; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is a leader in conservation within Canada; and

“Whereas Ontario’s world-class system of protected areas, which includes 340 provincial parks and 296 conservation reserves, covers almost 11% of Ontario and grows every year;

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

“That the Ontario government continue to consult with the public, stakeholders and Indigenous communities as we continue to expand Ontario’s vast network of protected lands and secure our natural heritage for future generations.”

I support this petition. I will affix my signature thereto, and I’ll give it to this responsible page Shahan, who will bring it to the Clerks’ table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer, who collected signatures and submitted them to my office. I will now present the petition to page Henry, who will bring it to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “To Raise Social Assistance Rates.” It’s signed by residents of Lynden,

Dundas, Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Waterloo and Ancaster, and it reads:

“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; **1320**

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

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

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

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

I couldn’t agree with this petition more and affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Save Ontario Place,” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas there are concerns” that “Therme Group Canada’s vice-president ... was previously” the Premier’s “deputy chief of staff;

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt any further development plans for Ontario Place, engage in meaningful and transparent public consultations to gather input and ideas for the future of Ontario Place, develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the revitalization of Ontario Place that

prioritizes environmental sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, and ensure that any future development of Ontario Place is carried out in a transparent and accountable manner, with proper oversight, public input, and adherence to democratic processes.”

I affix my signature to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoché: This petition is titled “Bring Back Rent Control” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government cancelled rent control on units built after November 2018; and

“Whereas the cost to rent a home has never been higher; and

“Whereas people are being forced to leave their communities because decent, affordable homes are increasingly out of reach; and

“Whereas the Rent Control for All Tenants Act, 2022, will ensure tenants are not gouged on rent each year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect tenants from predatory rent increases and pass NDP Rent Control for All Tenants Act today to ensure renters can live in safe and affordable homes.”

I couldn’t agree with this petition more and will affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2023, on the amendment to the motion regarding taxes on fuels for home heating.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think I have just a short period of time to speak. I’m not entirely certain how much time, but I’ll continue on, Madam Speaker.

First, let me just congratulate all members. I think members will know that today was another historic day in the life of this Parliament: A budget motion, a motion of confidence in the government—that’s what a budget bill is—and we received 100% support of all members of this House. One hundred per cent support, colleagues. Now, that has happened twice, to the best of my knowledge, in the entire length of time that Ontario has been in existence and, both times, it has been this Progressive Conservative government that has received the unanimous support of all members, colleagues. So that is a very, very good day, so I want to just thank all members and all parties for their unanimous vote of support in the government and the policies of the government. They will, of course, frame how we move forward.

I wanted to just talk a little bit about this. We’re now focused back on the carbon tax on this motion. It is also a

good day because we will be talking about taxes and cutting taxes over and over and over and over and over again until this House adjourns on the 14th, and I am looking forward to that.

One thing I do want to start with: We talked about it in a previous motion and I’ll get back to it—it was disappointing to hear that the NDP—I thought they actually wanted to get rid of the carbon tax because they believed in putting more money back in the pockets, but what they want to replace it with is a cap-and-trade system. Now, colleagues, apparently the cap-and-trade system doesn’t cost you anything, right? The billions and billions of dollars that the cap-and-trade collects, according to the NDP, it doesn’t cost you anything, right? So they’re complaining that they want to get rid of the carbon tax but replace it with cap-and-trade. Now, cap-and-trade costs billions upon billions upon billions upon billions of dollars, and who has to pay those billions upon billions of dollars? Well, guess what? All of you have to pay.

Here I thought that the NDP had somehow seen the light, had a conversion on the road to Damascus and were seeing and understanding that when you cut costs for people, that it means more money in their pocket, but I was wrong. I was duped. I feel slighted. I thought that the NDP actually cared about people, but I now know that it was all a ruse because they actually want to replace one big tax with another big tax and just call it something else. Now, that is a trick that they have learned from the Liberals, right? That is 100% a trick that they have learned from the Liberals. We’re going to be talking about this a lot, and I can’t wait to talk about this further.

I’m hopeful that we will pass this motion brought forward by the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. I know the last time we brought a carbon tax motion forward, the Liberals voted against it. I know on this, they have not had the courage to get up and speak about it even once. But we’ll have until midnight tonight and, hopefully, they’ll rouse up the courage to speak it to it and actually vote in favour of eliminating the carbon tax.

