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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 March 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 mars 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CROATIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE CROATE

Ms. Skelly moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 81, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine croate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, everyone. I am so pleased to rise today for third reading of Bill 81, the Croatian Heritage Day Act, an act to proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day right here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the remarkable contributions of Ontarians of Croatian descent, as well as the values they bring and the important role they played in shaping the identity of Ontario. For over a century, thousands of Croatians have called Ontario home. Today, Ontario is home to over 100,000 people of Croatian descent—the largest Croatian population in Canada.

In efforts to escape the oppression of the Communist regime, Croatian immigrants began arriving in Ontario in the 1920s seeking a better life. In every corner of the province, Croatian Canadians have helped build Ontario. They worked in steel mills in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie. They worked in the mines in northern Ontario. They worked in the shipyards in Port Credit. They worked in fruit orchards and construction sites across Ontario. They have helped build this province into the economic powerhouse it is today, while building vibrant communities across the province, including in my community of Hamilton.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians of Croatian descent have been committed to maintaining their culture, heritage and traditions, but they have also been open to our Canadian culture and traditions as well. The great Canadian game of hockey welcomed Frank and Peter Mahovlich from Timmins. Frank played for the Toronto Maple Leafs and was part of the 1966-67 team that won the Stanley Cup. Now, I grew up in Sudbury—and I'm very old—and I

remember collecting stamps for the Esso books, and the Mahovlich brothers were a big part of those books—they were key players. In fact, Frank was named one of the 100 greatest NHL players of all time.

The Mahovlich brothers were not the only athletes of Croatian descent who excelled in their preferred sport. Football, figure skating and boxing saw many Ontario Croatians reach global success. But, Speaker, it was soccer that was clearly their passionate sport. Soccer is an important part of the fabric of the Croatian community. When immigrants arrived in Canada, they quickly established soccer clubs to stay connected and share the love of the game with anyone who wanted to join. Today, Ontario has 12 clubs that are members of the Croatian National Soccer Federation of Canada and USA.

The game of soccer is what inspired the establishment of the Croatian Sports and Community Centre of Hamilton, also known as Croatia Hamilton. The organization was established to promote soccer, as well as provide a clubhouse and other conveniences for the use, enjoyment and relaxation of members. The club was also developed to promote Croatian dance, music, literature and all other forms of Croatian culture for the benefit of its members and their families. Today, the sports centre has become a social hub for the Croatian community in Hamilton, offering a wide range of sports and recreational programs to keep people active and connected.

The following excerpt from a book printed in 1966 can help explain Croatia Hamilton's beginnings, hinting at the passion, the patriotism and national pride that the club was born out of and continues to boast today:

"The Sports Club Croatia Hamilton, Ontario, was established in 1957. Due to some technical and organizational difficulties it stopped operating in 1960 but was reinstated in 1962. After the reorganization, Croatia Hamilton, the men's soccer team under the guidance of head coach Stjepan Stankovic, became a member of the Inter-City League.

"On the field, its technical and skilled performances earned the club success. In the early years the team flourished and garnered respect from every opponent. With each passing year Croatia Hamilton was regarded as one of the best organizations in the city.

"Not only was Croatia Hamilton established to work" to promote "the athletic development of Croatians in Hamilton, but the organization also committed resources to" promote "a Croatian national identity in a fight for a sovereign Republic of Croatia."

The club's fight for sovereignty continued into the 1990s, supporting Croatia morally and financially in the

defence of the homeland during the country's war for freedom. The club gave more than \$100,000 to Croatia for various causes, such as sponsoring Croatian orphans whose parents' lives were lost defending their native soil.

The following statement was provided by Jason Grbavac and the Croatian Sports and Community Centre of Hamilton when asked about what the passing of this bill would mean to their organization:

"This proposed bill means a great deal to not only myself as a proud child of Croatians who left their beloved Croatia for a better life over 50 years ago, but also this bill is highly significant to the many Canadian Croatians living in Ontario who work tirelessly as volunteers to promote and preserve their Croatian identity.

"As a member of the executive committee of our Croatian Community Centre in Hamilton, I can assure you that this bill holds immense importance for every member of our organization. We have been in existence since 1957 with the purpose of promoting sports and Croatian culture for the benefit of the broader community, which now also includes active participation from non-Croatians in the area.

"Hamilton Croatia is proud to be a place that unites and fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging for Croatians and friends of the Croatian community in Ontario.

"I have two children," Jason said, "who turn 11 and 9 this year, and like so many others, this next generation is actively involved in many of these programs to carry on the important traditions and community relationships that are formed in community centres like Hamilton Croatia."

Another significant organization in Hamilton which supports the Croatian culture and heritage is the Croatian National Home. In the decade prior to the First World War, Croats migrated from New York to Ontario in search of work. Many established a permanent settlement in the Niagara Peninsula. Records of the audit committee of the Croatian National Home state that five or six Croatian families had settled in Hamilton by 1918.

Mr. Speaker, by 1928, a large wave of Croats moved to Hamilton, ultimately settling in the neighbourhood surrounding Beach Road. A large percentage of these settlers were men, either single or who were forced to leave their families temporarily behind in Croatia. A desire grew among these men for a place where they could congregate and socialize. These early immigrants founded Croatian Fraternal Union Lodge 644, but they did not have a location to call home. So, they decided to build a community centre which later became the Croatian National Home, or, for many, the "Dom" or the "Hall." This became the very first Croatian National Home in Canada.

0910

The story of the Croatian National Home is just one of many examples of the strong Croatian culture here in Canada. Under the great leadership of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada was among the first group of nations to recognize an independent Croatia, leading our allies—including the US and UK—in extending recognition as well. As allies and members of NATO,

Canadian and Croatian troops have served alongside each other on missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo to advance peace and human rights.

While bringing this bill forward, I have had the opportunity to work alongside Ante Jović, Croatian consul general. Ante has been an incredible force in the advancement of the Croatian Heritage Day Act. I asked the consul general to share what the passing of this bill would mean to him and the Croatian community of Ontario, and he shared the following:

"Croatians in Ontario have woven a vibrant tapestry of contributions, enriching the province with their diverse talents, steadfast work ethic, and rich cultural heritage. For over a century, Croatian immigrants have played an important role in Ontario's development and prosperity. From arts and sciences to business, sports, and community service, Croatians have left an indelible mark, exemplifying excellence in various fields. The vibrant Croatian culture and traditions have brought colour and vitality to Ontario's communities, contributing to the province's cultural mosaic. Through their commitment to their new home, Croatians have become integral members of Canadian society, embodying the values of resilience, integrity, and community spirit. Their contributions to Ontario's social, cultural, and economic fabric continue to be celebrated and cherished, serving as a testament to the enduring legacy of Croatians in the province.

"As Croatian consul general, I am profoundly proud of the Croatian community in Ontario. The Croatian Heritage Day is a momentous occasion, one that not only recognizes the rich cultural tapestry and identity of Croatians in Ontario but also celebrates their enduring legacy and invaluable contributions to the province. It is a privilege to witness this recognition of the Croatian community's achievements, and I am filled with pride as the Croatian community embarks on a new chapter of their Canadian story."

To reiterate, Madam Speaker, I brought this bill forward because I believe all Ontarians can benefit from acknowledging and celebrating all that Croatian Ontarians have done to enrich our society. With the passage of this bill, Croatian Heritage Day will allow all Ontarians to become more familiar with the culture, heritage, traditions and contributions of Croatian Canadians. It is my hope that each year on May 30, Ontarians will mark Croatian Heritage Day by celebrating and giving thanks for the important role Croatian Ontarians have had in promoting multiculturalism, building our province, growing our economy and making our country proud on the world stage.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Today, we gather in the Legislature to celebrate the rich tapestry of Ontario's cultural diversity and pay tribute to one of the most vibrant communities: Canadians of Croatian heritage.

First and foremost, recognizing Croatian Heritage Day acknowledges the rich history and traditions of Croatian people. From their vibrant folk music and dances to the

delicious cuisine and intricate crafts, Croatians have a unique cultural heritage that deserves to be honoured and celebrated.

Furthermore, the Croatian community in Ontario has played an integral role in shaping our province's identity. Through their hard work, entrepreneurship and cultural initiatives, Croatian Canadians have enriched our society in countless ways. They have excelled in various fields, including business, academia, sports and arts, leaving a remarkable impression on Ontario's history and heritage.

Imagine, if you will, the resilience and determination of those Croatian immigrants who arrived in Ontario in the 1920s, fleeing the shackles of oppression under the Communist regime. They sought not only refuge, but also the promise of a better life. Today, Ontario stands as a testament to their perseverance, home to over 100,000 proud individuals of Croatian descent, the largest Croatian population in Canada.

Among them, we find shining examples of success and achievement that inspire all of us. Consider the story of Robert Herjavec, a true embodiment of the Canadian dream. From humble beginnings, he rose to prominence as an investor on *Dragons' Den* and *Shark Tank*, proving that with hard work and determination, anything is possible. Or reflect on the contributions of scientists like Asaf Durakovic, whose expertise in nuclear and radiation medicine has advanced our understanding of health and safety.

Yet it is not just in the realms of business and science that Ontarians of Croatian heritage excel. Athleticism runs deep in the Croatian identity, producing world-class athletes who have proudly represented Ontario on the global stage. Take, for instance, the legendary boxer George Chuvalo, a five-time Canadian heavyweight champion renowned for his unparalleled resilience in the ring, facing off against some of the greatest fighters of his time without ever tasting defeat.

And let us not forget the Mahovlich brothers, Frank and Peter, whose storied careers in the NHL culminated in Stanley Cup victories, bringing glory to their hometown of Timmins and to Ontario as a whole. From figure skaters Sandra and Val Bezic to football standout Tony Mandarich, Ontarians of Croatian descent have left, in very remarkable ways, a mark on the sporting world, embodying the spirit of determination and excellence.

But beyond individual achievements, the Croatian community has played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of Ontario. Their values of hard work, resilience and community have helped build our province into a beacon of opportunity and inclusivity.

Celebrating Croatian Heritage Day is not just about paying homage to the past. It's also about fostering unity and understanding in our multicultural society. By recognizing the contributions of Croatian Canadians, we promote inclusivity and appreciation for the diverse tapestry of cultures that make up our province. By proclaiming May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day, the province of Ontario acknowledges not only the remarkable contributions of Ontarians of Croatian descent, but also the

values they embody—values that continue to enrich our province and strengthen our collective identity.

In recognizing Croatian Heritage Day, we honour the past, celebrate the present and embrace the future—a future where diversity is not just celebrated, but cherished as the cornerstone of our strength and resilience as a province. Moreover, establishing Croatian Heritage Day serves as an opportunity to strengthen ties between Ontario and Croatia. It provides a platform of culture exchange, collaboration and dialogue between our two nations, fostering goodwill and mutual understanding.

In addition, celebrating Croatian Heritage Day can boost tourism and cultural awareness in Ontario. It offers residents and visitors alike the chances to learn about Croatian history, traditions and customs through festivals, exhibitions and educational programs. This is not only promoting cultural diversity, but it also stimulates economic growth and great opportunities for local businesses and artisans.

0920

As I prepared this special tribute to their contribution in Canada, I am deeply encouraged. As a Chinese immigrant—I came from Hong Kong—what they have achieved is really contributing to a lot. That sets a great example for all of us, and they are our role models.

Lastly, honouring Croatian Heritage Day demonstrates Ontario's commitment to preserving and promoting cultural heritage for future generations. By officially recognizing and celebrating the contributions of Croatian Canadians, we send a powerful message of respect, inclusion and appreciation of all cultures within our society.

In conclusion, I urge you all to support the establishment of Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario. Let us come together to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Croatian community, promote diversity and inclusivity and strengthen the bonds of friendship between Canada and Croatia.

Let us stand together hand in hand as we pay homage to the rich cultural mosaic that is Ontario and reaffirm our commitment to building a more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

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

MPP Jamie West: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Nickel Belt.

Speaker, before I begin, I want to introduce a friend of mine who is not going to be able to be here for question period but came down from Sudbury. Bruce McComber is joining us in the gallery. I think he's excited to be here. I think he's even more excited to meet the member for Kiiwetinoong today as well.

Bruce has done a lot of things for the Indigenous community in my riding, including recognizing the importance of Ramsey Lake and the original name of Bitimagamasing, which means "the water that lies beside the hill." Welcome to Queen's Park, Bruce.

I want to begin by recognizing and thanking the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook for Bill 81, which would proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day.

The member from Niagara Centre wasn't able to speak to the bill today and asked if I could share some words that were from Nicholas Turkovich, a 22-year-old member of the Croatian National Home in Welland. Nicholas had this to say: "The Croatian community of Niagara is a large and proud heritage group which has played an important role in the history of the region.

"Croatsians hold a very unique and vibrant culture filled with music, dance, food and language.

"They take every chance to celebrate and share their culture with others in festivals across the region.

"Through the building of cultural community centres, churches, and banquet halls, Croatian heritage has been able to thrive in Niagara throughout the generations by fostering a sense of belonging.

"Bill 81, the Croatian Heritage Day Act, very graciously recognizes the vibrant community that the Croatian people of Niagara have been able to grow over the last century.

"It beautifully commemorates the contributions that Croatsians have made to the Niagara region and beyond.

"We at the Croatian National Home in Welland thank MPP Jeff Burch for allowing us to speak about our culture and share our heritage's history in Niagara, and we thank the Ontario Legislature for considering the Croatian community with Bill 81."