I can tell my friends in the NDP that we aren’t going to eliminate one tax to put an even bigger tax on top of it and just call it something else and say, “Well, we’ve done our job.” I’m glad that the opposition House leader has really come clean and explained what the position of the NDP is; that removing the carbon tax is only supported by the NDP if it is replaced by an even bigger tax that hurts even more people across even more parts of the—it’s hard to believe that you would think that the carbon tax can’t hurt anymore than it does, but now the NDP want to layer something else on top of it.

Now, the Liberal member for Beaches–East York was talking about dinosaurs, right? She’s talking about dinosaurs in her dissertation. That is where the Liberals are at, right? It’s not about technology. It’s not about putting money back in the pockets of the people of the province of Ontario. It’s about collecting money, hurting people, ensuring that they do, in co-operation with the NDP, what they do best. That’s what it’s always been about. We believe and we’ll always believe that when you give

people the tools to succeed, they will take you up on it. The opposition coalition believes one thing: that the people shouldn't have the tools to succeed; that the more you take from them, they will rely more on government. That is the philosophy of both these opposition parties, and it is a philosophy that we will attack each and every day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank you for recognizing me because if I don't get this in, I won't be able to return next week. Our granddaughter, Adelaide Helena Colucci, from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, is celebrating her 10th birthday today, and I want to wish Adelaide a happy birthday from grandma and grandpa.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That is not a point of order, but we wish her a happy birthday as well.

Further debate?

1330

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for bringing forward this motion. I'm proud to be part of a government that, under Premier Ford's strong leadership, has spoken out against this carbon tax from the start. Members will know that he's been joined by the Premiers of Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. They've all called on Prime Minister Trudeau to remove the carbon tax from all home heating fuels. And added to that, the parliamentary budget officer shows that the carbon tax will cost the average household up to \$710 this year, even after rebates.

The federal government should do the right thing and remove the carbon tax on all home heating fuels. A recent Leger poll shows 57% of Canadians want the federal government to remove the carbon tax from everyone's home heating bills. And the majority of Canadians don't think that the federal government should be taxing people—yes, taxing people—for heating their homes. The numbers from every region show Canadians know it's unfair to give some people a break on their home heating bills, but not everyone. The federal government needs to listen to the people and take the carbon tax off all home heating bills.

From time to time, Speaker, myself, along with my Durham-based colleagues, we host round tables with our chambers of commerce and business improvement areas. What we hear regularly at these round tables is that starting and growing a business is hard work. As you know, Speaker, all businesses play a vital role in our province's economy, and in particular in local communities like the town of Whitby. Whether they're farmers producing food, like up in Ashburn, manufacturers leveraging our skilled workforce, or shops on Brock Street, anchoring main streets, Ontario's job creators all agree that this punitive tax hits hardest just when they're getting back on their feet.

While the opposition Liberals and the NDP have no problem at all with a regressive carbon tax, it's not fair or right, Speaker, that our local businesses are being punished—and yes, they are being punished. If the opposition truly cared about the businesses in their ridings, they would join us in calling on Ottawa to scrap the tax.

Without a doubt, 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 it's not just on the carbon tax. It's a tax on the truck drivers who bring in the food. It's a tax on farmers who grow our crops. It's a tax on the local businesses—like in Whitby—that are trying to succeed. It's not fair for the people of this province to continue with this punitive carbon tax. That's why we 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.

This regressive tax adds an unofficial barrier to the affordability of essential items, Speaker. It forces small businesses like those in Whitby and in other parts of the region of Durham to increase prices, making them less competitive, and it places an unfair burden on other 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 the NDP, our government believes in putting money back into the pockets of people by removing this harmful tax.

I'm proud, Speaker, 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.

Speaker, since the implementation of the carbon tax, the people of Ontario have been paying more and more every single day for food, for services, but particularly 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, including my community in the region of Durham. 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.

At the end of the day, the federal carbon tax is draining the pockets of hard-working drivers in the region of Durham. It hurts workers who want to drive to the office and get back home to spend time with their families. It's unfair for truckers who transport critical goods across our province. That's why I'm proud that our government opposed this harmful carbon tax.