When I was speaking about this, knowing the member is originally from Sudbury, I was trying to think of what I would say that she wouldn't cover already. I'm sure we've both been to the Croatian hall on Kathleen. But I was thinking about this bill in particular. Typically on Thursday mornings, Speaker, the member is in the Chair. I know from personal conversations, one of the things she loves most about being here as an MPP is being a Deputy Speaker, and I think it's very telling that she gave up the Chair to speak to this bill today and bring forward her bill today and chose the importance of this bill to her and her community. I want to recognize that.

While I was looking for stories to share about the Croatian hall that would go beyond having a beer and watching soccer or their love for soccer, I found this article from the Croatia Week newspaper from November 2023, and this phrase caught my eye: "There, in the heart of mining country, the story of ... Sudbury's Croatian community is not just a narrative; it is a love letter to the past, a celebration of the present, and a promise to the future."

There's nothing I could write that would be better than this article. It's from Croatia Week newspaper from November 2023. It's titled, "Visit to Sudbury—A Love Letter to Croatian Identity and a Tear for Vukovar."

"In the heart of Ontario's north, a story of longing, love, and heritage unfolds within Sudbury's lakes of (g)old. It is there too, amidst the rugged landscapes and sky-soaring chimneys, that the Croatian identity found its roots in Canada.

"It is in Sudbury that the inaugural Canadian-Croatian Folklore Festival cast its enchanting spell 49 years ago, weaving tales of tradition and pride that still echo through generations.

"Sudbury, a crucible of Croatian culture, proudly cradles Adria—the oldest Croatian soccer club in Canada, a testament to the enduring passion that beats within the hearts of its people.

"In 1934, against the backdrop of a world in flux, the Croatian Center in Sudbury emerged as a beacon of unity. Its foundations, laid with a commitment to preserve and celebrate Croatian heritage, stand as a testament to the resilience of a community that weathered the winds of change.

"There, in the heart of mining country, the story of ... Sudbury's Croatian community is not just a narrative; it is a love letter to the past, a celebration of the present, and a promise to the future....

"The Croatian community in Sudbury stands as a cultural cornerstone, a testament to the enduring significance of preserving one's heritage in the embrace of a foreign land. Beyond the geographic boundaries, this community serves as a living bridge, connecting the present to a storied past."

I just thought that was beautiful, and so there's nothing more I can say.

I'm very proud to support Bill 81, which would proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I do agree that this is a beautiful letter that was written by Nilgiri Pearson, who is a lifelong Sudburian. He studied history at Laurentian University and law at Trinity College in Dublin. He is currently finishing a master of arts in humanitarian action. And he is the co-coordinator of Lifeline Sudbury, an umbrella group working with private sponsors of refugees in Sudbury.

His article goes on to talk about the building of the railroad way back. Sudbury is "a city of immigrants. The irony is that ... for old-stock Sudburians, digging down to demonstrate how deep your roots in the region go only brings you closer to someone from somewhere else.

"Every one of the railwaymen"—they were all men—"who spent the spring and summer of 1883 cutting lines for the CPR across" Nickel Belt, the "outcrops, and on through the dense ... brush that covered ... were" all "new-comers. It was a bit like Noah's Ark.... Among these men were representatives of Sudbury's now-iconic ethnic communities"—and one of them is the Croatian community.

"They founded communities within a community and over the next half-century welcomed an ... influx of immigrants, many fleeing ... instability and economic privation in Europe"—many of them Croatian.

The story goes on about the Croatian soccer club in Sudbury. You have to realize that some of those Croatian descendants have been playing soccer for the Croatian team in Sudbury for 58 years. When you play in the same tournament year after year, facing many of the very same opponents, there are relationships that are built between people of Croatian descent from all over Ontario and part of the US.

0930

For the better part of the 58 years of the Croatian national soccer tournament between Canada and the US, what we call Croatia Adria—this is the name of the Croatian soccer club in Sudbury—have entered every single one, every single year. They assemble a core of local players. They travel to Hamilton, to Toronto, to London and across the border to Milwaukee, Chicago and New York. There are some very well-known Croatian players in Sudbury. One of them is Mr. Prodanovic, who played, I would, say in every one of those. He unfortunately passed recently, but he certainly made a big mark on Sudbury as well as on the soccer club.

The local crew has been very thankful because they did become front and centre when Croatia Adria, from Sudbury, broke through to capture the prestigious show-down for the very first time in September last year, celebrating their victory at the communal gathering place off of Froot Road that weekend. They called it the torch being passed on.

While long-time men's league defensive player Martin Martic was still there, he was filling the role of team manager after accompanying Prodanovic, the man I was just talking about, and so many others on this annual Labour Day weekend game, and he brought in a new generation. When you come home with a trophy, a lot of people start to look at you and a lot of younger Croatian men—it's a men's league—are interested in joining the league.

They went on to say that Laurentian University coach Tony Tagliaferro played a big part in teaching the Croatian team and bringing them to victory and they were happy for that.

I can go on to name the team that they played against and how they won, but what I really wanted to share is how proud our community was, how much they supported the Croatian team. It was a really nice gathering for everybody. Happy events like this in a community make our community stronger, make our community closer to one another and that was really, really nice to see.

I know that the member has talked about a Croatian man that is a big leader of our community. His name is Dario Zulich. Dario Zulich was mentioned as one of the very well-known Croatian men throughout Ontario who happens to be in our community. He is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario. He holds an honours degree in business administration. He returned to Sudbury to lead his family business as general manager of Zulich Enterprises, one of the largest real estate and developers in northeastern Ontario. For almost 20 years he continues to be the CEO of TESC Contracting, one of Ontario's largest industrial contracting business—all this coming from a Croatian immigrant to our province.

In recent years he has acquired four incredible sports teams. The first one is the Sudbury Wolves Hockey Club. The Sudbury Wolves are an OHL team located in Sudbury. They play in downtown Sudbury on a regular basis. I can tell you that the arena presently holds 4,500 seats and on Friday, when they played, they had sold over

5,000 tickets. That means that a lot of us get to stand for the whole game because you don't get assigned a seat because the arena is packed.

This is in part the work of Dario Zulich. Dario is always there, at every game. He will come and walk around, and basically talks to anybody who wants to talk to him. He's always dressed in black pants and a very nice, crisp white shirt. He always has a big smile. At every game, you will see Dario. He will walk through the arena and he will talk to people. He will ask them anything: "Is the music too loud? Do you like the popcorn? Is this okay?" He really wants it to be a fun event for everybody, and it is. As I said, every home game of the Sudbury Wolves, the arena is packed. I will go on to some of the special events that they do.

He also acquired the Spartans football club, which is the local men's football club. He is the owner of the Sudbury Five basketball team. We never had a basketball team in Sudbury before. We had the teams that play for the college and the university. Laurentian University's men's and women's basketball teams have done very well. But now we have a professional basketball team, thanks to Dario Zulich.

The professional basketball team is just so, so much fun. It's always packed with a lot of families, a lot of kids. They really make it interesting. They will come on and ask you to clap in a certain way or cheer in a certain way, and if you do, then the camera comes on you and everyone can see that you're cheering the right way—but only for children. So if you have children with you and they will tell you to clap this way or cheer that way, if a kid goes on, you will see him or her on the big screen. It makes it a lot of fun.

A lot of young people are now interested in basketball, interested in playing sports, because, again, Dario Zulich brought professional basketball to Sudbury, and people really, really enjoy it. Last fall, he just brought a professional soccer team to Sudbury, so it will be interesting to see what the next season will look like.

This is what he has done with sports. It has attracted new tourists who come to our region and also expanded the opportunity for employment. Laurentian University has a big program for sport, so a lot of the people who manage the sports teams, who support the players and all of this, are graduates of our local university. That works.

Dario, over the years, has served as a member of various boards within the city of Greater Sudbury, including the United Way Centraide, the Sudbury and district chamber of commerce, and the Laurentian University Next 50 Campaign. And he was the chair of the YMCA building committee for the Centre for Life. The YMCA and the Centre for Life share a building. The Centre for Life focuses more on elderly people, while the YMCA is a regular YMCA where you have a big pool and you have sports activities for every age group. Our Sudbury wellness hub is also within the Sudbury YMCA.

I wanted to share this because Dario is also the co-founder of the Wolves United organization. It's a partnership to raise support and funding for youth mental

health. We all know that the demand for support for youth who are dealing with mental health issues has risen exponentially through the pandemic and after. The new Sudbury wellness hub within the YMCA in Sudbury has done a lot of wonderful work trying to connect with youth. A lot of them, unfortunately, become homeless. A lot of them start to experiment with drugs. A lot of them choose a path that is not healthy. The youth wellness hub is able to connect with those youth, establish a relationship and then bring them into care and treatment when they're ready to do that.

0940

And Dario Zulich: Coming back to the Sudbury Wolves, there will often be a 50/50 draw and there will often be a special fundraiser specifically for youth mental health. There will be special nights that recognize—it was le Mois de la Francophonie, Francophonie Month, this month. It was the international day of francophones yesterday, so they had a special francophone event at the Sudbury Wolves, where the entire game was chronicled in French. So as they say “they pass the puck, they shoot, they score,” etc., it was all done in French by a very talented person who can describe a hockey game way better than I ever will, but it was to show the community—all this comes from a Croatian immigrant to our city.

Our city is very fortunate to have had a strong Croatian community, and we will be more than happy to support that May 31 becomes Croatian Heritage Day—la Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine croate. This is something that our community will celebrate. I have no doubt that the MPP for Sudbury and I will be there on May 31 at the Croatian hall, and I assure you that there will be big celebrations. There will be good food. There will be flags all over the place. People will have their uniforms that look like the Croatian flag that they wear on special occasions, and our community will rally behind this because we know how lucky our community has been to have this community within us.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2024.

CROATIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE CROATE

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: First of all, I would like to welcome the Croatian community here to Queen's Park today. Thank you for being here. It is my honour to speak again about this great bill that my friend the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook has introduced. I want to thank her for bringing this forward and for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill, which would proclaim Croatian Heritage Day each year on May 30.

Ontario is a dynamic and thriving multicultural community. People are coming here from across the world. As you stroll down the streets in my riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore, you will see many diverse smiles, hear various languages and smell the aroma of delicious international cuisines. As our population increases, our economy, culture and society grows. It is vital to recognize the great contributions of new Canadians to our community.

Croatians have a proud history here in Ontario dating back to the 1920s, when they immigrated looking for a better life. They are well known for their commitment to serve humanity and create a robust community. The business sector has seen some of the most remarkable contributions from Croatian immigrants, notably in information technology, hospitality, construction and manufacturing. A large number of the first Croatian immigrants found employment in my riding at the Port Credit brickyard, which later evolved into the Texaco refinery, where my father worked for 30 years and, and in its current state now, the Brightwater development in my great riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore. They helped to produce more than 15,000 bricks every day to use in construction projects across the region, including my family's home, which is directly across the street from the old brickyard and now is recognized as a heritage property by the Ontario Heritage Act.

At first, Croatian immigrants working at the brickyard were mostly male, but then women began to immigrate to Mississauga to join their husbands. These women only had letters that their husbands had sent them to rely on for information about their new home here in Canada.

While every Croatian came to Canada with a willingness to work extremely hard, women faced more barriers than men. The 1930s saw Croatian women move into semi-skilled labour positions, and from there, they set off to new positions. A page had turned in the history of Croatian women here in Canada. They were no longer only wives or domestic workers. During the Second World War, some went to work in the small arms building in Lakeview, manufacturing guns that were critical to the war that Canada was in during the Second World War.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to thank my friend who introduced this bill. I also want to thank the consul general from the Republic of Croatia here in Mississauga, Ante Jović, for his support, because without him we would

not have been able to do this bill here today. So I want to thank you for that.

As well, I can't wait to celebrate Croatian Heritage Day on May 30. Thank you. And thank you to the Croatian community that I was brought up with.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order, Speaker: I said May 31 rather than May 30. I want everybody to know that we will still be celebrating on May 31, but it will start on the 30th.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's an honour to stand before you today and advocate for the establishment of Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario to be celebrated annually on May 30. I believe all members will agree that Ontario should take the time to commemorate the cultural heritage, the achievements and contributions of Croatians to our province and beyond.

Croatian Heritage Day would not only serve as a celebration of Croatian culture but also as a recognition of the rich tapestry of diversity that makes Ontario such a vibrant and inclusive place to live. It would be a day to honour the achievements of Croatian Canadians in various fields—arts, sciences, sports, business, politics—highlighting their positive impact and contributions to our society.

The Croatian community has a long and proud history in Ontario, dating back over 100 years when the first Croatian immigrants arrived on Canadian shores. Since then, Croatians have played a significant role in shaping the cultural, social and economic fabric of our province, contributing their talents, their traditions and values to the mosaic of Ontario's identity.

By establishing Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario, we would not only pay tribute to the contributions of Croatian Canadians, but it would also be a day to celebrate the shared values of respect and solidarity that unite us all as Ontarians, regardless of background or heritage.

Furthermore, the Croatian Heritage Day will provide an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn more about Croatian culture, history and traditions, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding among different communities. It would be a day of cultural exchange, dialogue and friendship, strengthening the bonds of unity and harmony that make Ontario such a great place to live.

Speaker, I was fortunate enough to visit Croatia on a number of occasions as a member of the Canadian Forces—Zagreb, Split, Dubrovnik—and I was always struck by the elegance, by the beauty, by the art and culture that I saw everywhere. It inspired me so much that my husband and I went back for a 10-day holiday, and we loved it. I would highly recommend anyone who ever has that opportunity to do that. Time and time again, we were struck by the beauty of its landscapes, the friendliness of its people, the elegance of its food and its art and its architecture. They have so much to offer, and I wanted to say thank you to the people of Croatian heritage for

sharing that with us. How lucky are we that you have chosen to share that grand heritage and culture and art with the people of Ontario?

0950

In conclusion, I heartily support Bill 81 to officially recognize May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in our province. Let us come together to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Croatian community and reaffirm our commitment to each other. Together, we will celebrate Croatian heritage and history and we will celebrate a vibrant Ontario for future generations.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the resident of Simcoe—Grey this morning to join the debate on Bill 81, an act to proclaim May 30 each year as Croatian Heritage Day. I want to congratulate my colleague from Flamborough—Glanbrook on bringing this private member's bill forward and thank you for the opportunity to join the debate this morning.

Diversity makes us stronger, and the opportunity to celebrate that diversity and recognize the important ways that other cultures and their heritage enrich our province to make us a stronger and more inclusive and more resilient society is worth celebrating and is the reason for this bill.

Following the defeat and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War, the southern Slav people formed a new kingdom which included historic Croatian lands. It was known initially as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and, in 1929, changed its name to Yugoslavia, which translates to “the land of the South Slavs.”

As noted in the preamble to the bill, Croatian immigrants escaping the oppression of the Communist regime began arriving in Ontario in the 1920s, seeking a better life. They worked in steel mills in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie, in mines in northern Ontario and on construction sites across Ontario, and I know they worked in the Collingwood shipyards as well.

They established vibrant communities across the province including Windsor, Welland, Hamilton, Mississauga, Toronto, and further north in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie. Today, Ontario is home to over 100,000 people of Croatian descent, the largest Croatian population in Canada, and the contributions of Ontarians of Croatian descent have been numerous.

Moreover, athleticism is an important part of the Croatian identity. As an aging athlete, I am a great believer in the saying that life imitates sport so I would like to focus my comments this morning on the great Croatian Canadian athletes that many of us grew up cheering for as they competed in Canada and for Canada. They entertained us, they represented us with distinction, and they made us proud to be Canadians.

The Mahovlich brothers, Frank and Peter, have Croatian parents and are National Hockey League legends. Frank, also known as the “Big M,” joined the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1957, winning the Calder Memorial

Trophy as rookie of the year and he won four cups with the Maple Leafs in 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1966.

Hon. Stan Cho: Ah, the good old days.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: They are the glory days; you're absolutely right. And for us long-suffering fans, the years have grown far too distant since those great days.

Frank also won two Stanley Cups with the Montreal Canadiens in 1971 and 1973. Frank's younger brother, Peter, known as "Little M," even though he towered over his older brother, won four Stanley Cups with the Montreal Canadiens, two with his brother and two more after Frank had been traded, in 1976 and 1977.

Peter joined his brother Frank on Team Canada for the memorable Summit Series against the Soviet Union in 1972, and the two brothers were key contributors to that historic victory, which has come, really, to be a watershed moment in Canada's hockey history.

There are few hockey fans who watched that series who cannot recall in great detail where they were when Paul Henderson scored the winning goal in game 8 with 34 seconds left in regulation time. And the Mahovlich brothers are just one of numerous accomplished sibling duos of Croatian descent to embrace what for many Canadians is our national game, hockey, and to play in the NHL.

The Pavelich brothers were skating in the NHL before the Mahovlich brothers had ever put on skates, and their careers spanned four decades, from the 1940s to the 1970s. Older brother Marty played 10 seasons with the Detroit Red Wings during their heyday and was a member of four Stanley Cup teams with the Red Wings, in 1950, 1952, 1954 and 1955.

Marty's younger brother, Matt, debuted in the NHL in 1956 as a linesman and retired 23 years later, in 1979, after working 1,727 regular season games, 245 playoff games and seven Stanley Cup finals. In 1987, Matt was the first linesman ever to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

And there were the Sakic brothers, Joe and Brian, another dynamic Croatian brother duo. Joe Sakic won two Stanley Cups with the Colorado Avalanche as a player in 1996 and 2001 and another as the Avalanche general manager in 2022—only the second player to do that with his own organization. Joe was also a key member of Team Canada in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, where Canada won gold. And we all know the famous story of the loonie under centre ice.

Brother Brian was drafted by the Washington Capitals in 1990, but never played in the NHL. He played professional hockey in the Western Hockey League and had his jersey number retired by the Tri-City Americans, with whom he set WHL records for career assists and points.

And there are the Kordic brothers, John and Dan. They are the fourth sibling duo with Croatian heritage to play in the NHL. John played in the NHL for seven seasons and won a Stanley Cup with the Montreal Canadiens in 1986, and his brother, Dan, played for the Philadelphia Flyers for over five seasons.

There are, of course, other Croatian Canadian NHLers who have won the Stanley Cup, such as Cory Sarich, but these four brother duos are unique, not just because of their Croatian heritage but also because they won a total of 18 Stanley Cups between them—a truly remarkable feat. As new Canadians, they embraced our national sport, they excelled beyond all expectations and they made a place for themselves in our hockey lore.

Continuing with the siblings theme, Sandra and Val Bezic are another example of a Croatian sibling duo that excelled on the ice beyond all expectations as pair figure skaters. Sandra and Val were Canadian champions five times, from 1970 to 1974 inclusive, and placed a very respectable ninth at the 1972 Winter Olympics in Sapporo, Japan.

Speaker, the name of George Chuvalo, which has been mentioned previously, is another Canadian sports legend with Croatian heritage, and he's very well known to sports fans in Canada and around the world. He was Canada's heavyweight champion for 20 years and a two-time world heavyweight title challenger. George fought many of the heavyweight greats, including Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and George Foreman. He had 93 professional bouts and is famous for never being knocked down in his entire career.

Tragically, George faced his biggest losses outside the ring as he lost three sons and his wife to addictions and mental health struggles. Speaker, he faced those losses head-on, speaking candidly and openly about his family's mental health struggles long before it was mainstream. He was perseverance and determination personified, both in and outside the ring, and for that, he won the admiration of Canadians everywhere.

I'd like to use my remaining time just to speak about my personal connection with Croatia and, in particular, Zagreb, the capital and largest city in Croatia. During my time on the Canadian rowing team, I had the great pleasure to race in Zagreb in 1987 at the world student games. I was a member of the coxed four. It is a beautiful 13th-century city, surrounded by pastoral countryside, and it had a state-of-the-art rowing course, perhaps one of the best courses I raced on in my time racing internationally. The final was a hard-fought and closely contested race that saw us finish third, within a second of the Italians and less than a second ahead of the Yugoslavian crew.

That, Madam Speaker, is an important note, because during my time on the national rowing team, one of the things that I got to witness first-hand was geopolitical shifts and changes in our world. We saw the coming down of the Berlin Wall. In 1988, I raced against the East and West German crews; in 1990, I raced against the unified Germany. In 1988, I raced against the Yugoslavian crew, that same crew that we raced in 1987, and I'm sad to say, they beat us that race. Then, in 1992, I raced against Croatia and Slovenia as separate nations, after Yugoslavia broke up during the Bosnian War.

Having a first-hand seat to those changes internationally gave me an understanding and appreciation not only for the athletes, but for the heritage and the places

they came from. It's a shifting world and we need to take time out to celebrate our heritage communally and collectively, and this is such a great opportunity in this House this morning to do that.

Today, the Croatian rowing program is thriving, and, once again, a sibling duo is their top crew, with back-to-back Olympic gold medals in two different events. Martin and Valent Sinković won gold in the men's heavyweight double at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and, four years later, won gold in the men's heavyweight pair at the 2021 Tokyo games. Interestingly, this is only the second time in Olympic history that this feat has been accomplished. I'm very proud to say that Canada's own Kathleen Hedde and Marnie McBean, my teammates in 1992, were the first ever to accomplish this feat, winning gold in the women's heavyweight pair in Barcelona in 1992, where they also won gold as members of the Canadian women's eight, and four years later, they won in the women's heavyweight double at the Atlanta games in 1996.

My last connection to Yugoslavia is my coach, Boris Klavora, he himself an Olympian rower who represented Yugoslavia in the heavyweight eight at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. To me, I think Boris really represents the spirit of Yugoslavia and Croatia. He is determined and analytical, with an infinite capacity to challenge himself fearlessly and relentlessly. Indeed, it is these traits that make our Croatian Canadians such accomplished athletes and valued members of our communities across the province, and it is just one of the many ways our Croatian communities make Ontario stronger, more inclusive and more resilient.

That is why I will be supporting Bill 81.

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

Ms. Skelly has moved third reading of Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Congratulations.

Orders of the day? I recognize the deputy House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): There being no further business, the House stands recessed until 10:15.

The House recessed from 1002 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PERSIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Good morning, Speaker. Just two days ago, the Persian community around the world came together to celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year,

marking the beginning of spring and a season of renewal and hope.

This year's Nowruz celebration included the Haftseen Bazaar celebration in Oakville. I was happy to attend this amazing celebration and event in my home riding of Oakville. Over the course of three days in March, the Haftseen Bazaar became a hub of joy and cultural exchange. I want to recognize and thank Bitā Fanaei, whose dedication brought to life an event that was nothing short of incredible.

Persian Heritage Month is celebrated throughout March. Thanks to the great members from Carleton and Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed Bill 271 in 2021, proclaiming March as Persian Heritage Month.

With thousands of years of history and tradition, Persian culture is rooted in one of the oldest civilizations. From ancient Mesopotamia to Cyrus the Great's founding of the first Persian empire and beyond, Persians have held a home at the centre of countless empires, trade routes and cultures for centuries.

Over the past century, Ontario has been proud to welcome tens of thousands of Persian immigrants, growing into the largest Persian community in Canada.

I want to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous Nowruz, and may this year be the fresh beginnings of peace and happiness.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: During pre-budget consultations, the finance committee had the opportunity to hear from people across the province who are struggling. Despite living in the richest province in Canada and during a cost-of-living crisis, our provincial government skimps on paying for the services that people need right now.

Educators in my community are running their classrooms on as little as \$100 per year. How does that set kids up for success? Boards are running massive deficits while the government refuses to cough up money for legally mandated increases to CPP and EI. Conservatives are failing.

Education is an investment. Decades of Liberal and Conservative disinvestment and cost-cutting targeting Ontario's youth have resulted in an education system on the brink. Remember when a Conservative minister admitted on a hot mike they were deliberately creating a crisis in education so they could cut, destroy and privatize? Here we are again.

Children are our greatest resource, yet governments reward their rich buddies while Ontario's kids go without. School violence is at an all-time high and kids aren't getting mental health supports. Conservatives pretend there are supports in schools, but no one across the province said they could access them. Ontario is dead last when it comes to post-secondary funding—dead last. Conservatives are getting an F grade in education.

Stabilize the system. Give kids the tools to succeed. Reverse the \$1,200 cut per elementary and secondary

student you've made since 2018. Help post-secondary institutions make young people's dreams a reality by increasing funding with annual compounded increases of 11.75% for the next five years.

You have the money. Spend it on kids. It's their future. You can do it in budget 2024.

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today, I rise to recognize a great Canadian and Taiwanese hero, Dr. George Leslie Mackay. As we take the opportunity to celebrate him today, on what would be his 180th birthday, his legacy of service to the people of Taiwan has never been more prominent.

George Leslie Mackay was born and raised right in Oxford, near the village of Embro. Mackay charted new paths as the first Presbyterian missionary to Taiwan. He went on to establish a mission in the town of Tamsui, which remained his home for the rest of his life.

Mackay embraced the island's customs, traditions and people. His generous and accepting spirit compelled him to serve his community any way that he could. He spent almost 30 years building schools, founding churches and practising dentistry in his adopted homeland.

Mackay advocated for women's rights and spoke against discrimination and championed public health care. Some of his most notable accomplishments include building Taiwan's first school for girls and a major hospital in Tamsui.

On his birthday, we celebrate Mackay's legacy of investing in Taiwan. Having laid the foundations for innovative education and a cutting-edge health care system, Mackay would be proud to see Taiwan reap the benefits of its now prosperous and mature democracy.

1020

As our trade ties become stronger every year with increasing bilateral investments, I'm grateful to Dr. George Leslie Mackay for helping to establish an enduring friendship and shared confidence between Taiwan and Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: This morning, I want to share examples from my riding of why privatization of the health care system is harmful. We all know that when the Conservative government of Mike Harris was in power, they privatized home care. Private companies were going to make home care more efficient, serve more people, offer more care. None of that is true. The privatization of home care made hundreds of millions of dollars for private companies' shareholders and dire repercussions for people needing care.

Take Tina Senior's beautiful six-year-old son Alex. Bayshore gets paid for 1.5 hours of nursing care daily when Alex is in school, but they only schedule the nurse for 15 minutes. What happened? His mom, Tina, a nurse

with over 20 years' experience, had to quit her job to keep her son safe.

Mrs. C from Hanmer agreed to take her husband home from the hospital while he awaits placement in a long-term-care home with home care services. Of course, home care never shows up when they're supposed to. But get this, Speaker: They have a meeting, and her daughter mentioned that she would be there after work to help care for her dad. Now the only time Bayshore is available is after 4, when the daughter is there and when the family said, "We don't need you." Bayshore takes that as refused care, a cancelled appointment. They get paid, and the family gets zero care. This woman is burning out.

The list goes on. The privatization does money for shareholders, suffering for people who need care.

BURLINGTON LIONS OPTIMIST MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise today to recognize the Burlington Lions Optimist Minor Hockey Association. I'd like to congratulate BLOMHA for being a successful recipient of the government of Ontario's OTF capital grant. BLOMHA received \$25,000 for new hockey equipment to promote more participation of goaltenders in minor hockey. This funding will help break down barriers for players who don't have access to goalie equipment, allowing all players the opportunity to participate in goaltending.