Unfortunately, the Liberals and the NDP have 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 the tolls on Highway 412 and Highway 418 in the region of Durham. Unlike the

Liberals and NDP and their carbon tax, our government is making life more affordable.

Speaker, our government understands that lowering taxes actually increases revenue, creates jobs and boosts the economy. Unfortunately, the independent Liberals and opposition NDP are working against affordability. They continue to support the carbon tax and vote against measures our government has implemented to help businesses start and grow. When we speak to companies all across the globe, they're excited by what Ontario has to offer. It's our educated workforce, it's our low business costs, and, yes, it's our innovative ecosystem—all of this and so much more.

But one concern they all bring up, because they don't understand this, is this federal carbon tax. We look at our neighbours in the United States, \$460 billion in two-way trade, and they ask us, "What the heck is this carbon tax that you have?" They want to think twice about investing and expanding in Ontario. Simply put, this carbon tax has stifled our growth across our economy. Every business, in every sector, has seen their costs go up because of this terrible carbon tax. Speaker, our message to the federal government is very simple: Get rid of this tax and do it now.

I want to move to northern Ontario for a moment because we have members in our caucus from northern Ontario. The carbon tax there is making everything more expensive, and the reality is, because of northern geography, the cost of transporting goods is already much higher than it would be in any other part of the province. Speaker, you'll know that 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. There's snow up there already.

The carbon tax is negatively impacting people in these communities as they are hit hardest at the gas pumps and, yes, in the grocery store. There's no place in this province where that cost has had a greater burden. Think for a moment about 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.

Let's talk about energy, mining and forestry. As one of the largest producers or users, Ontario is exposed in three of its primary drivers for our economy. Yes, it's time to scrap this tax.

Speaker, I've only got 23 seconds. 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 carbon tax. Scrap it today. Do it now.

1340

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: I want to first take a moment to thank my family. I want to thank the residents of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and Pelee Island for their trust and for affording me the privilege of speaking here and working on their behalf every day. I also want to thank my colleague the gentleman member from Lanark-Frontenac-

Kingston for bringing forward an important motion which calls on the federal government to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels and inputs on home heating for everyone.

This motion is relevant. It's responsible. It is prudent. Just like its sponsor, it's grounded in integrity. The recent exemption offered by the federal government to benefit only those using home heating oil raises this issue to the top of mind for all Canadians, particularly since this benefit will never reach the majority of Ontario's homes, including families and individuals across my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and beautiful Pelee Island. Recently, I brought forward a motion calling on the federal government to eliminate the carbon tax from grocery items in an attempt to put more money back in the pockets of individuals and families across Ontario. This motion seeks to accomplish the very same goal.

Speaker, the delivery of nearly every consumer good in this beautiful province—especially the fresh and processed food we eat—is being affected by the worst tax this country has ever seen, a tax that's harmful to hard-working Canadian families, individuals, farmers and businesses, providing no value other than taking money from families. This is this carbon tax.

The carbon tax is obviously a price levied on emission from fossil fuels such as natural gas, coal, oil and gasoline. The current carbon tax rate, as we've heard, is \$65 per tonne of emissions, with a \$15 increase each year until 2030, when Canadians will have to pay \$170 per tonne. But the math is tricky, and most of us are lay people and not trained in economics and finance, so it's hard to translate what this actually means, this \$65 per tonne, but we know that the money that's taken from our pockets and from our family's budget, how that impacts our lives.

The carbon tax was introduced by the federal government back in 2019 with a lofty goal to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. Yet four years later, where we are in present day, the carbon tax has made absolutely no progress on this front, all of this against the backdrop—our reality—that Canada contributes less than 1.5% of global carbon emissions—less than 1.5%. Yet in a punitive way, a destructive way to business, family and farms, it takes money from us while doing no good in return. The carbon tax makes everything we rely on more expensive. It's costing the people of this province on every single thing we do, every single thing we have to buy.

The carbon tax is both unaffordable and ineffective. The federal Liberal government admitted as much when they removed the carbon tax, selectively and strategically, from home heating oil, a move that largely benefits residents only in Atlantic Canada. The federal Minister for Rural Economic Development fully admitted this move came after sustained pressure from Maritime Liberal MPs to support affordability and putting money back into Atlantic Canadians' pockets. So why don't all Canadians deserve the very same treatment? There are 76 federal Liberal members who represent Ontario—45% of their caucus—who all voted against a pause on the carbon tax for all home heating fuels. Yet if 23 Liberal Atlantic members can advocate for tax relief for their constituents,

why can't the federal Liberal members from Ontario do the same thing?

The clear majority of Ontarians believe the carbon tax should be removed from home heating—all home heating—so why isn't the federal government listening to us? If the federal government can eliminate the carbon tax selectively and strategically on home heating oil immediately, why won't they extend it to all home heating fuels? There's only about 3% of Canadian homes that actually rely on home heating oil, almost all of them concentrated—where else?—in Liberal-held ridings of Atlantic Canada. Some 65% of the homes in Ontario use a cleaner, more efficient and sustainably sourced natural gas or propane to heat their homes, but making them ineligible for this carbon tax exemption. In the midst of a true affordability crisis, when families are struggling to pay their bills, the federal government is only committed to giving tax breaks to their safe seats in Atlantic Canada and not to our hard-working families here in Ontario or beyond.

Speaker, this motion is truly about affordability. We simply can't afford the extra costs, and our members from across the aisle will admit and agree to the same thing. Canada's inflation rate has risen about 3.8% year over year, increasing the cost of food to over 10%, and Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The increase in global conflict and unrest has tested our fragile supply chains while increasing the prices on goods such as oil, gas and all the transportation networks and systems that we rely on to move our food, our inputs and our goods from one place to the other.

Our government is committed to combatting an affordability crisis. We've introduced a number of initiatives aimed at making life truly more affordable for all of Ontario. The LIFT, or Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, provides tax relief to low-income families—common sense. Prudent, responsible—just like the member's motion. The Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses—or the CARE—Tax Credit supports families with child care expenses. The Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit makes homes safer and more accessible so our seniors—those who built this great country and our great province—can live and stay safely in their homes longer. Most recently, our government cut the gas tax by 10 cents a litre—full stop. We removed the provincial HST from purpose-built rental housing in order to build a wider range of more affordable rental homes and units across the province, without prejudice, without favouritism.

Our government is committed to making life truly more affordable for all Ontarians, but we need the federal government and the members from across the aisle on our side. Most recently, Premier Ford, along with the Premiers of Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, wrote an open letter to the federal government asking to extend carbon tax exemption and remove the carbon tax on all home heating inputs. I'm very proud to be part of a government that's truly committed to working for all workers, removing the carbon tax from home

heating—all home heating fuels—would provide much-needed relief to families' budgets now and throughout the year.

The carbon tax will cost Ontario—everyone who uses natural gas—an additional \$300 this winter alone. This is a statistic from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; it's modest, and it's conservative. The Prime Minister has consistently stated that Canadians will be better off due to rebates from the carbon tax. However, the Parliamentary Budget Office itself shows the carbon tax will actually cost the average Canadian household an extra \$710 per year, even after all these so-called rebates. So at a time when all of us are already looking to cut costs and conserve and rein in spending, the carbon tax is truly ill natured.

The federal government cited itself the reason for the exemption on home heating oil was because it's four times more expensive than natural gas. However, natural gas prices have increased by 50% in the past five years and are continuing on that same trajectory, which doesn't make sense, not to mention that natural gas is, in fact, cleaner and, again, sustainably sourced from sources right here in Ontario. So heating is expensive for all Canadians, and heating fuels should receive the same carbon tax exemption.

Speaker, heating our homes is not a luxury; it's a necessity. I've heard it continually and as recently as last week when we were home in our ridings from constituents across Chatham-Kent-Leamington about the negative effects of this specific carbon tax on their home heating bills and what they're anticipating for a cold winter ahead. Most of my constituents and those across southwestern Ontario rely on natural gas to heat their homes, a fuel proven to be more cleaner and more efficient than oil, but they continue to be punished and to pay more for their home heating because they don't have that exemption to the carbon tax.