Hockey is an integral part of the Canadian cultural identity that brings together communities and creates lasting bonds. Players develop confidence. They learn good sportsmanship, camaraderie and a sense of community. Youth leagues like BLOMHA teach players valuable life skills, promote active lifestyles and contribute to mental health and well-being. That's why our government continues to support organizations like BLOMHA to ensure aspiring players and goaltenders have the opportunity to reach their potential goals.

SENIORS' HOUSING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Seniors in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean are being gouged by Alavida Lifestyles, and this government is letting Alavida get away with it. Residents at Park Place and the Ravines are being told that they need to pay thousands of dollars more per month in order to retain their housing. In one case, an elderly woman has been served notice of an increase of \$27,000 more per year. Another resident has received notice of a \$24,000 increase. Speaker, I doubt that there are many of us who are working who could afford to pay that kind of increase in our housing costs, and these are seniors on fixed incomes.

These residents feel like they are being forced out of their homes, forced to abandon their friends and their community. Some of them are also feeling so scared and isolated by the high-pressure tactics that Alavida has been

engaging in that they are having trouble eating and sleeping.

I reached out to the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, who said that it's not their problem. I reached out to the minister of seniors and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ask them to shut down this predatory behaviour. They literally responded with talking points, saying that retirement homes can charge whatever fees they want.

This is completely unacceptable. Seniors deserve a dignified retirement, not to have their home held hostage to increase the profits of a private developer.

Shame on this government for siding with a developer rather than with the seniors. It's time that they actually stand up for seniors and come up with a plan to stop this kind of price gouging.

SCARBOROUGH SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. David Smith: I stand today to applaud our government's \$70-billion transportation investment across Ontario, including the Scarborough subway extension, which serves Scarborough and beyond.

Our Premier's leadership of this ambitious effort enhances connectivity, minimizes travel times and reduces congestion for residents and tourists alike. Educational, employment and recreational amenities will be easily accessible.

Transportation infrastructure improves economic growth by attracting investments and creating jobs. The extension improves public transit accessibility for all residents, especially those with mobility difficulties. The Scarborough subway extension is a major step toward a more integrated, active and sustainable Scarborough and greater Toronto area.

I appreciate the Minister of Transportation, his associate minister, Scarborough MPPs and the Metrolinx team for inviting us to attend the site visit progress update—great work. We are getting it done for the people of Scarborough and beyond.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise today with profound gratitude for our government in securing uninterrupted learning for Ontario's students. For the first time in nearly a generation, our government has successfully negotiated agreements with four of Ontario's teacher unions, ensuring stability for families and students alike.

As a parent of four children, I recall the challenges we faced during teachers' strikes. Balancing responsibilities while scrambling to secure child care is not an easy feat. I do not want my children to go through similar hardships with their own children.

We are committed to equipping our young learners with the foundational skills necessary for academic success. The back-to-basics approach is well received by all parents in my riding of Richmond Hill. They say, "Finally, we have the crucial skills in reading, writing and math for

our children. Yes, it lays a solid groundwork for our students' future academic endeavours."

On behalf of Richmond Hill, I express my heartfelt appreciation to Minister Lecce and our Premier for championing these initiatives. Together, we are ensuring that Ontario's students receive the education they deserve—one that prepares them for the challenges of tomorrow while fostering a love for learning.

INDIGENOUS ARTWORK UNVEILING

Mr. Trevor Jones: This week the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance was proud to announce the unveiling of local Indigenous artwork at its Chatham hospital. Adding art at the Chatham site was made possible by the innovation grant program, which allowed staff, physicians, volunteers and patient advisers to bring forward ideas for positive change that benefits patients and improves the quality of the workplace.

After a call for submissions and voting by the staff engagement council, the successful entries were made by artist Celeste Noah of the Delaware Nation, which now hang proudly in the ambulatory care waiting room, the dialysis waiting room, the intensive care unit family waiting room and in the reflection space. Each piece is accompanied by a descriptive plaque for visitors and patients to learn more about its meaning. Collectively, Noah's vibrant watercolour artwork reflects the rich history and traditions of Indigenous storytelling. Hospital CEO Lori Marshall and board chair Deb Crawford were both on hand to congratulate Noah and commemorate the installation.

1030

Noah is a self-taught artist who researched and took up the hobby during the pandemic. She stated that she used her knowledge and creativity to paint her people wearing their regalia, colourful, and in motion.

Deb Crawford noted, "Ms. Noah's artwork serves as a powerful expression of connection to land, tradition, and spirituality."

I can't be more proud of our hospital's exceptional care and this young artist's successful contribution to this beautiful public space.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait plaisir de vous présenter l'Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne : Jean-François Bard, président de l'AGÉFO et surintendant de l'éducation pour le Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est; Jennifer Lamarche Schmalz, direction générale de l'AGÉFO; Jean-Guy Fréchette, Grande-Ourse Consultation; mais en particulier Guylaine Scherer, qui vient de mon comté, qui vient de Kapuskasing. Bienvenue, Guylaine. Elle est la vice-présidente de l'AGÉFO et direction des communications au conseil scolaire public du nord-est. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome to the House Director General Jin-Ling Chen and members of

the Taiwanese community who are here to celebrate the birthday of George Leslie Mackay. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I, too, on behalf of the official opposition, would like to welcome the director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Toronto, Jin-Ling Chen; staff Ethan Liao; and the rest of the members from the Taiwanese community. Welcome.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome some members from my community who are here today and who were instrumental in getting me here in this seat today. I'd like to welcome Blake Koehler, Adam Mobbs, Damon Liu, John Fiorni, Matt Buist and Stephanie McCleave. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's with great pleasure that I welcome Julia Martin and Elizabeth Martin, who I think will be here shortly. Julia is the mom of Christopher, one of our pages. We're very happy that you're in the House today. Thank you for coming.

And Speaker, I'd be remiss, even though he's not here in person—today is Ed Broadbent's birthday, and he's with me right here.

Mr. Logan Kanopathi: I'm happy to introduce and welcome Harold Wang, lead counsel for the Audemus Law Firm located in my wonderful riding of Markham—Thornhill. Trained in Canadian, American and Chinese law, he also serves as vice-president for the Canadian Fujian Business and Trade Association. He's joined by his assistant, Ashley Kwan Yi Mui, and Zijian Cui, my wonderful student assistant. Welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my great honour to welcome the amazing crew from NDP Western who are visiting Queen's Park today, including Austin Wang, Liam Solomon, Alex Wild, Marek Brooking, Can Batili, Nicholas Pestill and Ismael Sayal. You're all an inspiration.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't welcome members of my legislative and constituency team, Marie Rioux and Sarah Lehman.

I hope you have a great visit today.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to give an extra special welcome to my remarkable staff member Brooke Campbell, who also brought her father, Jim Campbell, and her brother Matthew Campbell to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to introduce folks from the Lake Simcoe area who have travelled here to recognize World Water Day: Ann Truyens, from AWARE Simcoe; Linda Wells, from Barilla Park Residents Association; Penny Trumble, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation; Rostyslaw Pityk from Innisfil District Association; Jean Ucar, Innisfree cottagers; Jack Gibbons, Lake Simcoe Watch; and Katharine Harries, Midland field naturalists. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: From the ZAKA search and rescue organization, I'd like to welcome Irene Nurith Cohn to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, following the lead of my colleague from Hamilton west, I'd also like to welcome Erik Schomann, Donna Deneault and Verne Deneault from Save Our Water Tiny township, and the Thomas Moore from Simcoe County Kairos. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If there are no objections, I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. I want to welcome to the Legislature the people from Rescue Lake Simcoe: Margaret Prophet, Claire Malcolmson, Susan Sheard, Jessica-Margaret Paige Merriman, William Alexander Agnew, Diana Wells and Carolyn V Boyer. Meegwetch for being here.

QUESTION PERIOD

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. This question is for the Premier. Speaker, the closer you look at the government's Ontario Place scheme, the worse it gets. Yesterday, we revealed a previously unknown phase 2 of the project that even involves a plan to fill in parts of Lake Ontario to build a "large-scale entertainment centre." While the minister tried to brush this off, she didn't directly deny it.

So, I want to hear from the Premier: Does he plan to fill in parts of Lake Ontario for this vanity project, yes or no?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm so sorry. I'm just trying to catch my breath here.

We announced \$3 billion for infrastructure today with the Premier and the Minister of Finance as part of the 2024 budget—very happy to see that happen.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: There is no phase 2. There is no paving of the Brigantine Cove. What we decided to do, Mr. Speaker, was instead to expand the public realm space to 50 acres. We're building a brand new stage, wellness facility, park and, as well, a new science centre, marina and food and beverage on the site. That is what we showed to the public in April; that is what we are constructing today.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I've got to tell you, that's not going to be good enough for a lot of Ontarians, because this government has hidden these plans. They've refused to answer the questions and be straightforward with people. You have to really wonder why they decided to hide these details.

Yesterday, the minister said over and over and over again that the government only plans to move the science centre to Ontario Place. They only came up with that plan in 2023. Today, the official opposition is sharing more

documents that show the plans to relocate the science centre were already in motion in January of 2020. That's three full years before the plans were announced to the public.

We need some transparency from the Premier today. When exactly did the government decide to move the science centre, and why did they hide it from the public?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, years ago—and I remember a member from Ottawa was with us when we clearly said that we wanted science-related programming on this site. That's when we started exploring the idea of bringing the science centre to Ontario Place. Mr. Speaker, the AG justified everything that we have said, that it would be less expensive for government to build a brand new facility with 10,000 more square feet of exhibition space.

What's most exciting is that Ontarians will finally have an Ontario Place that they can enjoy for years to come.

1040

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister's timeline keeps changing, and that's what happens when you make major infrastructure decisions in the shadows and the backrooms.

The government had already decided on this plan more than a year and a half before they announced that Therme won the contract. The documents we uncovered appeared to show the undisclosed attraction plan for Ontario Place has the exact same footprint as Therme's proposal—quite a coincidence.

So, Speaker, did the government give preferential treatment to Therme for its luxury spa proposal?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm happy to repeat myself again: In 2019, we did a call for development where we encouraged people to participate in the process. In 2021, we picked our partners, which are Therme and Live Nation, and in April of 2023, we presented the whole vision of Ontario Place, which included a brand new stage, 50 acres of public realm space, wellness facility and water park provided by Therme and a brand new science centre.

We have been fully transparent with the public throughout this entire process. We have consulted with close to 10,000 people throughout this process. But again, what is most important is that a site that was forgotten about by the Liberal government will now come to life and be a site that families and Ontarians can enjoy for generations to come.

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This project involves vital public land on Toronto's waterfront and hundreds of millions of dollars of public money. People deserve to know how that money is being spent and who's going to benefit, so I am going to keep asking.

Last year, the Premier confirmed that his family friend Carmine Nigro was negotiating a mysterious sole-source agreement with Ontario Live. Ontario Live happens to be run by another family friend, Zlatko Starkovski. What is

the relationship between the secret Ontario Live agreement and the secret phase 2 plan for Ontario Place?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, part of what she said was right: This is vital land, which is why we as a government decided to finally build something on these lands that families can enjoy.

The Liberals closed the site—of course, there's Trillium Park, but the rest of the site is deteriorating, is flooding, to the degree that Live Nation actually had to close down their shows in 2017. And that is acceptable to the NDP. It is not acceptable to us.

We have a vital asset on the waterfront that is not being used. We are building attractions on the site so that families can enjoy the site once again.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Public land, public money, Ford family friends—that's how it all connects.

People shouldn't have to make freedom-of-information requests to find out about a major infrastructure project happening with their money. People shouldn't need a chart of the Premier's friends and family to find out who is securing sole-source contracts.

We need this Premier and this minister to come clean about this project. So to what extent were these deals made to benefit the Premier and his personal friends?

Hon. Kinga Surma: In 2019, when the government announced that we wanted to bring Ontario Place back to life, what did we do? We had a public procurement process, a competitive process, where parties participated. The outcome of that process in 2021 was the selection of two partners, Live Nation and Therme, to build the wellness facility and the water park.

We have kept the public apprised of this project the whole way. We have spoken about this project almost on a daily basis in the Legislature, and we will continue to keep the public apprised of our project. In fact, we just wrapped up a consultation with marina operators. We are planning on rebuilding and revitalizing the marina, making it a more inclusive marina. We have every intention to bring food and beverage on the site, because we know families with children need to have a drink and they need to have food for their children and have ice cream on the site. And that is how we are proceeding, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let me get this straight: The secret sole-source deal for Ontario Place was negotiated by two Ford family friends. A private luxury spa company got a taxpayer-funded parking lot that was not offered to other bidders. The government had to change the laws so they could force this project through without being taken to court.

How can this shady deal proceed considering this government is already under investigation by the RCMP?

Interjections.

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

I'm going to caution the Leader of the Opposition on her choice of words.

To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, with the vision that we shared in April 2023, the announcement—which her colleagues attended, the public attended, the whole press gallery attended. We anticipate to have approximately, or up to, six million visitors a year. We want to make the site as accessible to the public as possible, whether they're cycling, walking, taking public transit—because of our subway expansion plan, the Ontario Line will connect to Ontario Place—but we also need to have a parking option for families. We know that seniors and families, women with children, will likely drive to the site and we want it to be as accessible for families to enjoy. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, as part of the new deal with the city of Toronto, we will continue to work with the city on the parking option to make sure that parking is available on-site for Ontario Place and for Exhibition Place.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

Neskantaga First Nation is coming on its 30th year with a boil-water advisory. That is 10,641 days. Once again, tomorrow is World Water Day. In the riding of Kiiwetinoong, I have 14 First Nations that have boil-water advisories.

Speaker, it is racism to do nothing. Next week's budget is an opportunity for change. I ask, will there be any allocations for money to lifting boil-water advisories on reserves?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Look, I can't confirm anything that will be in the budget. The member will have to wait until next Tuesday for the details of the budget.