1350

If our federal government will eliminate the tax on home heating oils, why are producers not afforded the same exemptions? I'm talking about food producers: the food producers we have across Ontario, and particularly in my riding. We can fight for the environment at the same time by treating climate change seriously and working with one another, working with industry for innovation, efficiencies and economies of scale to pass down cleaner, more efficient solutions, and lower costs to all consumers.

Worse off, and probably worst of all, the recent exemption seeks to pit Canadians against one another, at a time when we're already vulnerable and when there is strife across the world and at home. The federal government should not be isolating regions based on their voter support, but bringing people together in times of need. This latest move truly divides Canadians, region against region, one against the other—families, friends and relatives from across Canada.

The carbon tax is not a climate plan. My friend and member from Essex said it very articulately yesterday when he said that this is a revenue-generating tool and we

truly do not know where these revenues and these profits go from the punishing tax on all Canadians.

Overall, emissions are up about 14% from 1990. The carbon tax is not an effective climate plan. It's accomplishing one thing: making life more unaffordable. It's not an option for any of us to heat our homes over the winter, and implementing a carbon tax on essential fuels disproportionately burdens lower-income households and forces families to make tough decisions and cut costs on even our most basic goods. Our government is committed to making life more affordable for all of us. To do so, it's crucial the federal government listens to all of us and works towards cutting costs by eliminating this carbon tax.

I'm very disappointed that our federal Liberal counterparts are voting against a motion which would have extended the carbon tax exemption for all Canadians and all sources of home heating fuels. Their refusal to do so and their refusal to support Canadians and our friends and families across Ontario proves they're committed to strategically preserving political seats in Atlantic Canada at the cost of families across Canada.

We have to be united in our approach. Placing the burden on taxpayers is unfair. It's ineffective. It's not helping our economy. It's not helping our environment. I truly hope my colleagues from across the floor will call on their federal counterparts in the federal NDP Party, and our independent Liberals will call on their relatives in Ottawa to ensure that we have a sustainable, equitable outcome, by removing this burdensome tax for all home heating fuels.

Speaker, I thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: This has been, actually, a fascinating debate, with the amendments and the amendments to amendments. I think it's my first go-round to see so many intricacies with this particular motion.

I want to thank, certainly, the member from Lanark for this motion, because my riding back home, Windsor-Tecumseh, is built on automobile use, not just because we produce the vehicles—and the discouragement of the production of those vehicles would have an economic impact on our community—but also, I have an extensive riding that includes far more geography of an agricultural nature than of an urbanized one, so travelling is incredibly important. Just the way history has gone, the density is not there to sustain alternatives to driving. We may get there some day, but we are definitely not there yet.

So the carbon tax assumes that there is an alternative for the necessities of life. Now, we've had previous debate on purpose-built rentals. Having a roof over your head, to me, is a necessity of life; also, getting to work, getting to be able to provide for yourself. Heating your home is also a necessity of life, especially in the wintertime. You do not have options today that are viable, that exist.

I just had to replace my vehicle a few months ago. You know what? I'm in a privileged position because I have been a civil service member for nearly 20 years. I get compensated well for the tasks I do within the govern-

ment. And now, being here as the MPP, I would say the same. It put me in a position where I could actually change my habits by doing something many could not afford to do: I bought a used electric car when I had to replace my black Equinox from 2011.

With that, I had that option because I had the means to do it. Not everyone in our community has the means to do that. I could not afford a new electric vehicle, even today. I could not; there is no question about it. I could afford a used one. While this means that I could—it's a fantastic vehicle for urban driving. For me to be able to get to say, London, Ontario, is not in the cards. I'm going to run out of battery life by the time I get to the ONroute over in West Lorne. As a consequence, it really limits my opportunity to add to that impact, including my ability to actually get here in the most environmentally sensible way.

That's why I rely on VIA Rail exclusively. I've never flown. I have driven a couple of times, but mostly I take the train, as my predecessor, Percy Hatfield, always did. In fact, I was often on that route between Toronto and Windsor—well, not often, but it seems like every time I was on that train, MPP Hatfield was there, and I always had a great opportunity to engage with him on those trips.