At the same time, I know that the minister has continued to work very closely with our federal partners. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the federal government made a commitment to First Nations back in 2015 that they would provide the necessary funding to remove all boil-water advisories across the country. That is a promise that has still not been kept by the federal government. We will continue to hold their feet to the fire to make sure that we can get this promise, not only for First Nations, frankly, across the province of Ontario, but I think all First Nations across the country who are relying on the federal government to live up to this promise back in 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, tomorrow is World Water Day, March 22, and we have many people here in the gallery who have travelled from the Lake Simcoe area. They, along with the Chippewas of Georgina Island, are very concerned with the health of this beloved lake. We have a majority government. There are five Lake Simcoe area Conservative MPPs, including the Minister of the Environment, in this area. There's existing legislation dating back to 2008, and yet, we have seen no action in cleaning up the phosphorus issues in Lake Simcoe.

1050

This budget, the Conservative budget, is coming next week. Will the Premier finally adequately—adequately—fund the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, yes or no?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I really welcome the member's interest in this file. This government has been interested in protecting Lake Simcoe from day one. For instance, there's this historic project to take five tonnes of phosphorus per year out of the Holland Marsh, thanks to the actions of this Premier and this government. A project that was on the books for decades that wasn't getting done, this government is getting done.

Work is already under way, Speaker. This is a great project for the watershed, a great project for the jewel of Lake Simcoe. This builds on the millions of dollars of investments in the lake, to date. We're working with partners like the Lake Simcoe conservation authority and the St. Lawrence River institute, amongst many other partners, in terms of reducing chloride levels, reducing phosphorus and making sure we have a great state-of-the-art lake for generations to come.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Constituents in my riding are telling me that they can't afford the Liberal carbon tax, and the last thing they need is another Liberal carbon tax.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members of this Legislature, under the leadership of the queen of the carbon tax, won't stand with us when we try to fight the carbon tax. They won't stand with us, and they're happy to raise your taxes every year under the Liberal leader, the queen of the carbon tax. Only the PC government is trying to make life more affordable for the people in the province of Ontario, and only the PC government is fighting the Liberal carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House why it's time to scrap the carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Essex, who is doing an outstanding job representing his residents in southwestern Ontario, where we're actually seeing growth happen at a record pace, Mr. Speaker, and that's in spite of the regressive carbon tax that's being imposed on the people of Ontario and the people of Canada by the federal Liberal government.

Now, the member of the Liberal Party is saying, "Well, you opened the door for this by getting rid of the cap-and-trade." We campaigned in 2018, Mr. Speaker, to cap taxes and to trade Kathleen Wynne, and we were very, very successful in doing that, with a massive majority government, and then won another one four years later.

As a result, we went from being the most uncompetitive jurisdiction in North America in the eyes of the global auto sector to a jurisdiction that is now seeing multi-billion-dollar investments like ones in Essex and in Windsor, ones in St. Thomas, in Loyalist township and right across Ontario. In spite of this regressive tax, we've been able to return Ontario to its rightful place—

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

Supplementary question.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that excellent response and for his continuing fight against the carbon tax. While our government has remained laser-focused on trying to keep costs down, the Liberals and the NDP continue working against us. Under the leadership of the queen of the carbon tax, the Liberals in this House continue to try to block us in our fight against the carbon tax. They vote against us every time.

As the federal Liberals continue reaching into the pockets of taxpayers with more and more tax hikes, we need the opposition parties—the Liberals and the NDP—to help us fight the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why Ontario families simply cannot afford this unfair carbon tax imposed upon us by the queen of the carbon—

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Absolutely I can, Mr. Speaker. It's unbelievable, at a time when people are worried about the cost of living in our province and we're in the midst of an affordability crisis across the country, that a government at the federal level, would decide to increase taxes again, in about 10 days' time. This carbon tax is about to go up by a staggering 23% on April 1—and again, that's no joke.

And the queen of the carbon tax, the leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, is hand in hand with Justin Trudeau championing this increase when the people of Ontario and the people of Canada are hurting, Mr. Speaker. We disagree. We disagree wholeheartedly with this approach by the federal government.

We have cut taxes. We've reduced taxes. We've eliminated fees. We brought in things like One Fare in our transit system across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. That's going to save people \$1,600 a year. This is what a responsible government should be doing, working for the people, not against them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, we recently learned that nearly 300 seniors in Ontario have been moved from hospitals to long-term-care homes that they didn't choose. Under Bill 7, patients can be sent to a long-term-care facility up to 150 kilometres away from their homes without their consent or be charged \$400 a day if they refuse. These are our moms, our dads, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles—the people who built this great province.

Speaker, why is this government choosing to force almost 300 vulnerable seniors to be moved without their consent away from their homes and their families?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Stan Cho: By the same numbers, what the member is saying is that 17,337 seniors went from being ALC patients in hospitals to being residents in long-term care. Speaker, that's 17,000 more beds in hospitals for more acute care. That's 17,000 seniors who get to call a home a home, because it is this government that is investing into these homes, not just by building more capacity, but making sure that they have a level of comfort that they deserve.

Interjections.

Hon. Stan Cho: Now the members are chirping, and maybe they're chirping because they're angry that, for the better part of two decades while they supported the Liberals, they built nothing. They built 611 net new beds during that time. They failed to invest into our health human resources. They failed to invest into the capacity. Speaker, in short, they failed our seniors. We're learning from their—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: Speaker, this is part of a pattern of disrespect from this government that's shown to our seniors.

As that minister stands up and talks about people leaving our hospitals, let's not forget about the 6,000 seniors who lost their lives during COVID and the government responsible is now taking away their families' ability to have a home accountable.

This government is giving away licence extensions—think about this—to the very same private for-profit homes where the Canadian military had to be called in to save these residents from dehydration.

They then passed Bill 7 without holding public hearings, preventing families from commenting on the devastating impacts of this legislation. This government refuses to treat seniors and long-term-care residents with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Speaker, will this government repeal Bill 7, apologize to those 300 families and finally show seniors the respect they deserve and have earned in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, you want to talk about disrespect? This government had been here for a year and a half. They had the better part of two decades when the

COVID pandemic hit. What did they do during that time? Did they invest? Were they that passionate? Were they asking questions in this Legislature about what the Liberals were doing to improve the quality of life for our seniors? No, Speaker, they weren't doing that.

Guess what? This morning, the cameras must be on because the member stands in his place and he claims to be a defender of seniors. But in his own riding, Oakwood Manor, Crescent Manor, Radiant Care Pleasant Manor Long-Term Care—it's a long list and thousands of beds. The member votes against building beds in his own riding, against supports for beds in his own riding.

You want to give an apology? You should apologize to the seniors of this province for not protecting them before the pandemic hit.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats. And once again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. The House will come to order.

And once again, I will remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. Next question.

1100

TAXATION

Mr. Ross Romano: I can see the minister is very angry, and there are a lot of reasons to be angry when you think about the Liberals, especially the federal Liberals. You know something I'm angry about, Speaker, and people of my community are equally angry about it, and it's the federal carbon tax. It's leading us to soaring fuel prices, making it unaffordable for everyone—tough to even drive a car. People have to think twice about driving a car in my riding now and ridings across northern Ontario.

It's unfair to every driver in this province, especially those in the north who rely very heavily on their vehicles, just so that they can go to work every day, run errands, take their kids to soccer practice. All of these things are just too expensive because of the federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts who refuse to change this awful position on the carbon tax and are constantly hurting northern communities. We continue to take leadership on addressing affordability in this province to help the north get the help it deserves.

Can the Minister of Transportation please tell us how the carbon tax is hurting northern Ontario communities with this regressive, terrible—

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The member is absolutely right. When we look at the north, the challenges are even more significant when it comes to the carbon tax. But it's no surprise that the Liberals and the NDP are not listening to the people. They're out of touch. Just a couple of weeks ago, it was a federal Liberal environment minister, who is now trying to impose this 23% increase

of carbon taxes on the people of the north and across Canada and especially in Ontario—he was the one who said, “No more roads,” and that Canada doesn't need any more roads. How out of touch can you be?

But on top of that, now they want to increase the carbon tax by 23%. That's a tax on food. It's a tax on groceries. It's a tax on fuel, on energy, on heating your home. People cannot afford it. I hope that the provincial Liberals and the NDP step up right to the federal government and tell them to scrap the tax.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Well, I want to thank the minister for his response. It's obvious our government continues to advocate for all Ontarians. We continue to advocate for, really, everyone around this country when it comes to the far-reaching negative effects and impacts of this terrible tax, the carbon tax, the federal carbon tax—a tax that the opposition parties, especially the Liberals across the aisle, they want to support that. They think it's a great idea that we're going to nearly triple this tax.

It's unacceptable. It's breaking the backs of common, hard-working Ontarians, northern Ontarians. And the Liberals across the aisle, they just want to sit silent. I guess it's because their leader is one of the only Liberals left in the entire country of Canada who will not speak out against this terrible carbon tax and the additional nearly triple—triple, again—they want to increase it.

Can the minister please explain to us how this negative tax is hurting the people of our province?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let's just take the north for example on this. We know that long-haul truck drivers, under the current scheme, it costs them almost \$15,000 to \$20,000 because of that carbon tax. Now what does that mean, especially for the north, when you're taking truckloads of food, groceries, medicine, and now imposing a 23% increase on top of that for the carbon tax?

This is going to hurt not only truckers, who are out \$15,000 to \$20,000—they could use that money to support their families, put their kids through school, put their kids in extracurricular activities—but think of the people in the north, how much their food is going to increase, because that food travels on trucks. A 23% increase being proposed by the federal government, it's unbelievable.

What's more shameful, Mr. Speaker, is the provincial Liberals and the NDP are doing nothing to advocate to stop the carbon tax from going up 23%. Under the leadership—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The government's underfunding of education has led to an explosion in the use of portables at Ontario schools. This band-aid solution has become so widespread that new schools are opening with portables already in the yard.

Parents and teachers have raised concerns about the conditions in portables: mould, poor ventilation, heating problems, the lack of bathrooms. Does the Minister of Education share these concerns, and will he provide adequate funding for school construction and repairs so that portables can go back to being a temporary fix instead of a permanent fixture?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I thank the member opposite for the question. I think one thing that she and I could agree with is that the former government left a profoundly devastating impact after closing 600 schools in rural Ontario—unacceptable, and families paid the price.

In sharp contrast to their dereliction of duty, the Premier and our party has invested over \$15 billion over a decade to build net new schools. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report that 100 schools are being built as we speak, 200 more in the pipeline. We have invested in every single budget—invested over \$550 million to build schools. Literally thousands of additional spaces have been created as well as thousands of additional child care spaces within schools.

We're committed to going even further, which is why, in December, we announced a plan to slash construction timelines by half, to build faster and smarter and get the job done for growing communities across the province.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It really is amazing how this government has been in power for six years, yet all these portables in school yards are apparently not their responsibility.

The conditions in portables aren't just about health and safety. They also affect learning outcomes. Research shows that the more portables a school has, the lower its test scores in math, reading and writing. If the minister really wants to boost test scores in Ontario, he should increase capital funding so that schools no longer need to use portables. Will we see an increase in next week's budget, or is the minister's back-to-basics commitment all talk?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: After signing deals with all teacher unions, providing stability for three years, an achievement that has not been done in nearly a generation under any party in any government, we have, yes, committed to increasing investments, as we've done every single year in publicly funded schools, because under our Premier's leadership, we are investing more in publicly funded schools than any government in the history of this province, a meaningful commitment.

And it's not just about the money. Yes, we've hired 3,000 more teachers and 7,500 more additional education workers. It's not just about the money. It's about getting value for dollars. It's why we passed the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, to elevate our standards and demand better for the people we represent. "Back to basics" is more than a hashtag. It is focused on foundational learning, on reading, writing, math and STEM disciplines.

I would hope the members opposite wouldn't trivialize the necessity of building the skills to ensure every child

succeeds, owns a home, gets a good job and achieves the promise of this country.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, this morning the Premier showed his true colours when it comes to building affordable housing. This Premier doesn't care about getting people housed in homes they can afford.

Just this morning, while standing in front of massive single-family homes that the majority of Ontarians can't even dream of affording, he completely ruled out allowing four units as of right in communities across the province. Such units would supply more housing to families, renters, students, downsizing seniors and anyone else struggling to find an affordable place to live in their community. After today's revelations, will the Premier finally admit that he doesn't actually care about building affordable housing?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Listen, it's clear to me that the Liberals still have not caught on, right? This is coming from a party whose leader had the amazing responsibility of building homes but saw the population of her community, under her leadership, actually decline. She really knocked it out of the park with those two housing starts that she had in the month when she left office, right—two housing starts. Not only did she not even come close to meeting her target, she actually saw people fleeing her jurisdiction.

1110

The only reason Mississauga is doing as well as they are is because of the members of provincial Parliament from this caucus, who have been focused on jobs and economic growth, bringing investments to that community. We have been bringing forward measures to help build housing supply across the province of Ontario. It is becoming increasingly clear to us, working with our municipal partners, that the thing they want is for us to get out of the way and help them get infrastructure in the ground.

Today's announcement will do just that. We'll put infrastructure in the ground and homes will be built.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, the minister might want to look at a city that elected a Liberal member, the city of Kingston, that's leading the tables in building housing. Ontario Liberals want to treat housing affordability like the crisis it really is for so many people in Ontario. That's why we want to allow four units as of right, province-wide.

We believe this is a crisis. People across the province feel the pain. The Conservatives are just pretending to be worried. We must, and the people expect us to, build housing differently, with mixed neighbourhoods and gentle density while preserving green spaces. Many of the answers are right under the Premier's nose in his own task force report, like four units as of right, province-wide.