So in preparing for today and the decision as to whether to exempt the consumption tax or not—and the carbon tax is a consumption tax, as is the HST. All these mechanisms are intended to discourage behaviour, discourage consumption, so the more that you consume, the more you pay. On a theoretical basis, I think a lot of economists say this is actually the right way to go, and I think that point has been raised. But it's on a presumption that there are alternatives available to you, and we certainly don't have that across Ontario. Maybe there are communities that do have a variety of options. But I would say, my community of Windsor and Tecumseh, we're not there when it comes to providing alternatives for some of these costs. How do we get out of it? There is work that can be done when you have the means to do so.

Earlier today, we had the debate over the HST versus the carbon tax. I came across an article from CBC Ottawa which lamented the double-dipping of the HST charge on the amount of carbon tax charged. This was from CBC Ottawa back in 2019. This is something that I would say grinds a lot of people's gears, that government taxes tax. It truly does contribute to the affordability crisis that we've got. Actually, the motion that the House leader put forward today probably was the best of all worlds when it came to that, particularly for home heating.

In my riding, we have a development called Little River Acres. I remember visiting there multiple times. Actually, in last year's election, it was probably one of my favourite places to go to because the people of that community are just strong-willed, practical and very community-oriented. The housing, though, was built probably about 40-something years ago. There is no natural gas service; it's all electric heat. It means that there's a great deal of turnover in those properties, because the cost to heat their homes is well in excess of what the neighbourhood surrounding it has to pay on their natural gas charges. Now, a carbon tax

will maybe even the odds for those homes when it gets to its ultimate price, but at this point in time, the electric heating of a house is a pretty daunting task. So people, even though they love the neighbourhood, sometimes they just truly can't afford to live there.

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Getting back to the CBC article from 2019, they actually had a receipt from this home in Ottawa, and they were charged \$14.44 of HST on their bill, and \$42.40 of HST—sorry, the first one, the \$14.44, was carbon tax and the HST was \$42.40. Now, that was back when the price on carbon was a lot less. It was \$20 per tonne; it is currently at \$65 per tonne. So the equivalent—now, the math is not going to work perfectly, because of the tax charged on the tax, but if you take it on a strict proportional basis, the carbon was \$14.44 in 2019 and is now \$46.80—on a strictly proportional basis, when you take the price per tonne on carbon from 2019 to 2023. At the ultimate cost, when the federal program is fully implemented at \$170 per tonne, the carbon tax would be \$122.74, and that's not even counting the impact of the HST. So, from \$14.44 in 2019, to that day in the future when it becomes \$122.74, that's over \$100 more per month on heating your home.

Now, fortunately, in southwestern Ontario, we have a great climate; in Windsor-Essex, I have a great climate. I used to do winter control at the city of Windsor, and I was called in probably three times a year, because we just don't get a lot of snow these days. I don't know if there was ever a time when we got snow. I do vaguely remember snowmobiles back in the day; I don't know if they remain viable today. But still, I mean, that may accent the reason why we need to be aggressive with our carbon emissions. Because at a certain point, people down our way had snowmobiles, and now it's not cold enough to do so.

There's impact to the environment. That's why it's important to make investments like the ones with Stelco and Algoma. That's the equivalent of taking millions of vehicles off the road. There are heavy, heavy emitters out in the province of Ontario that really can make an impactful difference on our carbon emissions. And, you know, the federal government partnered with the province on changing those processes to be electric, which I applaud them for. Actually, I think it's one of a number of great examples of collaboration between the province and the federal government.

But getting back to CBC article, though, from 2019, I thought it was very interesting to see what the federal government had told the public at that point. It says, "The federal government does not expect to see any increase in HST revenue, as consumers learn to change their purchase habits.

"Most consumers would have spent the related funds on other GST/HST taxable goods and services." That's from the federal department of finance.

They also note, "Business won't suffer either, because they'll generally be able to recover the money with tax credits."

I'm not sure that our experience, four years later, is something that is what was described by the federal

government in 2019, because I look at my own habits—and, yes, I purchased an electric vehicle. That changed my habits. I probably would not have bought my 2019 Nissan Leaf in 2019, but I did in 2023. And really, it wasn't so much of a cost-based decision, because it cost me more. There's no amortization that improves my situation with an EV. The install costs for the charger plus the purchase cost was probably about \$1,500, but it's something that I can do because I have the capacity to do. But so many Ontarians do not have that, and affordability is the number one issue that I have in my riding. When I go knock on doors in Fontainebleau or just east of downtown, people are just crying for help about our situation.

This is part of being a balanced government: You can't be ideological in every single circumstance; you need to listen when people are saying you've got it wrong. I think this government has actually done that a few times. When it's gotten it wrong, it has course-corrected. And I think this is an opportunity for the federal government to also realize that it's coming too fast given the lack of development of alternatives to the current needs for consumption for home heating.

I do have Enbridge, formerly Union Gas, and Union Gas is a strong part of the community of Chatham-Kent, employs a lot of people in Chatham-Kent. So when the last government announced—did not announce, but it was leaked—that they were considering phasing out natural gas, my heart sunk for the people of Chatham-Kent, because that is such a major, major employer. If we're getting away from the use of natural gas, if that's the intention, then it is going to have a dramatic impact on rural communities like Chatham-Kent. It's certainly having an impact on mine.

Just about this time last year, I started to get the calls to my office about, "Why does my gas bill keep on going up?" They're calling on the province to intervene, force the OEB to cap the charge on natural gas. The honest truth is that it's going up because of the carbon tax. This is something that not within our ability to address; although it was mentioned that if we had our own cap-and-trade program that would equally affect natural gas, we would be rid of it.

At the end of the day, if we do believe that making sure someone has got a roof over their head and is not going to have to live in a spot where there's no access to heat because they can't pay their bill, that's not a public good; the public good is finding things in a pragmatic and balanced way. And that means considering the impacts of your decisions on the people affected by them.

Now, getting back to the motion at hand, the motion is: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating."

We've heard—I don't need to rehash what the federal Minister Hutchings had said, that it was direct result of political will by the Atlantic caucus in the federal government. In my seat in Windsor-Tecumseh, I've got a Liberal member as well, and do you know what? I really should pick up the phone with him and ask him why, if we have so many more caucus members in the federal government

than Atlantic, did the numbers not work where having a less-polluting form of home heating, why is that not a consideration for some relief? Because the federal government made a few statements, and I'm going to bring them up in just a moment, but they really spoke to the importance of putting money back in people's pockets.

Minister Hutchings said, "I can tell you the ... Atlantic caucus was vocal with what they've heard from their constituents. And perhaps they need to elect more Liberals on the Prairies so that we can have that conversation as well.

"Trust me, Atlantic Canada, the Atlantic caucus, came with these options.

"They presented them to the Prime Minister, they presented them to cabinet. They said this is what we think will work in rural Canada."

The Prime Minister did give an answer to that: "If you live in a rural community, you don't have the same options that people who live in cities do. We get that. So this is more money in your pocket to recognize those realities, even as we continue to fight climate change...."

Actually, the Prime Minister is not wrong on this. I started in mentioning the geography of my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. We have a significant rural footprint, and we don't have the density. We don't have the alternatives in place in our community that you may enjoy in a larger one. To get down that road of having those alternatives, we do need a couple of further changes of federal policy beyond this one, which I support, because we do not have the alternatives today.

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But, interest rates: This is stopping multi-residential units from being built in my community—many multi-residential units. These are more affordable housing options, the ones that are coming online, because the costs to develop are not attainable for the people looking for homes. And so, we need to really get our head around this, that we cannot achieve that societal change unless those alternatives are there, and making things more expensive that are life essentials is not getting us there. It's just leading to discouragement and loss of hope. That's why this motion is a great motion, because it's reflective of the reality of today. But this is the contributor to people not being able to pay their bills and having a real worry about, what does the future hold for me?

Now, getting back to the consumption taxes: Look, we should use the tax system to encourage the behaviours that we wish to see—to me, that's actually a very Conservative philosophy—and use the tax system to discourage those behaviours that we do not want to see. Taxing things that are good—ways that someone develops themselves, someone takes care of their families, that's not the stuff we want to discourage. We do want to discourage environmental contamination and pollution. We do want to discourage needless environmental damage, and there are ways to do that. The government has demonstrated some. They may not be recognized as such, but they are legitimate and they are real.