Through you, Speaker: Premier, why are you giving up? Why can't the people of Ontario count on you to believe we're facing a housing affordability crisis?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The former leader of the Liberal Party came in front of a committee that this House had brought forward and said that the housing crisis started under the previous Liberal government. You know why? Because of red tape, because of high costs that stifle the ability to build more homes. And now we're seeing the exact same thing: They're supporting high interest rates because of their federal cousins—high interest rates which are making it impossible to build more homes and puts many people, thousands of people, out of the market for those new homes.

Working with our municipal partners, we have heard one thing over and over and over again: The infrastructure deficit that was left behind by the previous Liberal government is stopping them from building the hundreds, the millions of homes that are needed. So while we will continue to work with our municipal partners, we'll actually give them the tools they need to build not hundreds of homes but millions of homes, and that's what today's announcement—

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

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Mines. There is no better place to invest and do business than right here in Ontario. That is why we are continuing our efforts to secure the supply chain for critical minerals—with no help from the opposition NDP and the independent Liberals.

For 15 years the previous Liberal government, supported every day by the NDP, did nothing to unlock the generational critical minerals in the Ring of Fire region. In fact, the opposition continues to say yes to the carbon tax that only harms this critical sector while voting against any measure that makes life more affordable for people in northern Ontario. That's unacceptable.

Our government must continue to support responsible development that will create jobs across the entire province, including northern and Indigenous communities. Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to build a corridor to prosperity in partnership—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
The Minister of Mines can reply.

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant for the question. During the PDAC mining conference this year, I signed a community development agreement with the chiefs of Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation. This agreement is part of our \$1-billion investment to build a corridor to prosperity that will connect First Nations partners to the road network and bring growth and prosperity to the region. It will support shovel-ready infrastructure projects that will improve the well-being and readiness of First

Nations partners, getting us one step closer to building the roads to the Ring of Fire.

I want to commend Chief Bruce and Chief Cornelius for their vision and commitment to building stronger communities and thank them for their dedication to moving these projects forward. I look forward to strengthening our partnership as we take the next steps together. I am honoured to be associated with these two leaders.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Speaker, people in northern Ontario are struggling to afford basic needs as a result of the federal carbon tax. That's why I am so proud to be part of a government that, unlike the NDP and the Liberals, is finding ways to create jobs and bring prosperity for everyone across this entire province. Speaker, that is exactly what the community development agreement will accomplish. It commits Ontario to supporting shovel-ready infrastructure projects to help each First Nation prepare for future economic development opportunities, such as road construction and mining development.

Speaker, can the minister please provide the House with further details on the agreement with Marten Falls First Nation and with Webequie First Nation?

Hon. George Pirie: Mr. Speaker, Webequie and Marten Falls First Nations will choose projects that meet their specific needs so that they are ready for the exciting economic opportunities these roads and mining will create. Projects like new health and training facilities, recreation centres, community centres and labour force development programs are all eligible for funding. We also agreed to make decisions together on construction, ownership and governance of the roads so we can improve project timelines. We can't wait for the EAs to be finished. We must act with urgency.

Working together, we will create an unprecedented era of prosperity that will secure a better future for the next generations. That is what these projects are all about. I know the community development agreement we reached will help us to work together to prepare for a future that is connected by roads and a future that unlocks the area for mining that the previous governments neglected. We are getting it done.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Since 1995, A Child's World has provided affordable child care for the Niagara region. They have a rental space from this Ontario government, and your ministry has just informed them that the rent is going up by \$160,000. That's a 1,300% increase. This is going to shut down this centre, and these parents can't lose their child care spaces that they depend on.

Why is this Conservative government raising the rent?

Hon. Kinga Surma: What this government did was land a child care deal that benefits families across the

province of Ontario, which also includes building 86,000 additional child care spaces, Mr. Speaker. I know, because my very own constituents are benefiting from the work that the Minister of Education has done on this file.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take her request back and look into it further. I thank the member for raising the issue.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Back to the minister: Minister, you could have saved these child care spots today if you weren't putting profits over the parents and the children of Niagara. These federal child care dollars need to be going to child care, not to profit your government.

Minister, will you direct your staff to overturn this decision, reverse this 1,300% rent hike today—now—for the 44 child care spaces that are going to be lost?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, I'd be happy to speak to the ways that we are supporting the good and hard-working people of Niagara. We are building two hospitals in the region, Mr. Speaker. We're building the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, which is under construction, as well as the new Niagara south hospital. This is in addition to transit expansion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Kinga Surma: —through other means, other investments, through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, such as the Peach King community centre.

But again, to the member opposite, I'm happy to take back her comments and look into them further.

TAXATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. Constituents in my riding of Richmond Hill are becoming increasingly concerned about the carbon tax and the impact it has on their household budgets. As the prices of food, gas and transportation continue to rise, the federal government is choosing to ignore the hardship Ontarians go through.

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The NDP and the Liberals are like their friends in Ottawa. They are supporting this costly tax rather than standing with us. Unlike the members opposite, our government is fighting this tax to ensure that we're delivering more affordability and more financial relief for the people of Ontario.

Can the associate minister please tell the House what action our government is taking to combat this dreadful carbon tax?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for that question. On April 1, the federal Liberal government, supported by the Ontario Liberals, is increasing the carbon tax, which will hurt Ontario families and make life more unaffordable. We

recognize the people of Ontario need a break now more than ever.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have been proactive in cost-cutting in every measure we can. We have introduced One Fare that's saving \$1,600 every year. We got rid of fees to renew licence plates, saving drivers over \$2.2 billion. And we reduced the gas tax by 10 cents per litre.

At every turn, the opposition continues to vote against making life more affordable for the people of Ontario, while our government is doing everything we can to respect the hard-earned money of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the associate minister for his response. The carbon tax is leading to soaring fuel prices that make it difficult for everyone in our province. The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts continue to turn a blind eye to Ontarians' struggles.

Our government cannot let this costly carbon tax continue to affect our businesses, economy and Ontario workers. We must continue to make life more affordable and put more money back in people's pockets, where it belongs.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation please explain how our government is ensuring that Ontarians are receiving the support they need as we fight the carbon tax?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for her advocacy. Mr. Speaker, this carbon tax is a heavy load for Canadians. It's making everyday things like driving to work and getting groceries more expensive. A tax that cripples industry and sends jobs overseas is not a step forward. It's a giant leap backwards for the working people of Ontario.

The federal Liberals are ruining lives and destroying small businesses across the province. The Ontario Liberals and NDP let us all down by not showing up for the fight that really matters for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government and millions of Ontarians across this province are calling on the federal government to stop playing games and axe the tax. Our message is clear: We will fight.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

MPP Jill Andrew: Ontario's arts and culture sector represents over \$28 billion, approximately 3.5% of the province's GDP, and creates some 300,000 jobs and counting. There is no question that this sector is an economic engine that will only grow and remain competitive with real, sustainable government investment.

We are hearing from theatre companies; culture, heritage, arts organizations; individual artists; cultural workers; and festivals. For many, the costs are skyrocketing—costs for insurance, security, venue rentals, staffing and labour, even production cost. Softwood lumber, I've learned, has gone up hundreds of per cents over the years due to the closures of mills.

My question is to the Premier: For the love of arts, will this government stop gutting the Ontario Arts Council and

Experience Ontario so the curtains don't close on our culture sector?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you for the question. I know the member understands completely what culture and the arts mean to all of us in all of our communities.

Mr. Will Bouma: Hear, hear.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Yes, absolutely.

You know, we can look at culture, we can look at tourism, and there are a lot of elements that it touches and touches us all in a very positive way—from an investment to an impact to our communities and our province.

Through the Ontario Arts Council, our investment of \$60 million goes a long way in supporting a lot of the cultural pieces within our province. We have had those that have struggled in the last little while, and I'm proud to say that our ministry has met with them and talked and see if we can help them find their way. A lot are talking about restructuring; a lot are looking outside of other opportunities, understanding that the government is there for them in the right way, not only that the government is there, but that they have to go out and find their way, and they're willing to do it and they're passionate about doing the same.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: OAC funding has pretty much stayed the same for several years. Inflation has gone up. That equates to a cut to Ontario Arts Council funding and a cut to our artists and our cultural institutions across the province.

My question is back to the Premier. This government referred to the culture sector as the "first hit," "hardest hit" and "last to recover" during the pandemic; remember that.

In my community, Rastafest organizers are worried, especially Little Jamaica, where festivals like Sinting also saw zero investment from this province. The Toronto Caribbean Carnival—the largest festival in North America, annually contributing nearly half a billion dollars to Ontario's GDP and creating 4,000 direct jobs—is asking for \$2.5 million annually for the next three years so they can keep their heads above water.

Just for Laughs, Hot Docs, Taste of the Danforth, Home County Music and Art Festival in London, Supercrawl and more need real, sustainable help.

Speaker, my question is back to the Premier: Does this government have a provincial culture strategy with teeth, with dollars, to help creative industries keep their lights on, and if not, why not?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Let's look at some of those "teeth": \$2.6 million to Hot Docs over the last five years. We met with them recently, exactly—the day was March 5. We've talked to them about how we can help them. We're looking into their business model, their plan.

Experience Ontario covers this province with great support—\$19.5 million. It supports community events and

festivals, Mr. Speaker—all of our communities, and all those events and festivals, and the people in and around those events and festivals are helping build business and community and confidence in what they do. We're there to support them, we are happy to support them and we will continue to do that.

And we are happy, again, to sit down with Caribana, as we did this past week, and talk to them about their business plan and their model moving forward. Thank you for putting the number on the table, because in our conversations they didn't mention \$2.5 million, but—

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

And the next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question this morning is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The hard-working people of Simcoe–Grey and across Ontario are being punished by the regressive, federal carbon tax, Speaker. The tax is forcing individuals and families who are already struggling in these challenging times to stretch their hard-earned incomes like never before.

As the Parliamentary Budget Officer found, the federal Liberals' carbon tax rebate program is not providing residents in rural communities with the relief that they were promised. Speaker, this is not fair and it is not acceptable.

Our government, under Premier Ford, will continue to stand up for the residents of Simcoe–Grey and rural Ontario, and call on the federal government to end this punitive tax.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House why the federal carbon tax and its failing rebate program are disproportionately affecting the residents of rural Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I truly appreciate the question from this amazing member from Simcoe–Grey because he totally has nailed it. There are inequities happening across the board because of this failed ideology that has driven Liberal policy to make the cost of everything go sky-high.

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For instance, in the spirit of inequities, in rural Ontario and across the entire province, 70% of people require heating through natural gas. In some instances, like in northern Ontario and on our farm, we use propane.

Furthermore, we have to take a look at what's happening in rural Ontario. With the increase of carbon tax happening as of April 1, we are going to have more stress and pressure on all of our systems. For instance, in rural Ontario, we have transit mobility initiatives, but the cost of those buses travelling from town to town is going to go nowhere but up. School buses, ambulances, even getting our mail delivered in our rural routes across the province: It's going to go sky-high—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for her response. The carbon tax is harming the hard-working individuals, businesses and farmers of Simcoe–Grey and areas across our province.

We know Ontario has one of the cleanest electrical grids in Canada. We also know that Ontario has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 27% as compared to 2005 levels. That is 90% of the way to our target, Mr. Speaker. We are leading Canada.

The fact is that the tax is taking money from families for no good reason. On top of that, the federal government is selectively exempting home heating oil from the carbon tax. They are sending the message that not everyone is treated equally across this country. Again, this is unfair and it's unacceptable.

As we continue to face an affordability crisis, our government must continue to fight the carbon tax and provide Ontario families with the financial relief they need. Can the minister please explain why the federal carbon tax is costly and unfair to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to point out the fact that it's our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, with the support of our finance minister—we have done so much to reduce the cost of living. For instance, one of the single largest tax cuts in Ontario history is what we did with gas. We reduced the cost of gas by 10.7 cents a litre.

But guess what, Speaker? As of April 1, carbon tax is going to make the cost of everything go up 23%. That's what's unfair. We have to fight against it every step of the way. The federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals need to stand up, take responsibility and actually do what we're telling them to do: Scrap the tax. Because guess what? I would project, as of April 1, we're going to see Bonnie Crombie go on another fundraising spree because she needs to raise money to—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Good morning. My question is to the Premier. The official opposition leader and London MPPs recently toured the Nazem Kadri Surgical Centre, a brilliant, first-of-its-kind outpatient clinic which deals with low-intensity, low-risk procedures in a high-quality interdisciplinary environment. It's an ingenious, cost-effective way to help patients quickly while alleviating the burden on our precious health care system. Public funding and public delivery: the best bang for your buck.

To our surprise, we learned that the Premier and Minister of Health also visited the centre and said this was a model to replicate. We agree. So why aren't they?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm glad you finally had an opportunity to tour the centre. We actually did that many months ago and have had subsequent conversations with

the leadership within that centre. It is a model of care that was funded through our innovative program that allowed and ensured that hospitals had access to infrastructure to make sure that they could provide additional surgeries and deal with the backlog that we were dealing with post-COVID.

It is a wonderful model and they've been doing exceptional work in London with the hospital and with the community. I am happy to continue to have those conversations, as we have been doing for many months, to see what parts of those programs we can duplicate in other centres across Ontario.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier: Just to clarify for the minister, they self-funded and they came up with the concept, so I don't think it's appropriate that the minister takes credit for it.