Large emitters still have a great role to play. One of our recent red tape reduction bills brought forward the oppor-

tunity for carbon storage and opportunities to incorporate some ideas from industry. In fact, I was in Sarnia a couple months ago, and one of the people at Imperial Oil mentioned that we're on the cusp of technology that is actually going to make everything recyclable. It gave me so much hope for the future, that we are on our way to a better planet for all.

But it's still going to take some time to get there. Until that day happens, we cannot continue to tax the heck out of life essentials like home heating, like driving. We need to make sure that we can afford to take care of our families.

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

Mr. John Jordan: I want to start by thanking all the members for staying to midnight last night and participating in this debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Including you. You were here late last night.

Mr. John Jordan: Sure, I was.

Interjection.

Mr. John Jordan: Okay. Thanks, Deepak.

Thank you, Speaker, again. It's a pleasure for me to rise once again on this motion. There's been a lot of distraction on it, but given the number of people that have been willing to come up—on this side of the House, at any rate—and speak to this motion really speaks to the issue that is common amongst all our ridings, and that is affordability. People are really hurting. The cost of living has increased, in a lot of cases, beyond their means.

So when we looked at some tools, as many tools as we can, to fix this issue to address this issue of affordability, what is, in a sense, the low-lying fruit? What is the opportunity cost? What can we give up? Well, let's give up a tax that has no purpose, that has no value, a tax that is hurting people, and that's the carbon tax. We're going to chip away at it. This motion is about chipping away by taking this tax off of all home heating fuels. I'll read it again because there may be some confusion, given all the amendments: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should take immediate steps to eliminate the carbon tax on fuels and inputs for home heating."

Why is that? Why do we want this to be removed? Currently, 14% of the Canadian population is grappling with unsafe temperatures in their homes, a stark reality that underscores the pressing issue of housing affordability. Shockingly, one in 10 Canadians has missed paying a heating bill in the last 12 months, shedding light on the financial strain many individuals and families are experiencing.

To put it bluntly, Speaker, we currently live in very uncertain times, and for many Canadians, quite difficult ones at that. According to Statistics Canada, the nation's inflation rate rose to 8.1% last year alone, marking the fastest annual increase in the cost of living in decades, reaching a 39-year high.

Additionally, a major factor of inflation was food, which rose by around 10.3%. A recent report by Dalhousie University predicts that food prices will increase by another 7% in 2023. This distressing situation is exacerbated by the fact that one and a half million people in the country

are relying on food banks to meet their basic nutritional needs. A staggering seven million Canadians have been compelled to cut down on their diets, falling below recommended levels, simply because the cost of food has become unmanageable. The root cause, as argued, lies in the cumulative impact of eight years of the Prime Minister's inflationary deficits and the imposition of carbon taxes.

A critical issue that has emerged is the alarming belief held by nine out of 10 young Canadians that they may never be able to afford a home, a stark contrast to the situation eight years ago. This reality paints a picture of a housing market that has become increasingly inaccessible to the younger generation.

Moreover, one and a half million Canadians are now relying on food banks, with one in five individuals forced to skip meals due to the prohibitive cost of food. Again, that is an example of affordability issues in all our ridings, and that's why we have to do everything we can to reduce the cost of living in Ontario.

I'm going to jump to a couple of comments that were made earlier. I was really surprised by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane when he actually said that this government doesn't care about the environment. Really? No government has done more for the environment than this government. Take a look at the facts.

Interjection.

Mr. John Jordan: Actually, when it comes to protecting the environment while at the same time promoting the economy, the federal Liberals, for all their talk, could learn a lot from our government right here in Ontario. I was surprised to hear that from Timiskaming. Unlike the

federal Liberals, we don't pit ourselves against the people who we came here to represent. Actions are what this government is about. Let's talk about it.

Quickly, we provide both the tools and incentives to empower Ontarians. Hydroelectric, improving our electrical grid, providing the resources for EV—many examples of how this government has addressed the environmental issues, creating an environment for a safe and clean Ontario.

Speaker, at this time, given all the speakers that have gone before me and all the great demonstrations of how this motion will improve the lives of people in Ontario, which is why we are all here, I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): There have been six hours of debate; 19 members have spoken. Mr. Jordan has moved that the question now be put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

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

Vote deferred.

Report continues in volume B.

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Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
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Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
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Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
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Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
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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	
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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	