The surgical centre operates at half the cost of hospital ORs. They literally double the output, meaning twice as many happy, healthy patients, yet this government is prioritizing spending on for-profit surgery clinics and agency nursing companies which bleed the government dry. Why?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I want everyone to understand what the member opposite just said. Surgical centres that operate outside of hospitals are working and should be replicated throughout Ontario. There are many examples of individual surgery centres that are happening, whether it is through our cataract surgeries or particular orthopaedic surgeries, that happen outside of a hospital centre. The one in Ottawa is a beautiful example, and we have others operating within the province of Ontario.

But I hope that the member opposite remembers that question when we vote on expansion of independent integrated surgical and diagnostic centres in Ontario.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. The federal carbon tax is making life more challenging for Ontario families. When I was door-knocking last week in my great riding of Newmarket–Aurora, the top issue I heard from residents was how the carbon tax was adding further strain on their household budgets. They know that this coming hike will drive these costs even higher, and they are concerned about the impact it will have on them and their loved ones.

We know that the cost of building long-term-care homes remains high, but the carbon tax is making it even higher. Our government must continue to uphold our commitment to support seniors in Ontario. Speaker, can the minister explain what our government is doing to ensure that our seniors get the care they deserve, while fighting this carbon tax every step of the way?

Hon. Stan Cho: You know, this may be the first time I'm sitting closer to the floor than the superfan up there. But whether you're here, in his seat or in one of the long-term-care homes across the province, there is one fact that

remains: The Liberal tax is making everything more expensive, and it's going to get higher—that's no joke—on April 1.

It's a tax on the very operation of our long-term-care homes. Just like how it costs more to heat our homes, it costs more to heat their homes. That's one reason our government is continuing to make historic investments into long-term care.

Unlike the Liberals, we understand that rising costs hurt everyone, especially our most vulnerable. And unlike the previous Liberal government, which drove up the price of hydro, and unlike the federal Liberals that keep driving up the cost of heating, we're fighting to keep costs low. That includes our great seniors in long-term care.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize, first, the member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's an absolute pleasure to introduce my good friend Raj Thanna, Rinku Ghai and a person who needs no introduction—we are all fans of him—superfan Nav Bhatia.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor–Tecumseh has informed me that he has a point of order as well.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I wanted to welcome the family of page Sarah Penner, who are here in the gallery: Garth Penner, Bridget Haugh, Meagan Haugh, Teagan Haugh and Harrison Haugh. Welcome to Queen's Park.

BIRTHDAY OF MEMBER'S BROTHER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I just wanted to wish a happy 56th birthday to my big brother, Jeff Smith.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader under standing order 59.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you to our colleagues for a very productive week for the people of Ontario.

On Monday, March 25, we will have opposition day number 3 in the afternoon, followed by third reading of Bill 31, the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act, in the name of the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

In the morning of March 26, depending on how business unfolds on Monday, March 25, we will either continue on that or we will not be sitting, but we'll have more information on that on Monday afternoon.

As you know, the budget will be presented on Tuesday afternoon by the Minister of Finance, but before that, colleagues, before question period, the House will pay tribute to our departed former member Mr. Daryl Kramp.

On Wednesday, March 27, both the morning and afternoon sessions are yet to be determined, and we will follow up with House leaders. In the evening, private member's motion number 82, standing in the member for Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

On Thursday, March 28, in the morning and in the afternoon, government notice of motion number 22 will be debated, and in the evening there will be no private members' business.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Niagara Falls has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to their question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care regarding long-term care. This matter will be debated on Wednesday following private members' public business.

DEFERRED VOTES

RELIEF FOR RENTERS ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 VISANT À ALLÉGER LE FARDEAU DES LOCATAIRES

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

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

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

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats. On March 20, 2024, MPP Hazell moved second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Hazell, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Schreiner, Mike
Clancy, Aislinn	Jama, Sarah	Shaw, Sandy
Fife, Catherine	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Gates, Wayne	McCrimmon, Karen	Taylor, Monique
Gélinas, France	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
Glover, Chris	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross

Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Todd
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Dunlop, Jill	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Piccini, David	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan	Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The eyes are 30; the nays are 66.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 21, 2024, 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.

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here titled “End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas since 2006 the Auditor General of Ontario had been responsible for reviewing all government advertising to ensure it was not partisan; and

“Whereas in 2015 the Liberal government watered down the legislation, removing the ability of the Auditor General to reject partisan ads; and

“Whereas Conservatives have since run ads such as those for the Ministry of Health that were extremely partisan in nature, which cost more than \$20 million; and

“Whereas the Conservative government is currently using taxpayers’ money to run partisan ads during the Super Bowl and the Oscars; and

“Whereas history shows that the Conservative government is increasing their spending on partisan ads, totalling nearly \$25 million in 2023 compared to \$17 million under the Liberal government in 2017;

“Whereas the Conservatives advocate for the reversal of the 2015 amendments when they were in opposition under the Liberals;

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

“To immediately restore the Auditor General’s authority to review all government advertising for partisan messages before the ads run;

“To pass the NDP’s Bill 176, End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act, 2024.”

I wholly endorse this petition and give it to page Bhavna.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank Sally from Lakefield for her work on this.

“Whereas in 2015 the Liberal Party of Ontario with their leader Kathleen Wynne who was the Premier of Ontario at the time announced that Ontario would implement a cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme; and

“Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario began their cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme on January 1, 2017; and

“Whereas this cap-and-trade carbon tax scheme immediately raised the price of every consumable product in Ontario; and

“Whereas during the provincial election in 2018 the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario campaigned against this unfair tax on the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the newly elected Doug Ford Progressive Conservative government of Ontario repealed this unfair tax on the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas in 2018, the federal Liberal government passed the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act; and

“Whereas on January 1, 2019, the federal government’s output-based pricing system for large emitters came into force; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario on fuels came into effect on April 1, 2019; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario will rise by an additional 23% on April 1, 2024; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario is a tax on the factors of production (i.e., labour, capital, and intermediate inputs). Intermediate inputs are goods and services (such as energy) used in producing goods and services; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax forced on the people of Ontario will raise the intermediate input cost and thereby increase production or business costs. Intermedi-

ate input costs play an essential role in most businesses, affecting the final price at which goods and services will be sold to customers, which in turn influences the business' profitability; and

"Whereas when the federal carbon tax forced" upon "the people of Ontario is applied to refineries, utility companies, and other intermediaries that supply electricity, fuel, and other energy that industries use. The tax then translates into higher fuel prices, which in turn increases input costs for other industries; and

"Whereas the production of goods and services necessitates business input costs which include capital, goods, services, energy, wages, and salaries, production costs will increase by more than 10% in the utilities industry" alone; and

"Whereas in 2023 Ontario's agriculture sector" saw a "6.7%" increase in production costs for the use of "energy; and

"Whereas in 2023 Ontario's forestry sector" saw a "7.7%" increase in production costs in the cost of "energy; and

"Whereas Ontario's electric power generation, transmission, and distribution sector will see a cost increase of almost 11.8% due to the federal carbon tax forced onto the people of Ontario. (Electric power generation uses natural gas in the generation mix, which accounts for 5.8% of the industry's inputs.) At 62%, iron and steel manufacturing will see the highest cost increase of all industries from the carbon tax; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax is costing Ontarians, on average almost \$500 per year, increasing annually until 2030, when the average cost for an Ontario household will be faced with an annual federal carbon tax bill" greater than their rebate by more than "\$1,416 annually; and

"Whereas there is a federal fuel charge that applies to all purchases of different fuels such as gasoline, propane, and diesel," and "this hurts the daily aspect of life" of people in Ontario, "especially those residents of northern Ontario and Indigenous communities where prices are significantly higher than elsewhere across the province; and

"Whereas the Chiefs of Ontario have been calling on the federal government to consult with them on the impact that this harmful tax is having on all of their communities; and

"Whereas due to the federal government's failure to address the First Nations' concerns, the Chiefs of Ontario have filed for judicial review into the application of the carbon tax in Indigenous communities; and

"Whereas the Chiefs of Ontario have called this federal carbon tax anti-reconciliatory and discriminatory; and

"Whereas those in northern Ontario do not have a choice when it comes to how they heat their homes, they are using home heating fuels such as natural gas or propane; and

"Whereas increasing the federal carbon tax by 23%" on April 1 "will see an increase of almost \$400 per year for a family in northern Ontario to heat their home; and

"Whereas home heating is not a luxury and Ontarians should not be unfairly forced to pay additional costs to stay warm during the winter months; and

"Whereas the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer just concluded that the federal government finances will increase the deficit by \$5.2 billion in 2030-31; and

"Whereas a higher federal carbon tax will have a negative impact by shrinking the economy by" an estimated "1.8%; and

"Whereas a higher federal carbon tax will have a negative impact on approximately 185,000 jobs across" Canada; "and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax has contributed to inflation, high taxes and big spending, which is leading to higher interest rates and is forcing thousands of people out of the housing market; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax has shown to have a significant impact on inflation, which accounts for a 16% rise in inflation last year alone; and

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"Whereas truckers in the province of Ontario are facing an additional cost of about 17.5 cents per litre; and

"Whereas this increase in fuel costs will translate to an annual cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000" per truck; "and

"Whereas small businesses across the province of Ontario, especially those with fleets of trucks, the federal carbon tax could add up to an additional \$100,000 annually; and

"Whereas this increase in cost will lead to layoffs or forcing those small businesses to close their doors permanently; and

"Whereas 60% of households in Ontario pay more in carbon taxes than they receive in rebates. This figure could increase by 80% by 2026; and

"Whereas 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" opportunities; "and

"Whereas since its introduction, the production costs for farmers, greenhouse growers and food processors have increased significantly. The delivery of every single consumer good in our province, particularly fresh and processed food, is being impacted by this punitive tax; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax is driving up the cost of transporting agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer and packaging; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax is driving up the cost of transporting fruits and vegetables to market; and

"Whereas rural Ontario is home to more than 2.5 million people and as the federal carbon price rises so will the cost of food and energy; and

"Whereas the federal carbon tax is not working to reduce emissions. Instead, it is simply driving up the costs of goods, services, and other essential items for the people of Ontario; and"—

Mr. Ted Hsu: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if you could provide some guidance to this House on the difference between making a speech and presenting a petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would be happy to provide any guidance to the member that I can, obviously. We are in petitions. The member is reading a petition, I believe. It is quite lengthy, obviously. We ruled on this earlier this week, that members can read a petition verbatim, but they also have the option of summarizing the petition if they choose to do so, but they can't do both. There is nothing out of order.

I go back to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

“Whereas in the natural resources sector, the federally imposed carbon tax has an impact on the cost of products such as sand, stone, lumber, and other building materials” needed to build homes, hospitals and schools in Ontario; “and

“Whereas not only does the federal carbon tax make raw materials more expensive, but it also increases costs across the entire supply chain...; and

“Whereas the federal government has decided to cut the carbon tax rebate for small businesses from 9% to 5%; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that \$8 billion will be collected from small businesses and only \$35 million will be returned” in that rebate; “and

“Whereas for most businesses—56% of them in fact—will have no choice but to pass on those increased prices to the consumer because of the federal carbon tax and the HST to the consumers of the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the federal carbon tax” imposed on the people of Ontario also affects “public safety; and

“Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police alone have spent almost \$4 million on carbon tax; and

“Whereas the \$4 million spent on carbon tax” by the OPP “could have put 40 new officers directly onto the front line; and

“Whereas that is only the cost borne by the OPP and is not” also borne by “first responders such as ambulance paramedics and firefighters that are on the roads multiple times a day requiring them to fill up their vehicles” as well; “and

“Whereas the federal government’s carbon tax has impacted Ontario’s public hospitals by increasing annual heating cost by \$27.2 million for the year of 2022 alone; and

“Whereas that \$27.2 million would be better spent on front-line services and improving the health care for the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas without the carbon tax hospitals would have been able to offer an additional 104,615 MRI operating hours, providing scans for an additional” 150,000 “patients;

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

To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “urge the federal Liberal government to repeal

the unnecessary increase in the federal carbon tax scheduled for April 1, 2024, imposed on the people of the province of Ontario.”

I fully endorse this petition, will gladly—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL CARE FOR ANIMALS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SOINS PROFESSIONNELS PRODIGUÉS AUX ANIMAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinarian Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2024 sur les professionnels vétérinaires et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Just saying that I liked the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane’s—what’s it called again?—petition better than the long one there. Otherwise, we should bring popcorn out.

Speaker, it’s always an honour to speak on behalf of the people of Kiiwetinoong. Kiiwetinoong, as you know, is a very, very unique riding, which represents 31 First Nations—24 of them are fly-in First Nations—and then four small townships.

I know this topic, when we talk about Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinarian Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts, is important because, as we know—right off the hop, I will say that, for me, I will be supporting this bill, alongside with my colleagues, because it is very reasonable. It is a reasonable framework to improve the standards of veterinary care in Ontario. And not only that; it will lead to greater accountability to the public. But also, we have seen a positive start in a consultation process, with years of open and transparent public consultations that included veterinary professionals themselves.

Engagement and consultation is important. That’s the same work that should happen exactly when you deal with First Nations when you’re trying to do work on their traditional territories. That’s the same engagement process that we should follow when you try to extract minerals from our territories.

1320

There was one time an elder spoke about consultation to me. He did it by a story, by a legend. He started talking about moose to me. He was telling me about what consultation meant. There was one summer; moose were gathering. Bull moose were gathering in the summertime. They were trying to decide, these bull moose, on how they

can gather on an annual basis. So they decided on the summer; bull moose will come together in the summertime.

Then, the cow moose showed up and said, “What are you guys doing?” They said, “We’re trying to determine when we’re going to meet as moose.” The cow moose says to the bull moose, “No, we cannot meet in the summertime. There are too many flies, too many bugs in the summertime. Because there are so many horseflies in the summertime, there are so many mosquitoes and it’s too warm, we should meet in the fall when there’s less bugs.” That’s why the moose rut happens every fall. That elder told me, “Now that’s consultation.” This is what you should do for First Nations people.

But going back to the bill, though I cannot say the same about many of this government’s bills, this process has been followed for the bill. That should be an example for future drafting of legislation. Rather than doing it by yourselves secretly, rather than doing lobbyist-driven politics with backroom deal-making, there should be an open concept of proper consultation, proper engagement.

But even with my support, I also want to acknowledge the history that we live in here in Canada. It may be not your history, but it’s our history as well. But it’s a colonial history of how our animals have been treated and the continued lack of access to veterinary care in the north.

I say this because veterinary care holds a very different significance for communities living in far northern Ontario, for communities living in the rural places. What I mean by that is not enough people know about the history of how animals, First Nations, sled dogs have been treated in this country. What we see today is very far different from what we know of how governments treated animals.

I say that because in First Nations, even in the Inuit communities, sled dogs were not pets. Sled dogs are not pets but working animals necessary to assume our ways of life, helping to transport hunting supplies, helping to move camp. But I talk about this because I think it’s just another example of the difference of how far we’ve come along in how we treat animals—when we talk about how colonization uses violence to aim, of taking First Nations, aim at the Inuit ways of life.

For decades, in the 20th century, as early as the 1920s and 1950s, there were government officials who came to our lands; there were the RCMP officers who came to our lands; there were the—I don’t know what the term was, but there were the MNRF officials who came to our lands. And what did they do? They killed our dogs. Do you know why they killed our dogs? So we had no means of travel, no way to continue our ways of life.

That’s the reality that I know. That’s the real history that I’m aware of. That’s why I say this is a very—fast-forward to 2024, this government, all levels of government, have come a long way of being colonial.

It was very clear, where my elders, my parents, tell these stories—where these government officials, RCMP, shot and killed our people’s dogs. The intent, again, was to disempower and take away our ways, take away our independence, take away our ability to hunt for food.

I’m just sharing this story because, again, it is part of our shared history; it’s part of that untold history that you never learned about in your history class, but it is our known history here, as First Nations people.

It is also very clear, this is one of the many, many violent tactics used by government to try to force us to assimilate, and we continue to see this in Kiiwetinoong, with the people I represent.

I think it’s also important—I started off with the number of First Nations that I represent in the riding of Kiiwetinoong. The riding of Kiiwetinoong is very unique, where there are a number of First Nations that are represented—I’ll say “First Nations,” but they’re also reserves. Because we are on-reserve, we are treated differently. We do not have access to veterinary services in Kiiwetinoong. There are animals that we have to send out by plane to send to a vet.

I spoke about the history, how we came about, and on how government treated our sled dogs, even though it really interfered on our ways of life relating to animals, relating to the land. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, back then, the officials—I can’t remember the name of the department back then—went further, where the government officials, bureaucrats and RCMP came and ripped out our traps. They came and ripped out the gillnets that we need to get our food, to be able to sustain ourselves and to have fish.

1330

I speak about that because recently, one of the things—I put a motion forward recently for our government to recognize colonialism and Indigeneity as Indigenous determinants of health, which would help acknowledge that colonialism still impacts the lives and the health of First Nations people every day and to address the structural violence. Of course, this did not pass.

I want to do a shout-out to this dog; he’s got his own Instagram account, @mr_black.213. The .213 is the reserve number in Muskrat Dam. We are all numbered people, First Nations, but this dog has his number as well. So a shout-out to Mr. Black. They call him Blackie.

I think when we talk about northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario, Kiiwetinoong, there is so much more that needs to be done for veterinary services in Ontario. You know, when we talk about access to veterinary care, it is a major problem for livestock producers, and it is even worse in northern Ontario.

I just want to talk about—her name is Sara Epp. She’s a researcher who did surveys and interviews with many stakeholders and learned about their challenges and talks about how some of the producers have been asked by veterinarians to sign a waiver because in an emergency, they would not have veterinary care.

I think it marks that there’s a shortage. It’s very bad, and even today, I think some of the farmers are considering leaving livestock farming. And one of the things, too, is she heard that long-distance travel, distances between farms, was a major challenge for vets, and it’s even harder in the north, especially in the winter season.

One of the things that she found as well was that veterinarians told her that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in the north and that northern Ontario needs solutions that are specific to its challenges. I am hopeful that the upcoming budget next week will announce more such initiatives to help communities in the north access veterinary care for our animals in the north.

I guess one question I would ask is, how are we supporting students from the north who want to become veterinarians? How can we make existing streams of funding for veterinarians in the north more effective? I ask those questions because life is already expensive for people living in northern Ontario and especially within the fly-in First Nations, and we need to remove any barrier any way we can.

When we talk about fly-in First Nations in Kiiwetinoong, even with the north, access to veterinary care is not equal. The first time that Sandy Lake First Nation, which is also a fly-in reserve, a fly-in community in Kiiwetinoong, ever had veterinary services was 2015. It actually made the news. It was news to get a veterinarian on-reserve in Sandy Lake. Community members lined up for five days so that their pets could be spayed, vaccinated or neutered. At that time, they had 238 dogs receive veterinary care at the clinic, which was open 14 hours a day.

They were even able to spay and neuter the stray dogs. Those are the ones that we call “rez dogs.” There’s a show called Reservation Dogs; everybody should watch it. I can’t remember which service it’s on, or which stream. But yes, that’s what we call stray dogs: rez dogs.

But going back to those 238 dogs that got vet services: That clinic took a year of work just to organize. I think it recognizes the difficulty for fly-in First Nations to keep their dog populations under control without adequate access to veterinary services.

The role and the relationship with the dogs has changed over the years. Where they used to be means of transportation and companionship, some dogs roam freely as strays and some are pets. I think when we talk about vet services on-reserve in far northern Ontario, it is a source of stress for communities that if their pet got injured or sick, they could not get immediate care for their pets, the way you can have this access in cities or in places like this.

My time is up. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? Oh, sorry—questions. I apologize. Questions?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Our government knows that receiving veterinary services can be challenging for many farmers and for pet owners. That’s why we’re investing \$14.7 million to add 20 new seats to the doctor of veterinary medicine program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. We’re also providing grants of up to \$50,000 over five years to new veterinary graduates, to encourage veterinarians to practise in underserved communities.

I’d like to ask the member opposite if he agrees that the proposed changes will help assist in addressing some of the veterinary service gaps that he mentioned during his remarks.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the question. To have 20 seats in the north, such as Thunder Bay, would be very helpful. What would be more helpful, as well: There are so many First Nations, so many of us, in the north. I think if you had specific seats for Indigenous people to become vets, it would be so awesome. I think that’s the best way, because we want to be the ones servicing our dogs. Our people, the First Nations people, want to be the ones to help their pets.

There’s always room for improvement in anything, I think—such as this bill; such as your question. The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement. Let’s do it for the pets. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for your comments today.

1340

When he and I were first elected in 2018, he actually stayed with me, and my daughter was working on Big Grassy reserve up north for the summer and she called me up one day, she was very agitated, she said, “Dad, Dad, you won’t believe what happened today. I was walking home from the school and a bear ran across the road right in front of me.” So the member from Kiiwetinoong came to my place and I told him this story. He started to laugh and I said, “Why are you laughing?” and he said, “Seeing a bear cross the road in Kiiwetinoong is like saying you saw a truck cross the road in Toronto.”

So I went up to visit her over the long weekend and I took a whole bunch of dog treats, and she started feeding one of the dogs these dog treats. She would feed it all the way home to her place and then eventually the dog learned, and in the mornings, the dog would come and meet her at her place and then walk the mile to the school with her.

My question to the member of Kiiwetinoong: These rez dogs actually provide a service for the people on the reservation. Can you talk about the value of the rez dogs?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Rez dogs are very important in the north because they provide whatever—we’re in a reserve, right? We’re in a reserve. We’re in the north. If there are bears coming, if there’s polar bears further up north in Kiiwetinoong, like in Fort Severn, if there’s other animals that come to the communities, such as wolves, they’re the warning. They warn the community members if there’s other animals that are coming within the reserve.

But also, rez dogs can be scary as well. I think that’s where the importance of—we need to have a control system where we need to manage the dogs because dogs will attack children, will attack people as well. They will bark at people, so it’s two-sided.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciate the member from Kiiwetinoong’s presentation and I would remind him—and I’ll ask the question at the end—that for underserved areas in this province, this government is already providing \$50,000 over five years for those underserved

areas for veterinarians that have out-of-pocket costs—number one.

Number two: We've created 20 more spaces for veterinary students, hopefully from Ontario, to learn their practice and follow a career of veterinary medicine.

But the important part of this bill, in my opinion, is that we've expanded the role of veterinary technicians. And in the north—which is so important, I know—I think that is going to help.

I'll ask him the question: Explain to us how you think that part of the bill could help you and your region.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I think with the recognized scope of the veterinary technicians, it's a bonus because they can actually go up to these fly-in First Nations or the more remote First Nations to be able to provide the veterinary care that is required.

Again, when I listen to the debate, when I look at the bill itself, I recognize that. I think, again, it's an opportunity—not just veterinarians, but also the veterinary technicians—to be able to travel up north to do the work with the recognized scope. I think that's a plus, it's a bonus, and I think the way this government engaged with the veterinarians is the same way you should engage with First Nations when you want to make good legislation, so meegwetch for that question.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I really enjoyed your speech, but you raised a couple of things: You raised the fact that we still have water advisories in First Nations, including as close as Brantford, and then you talked about how they used to come in and shoot the dogs that would pull the sleds that would bring—whether it be your supplies or your food.

Is there anything that was going on in the north that talked about long-term care that you'd like to raise?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Long-term care for dogs? No, I'm just kidding.

In all seriousness, there are so many issues in the north: housing; clean water; overrepresentation of our people, people who look like me, in the jail system. But I think long-term care is a big issue. We have to travel hundreds of kilometres away to access long-term care. I know, back in 2018, we were promised that we would be getting a long-term-care facility in the north. We are still waiting today for the 76-bed facility that was promised.

I think it's important to acknowledge that even at Fort Severn, which is right on Hudson Bay—just imagine if they came to Thunder Bay from Fort Severn. That's 700 kilometres. I think, further apart, that's just continued oppression, continued colonialism, when you take away our elders from their homelands and to an urban place like Thunder Bay. Thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I know the member opposite has touched on transparency and diversity of voices as being issues of concern. In terms of the legislation that's put forward here, there is a broadening out of the regulated

college so that it's not just focused on veterinarians but also on veterinary technicians etc. So it's bringing more regulation, more professionalism to the sector and, I think, also bringing more voices to the table. As we all know, being in government or politics, we're here in the chamber, but there's a lot more people who are beside us and behind us that people don't see that are part of the process—no different than the medical profession, legal profession etc.

Do you think this bill brings about better transparency and professionalism to the voices within the veterinary community?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It brings better transparency for all the pets, I guess. I'm just kidding. But it's important that—again, I think when you talk about consultation, the engagement that you did on this bill, it is the same way that you should do, for example, the Mining Act; for example, the water and sewer infrastructure projects that are happening. Whether you're building the Ring of Fire—there should be better processes. This is the same engagement process that you should follow, because if you do not follow that, whatever you're trying to push will not happen, because you will get blowback from the First Nations that you do not talk to. Essentially what you're doing is, you're shooting yourself in the foot when you don't do that.

I think this is a good bill, a good process but, in other areas, not so good because that that will certainly give you—meegwetch.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm going to take this opportunity to wish my niece Lillian Margaret Shaw a very happy birthday. Lilly is a very special, special person to all of us. March 21, which is her birthday, today, is the first day of spring; it's also Lilly's 21st birthday.

So, from me and all your family, Lilly, we want to wish you a very happy champagne birthday. Thank you.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: The member opposite just gave me a great reminder—and I want to also say happy birthday to the member's niece.

I thought at this time I might as well say happy birthday to my mom, Lina. I won't say how many years old she is, but she's quite a young lady, and she's a pretty awesome mom. I'll make sure to get a copy of Hansard and send this to her, because she'll probably be pretty excited about that. So, thank you, and thanks for the reminder.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will wish everyone a happy birthday who is celebrating today.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise. I don't have a happy birthday wish for anyone, but I'm certainly happy to debate Bill 171, Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act.

I just want to say that I was listening to the member from Kiiwetinoong's debate remarks, and his remarks

really highlight the consequences of having a shortage of veterinarians across Ontario, but especially in the north. And so, one of the reasons that I'll be supporting this bill is, it's an important step towards addressing that shortage—but it's not going to be a sufficient step, and I'm going to talk about that in my remarks.

1350

I do want to say that this is an important step forward in professionalizing and modernizing veterinary care in Ontario and, in particular, recognizing the role that the college plays in providing regulation and governance and doing that in a way where technology is changed.

I think schedule 2 of the bill is particularly important—expanding the scope of registered veterinary technicians. When you talk to humane societies, when you talk to veterinarians—the ability for technicians to operate at their full scope of practice is a really important step forward, and it will hopefully allow more team-based veterinary care. I've been a strong advocate of team-based care, especially primary care, for people, and I believe we need more team-based care for animals as well, whether it's in agriculture or with our pets.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about the fact that in Canada, each and every year, 350 veterinarians retire and less than 350 veterinarians are educated to replace them, and that has been happening year over year over year.

As a matter of fact, at the University of Guelph—I'll just say, the Ontario Veterinary College is Canada's top-rated veterinary college, a top-five veterinary college in the world, and the oldest veterinary college in all of North America; an outstanding treasure for our province and, obviously, for the city of Guelph, which I proudly represent—they have graduated 120 vets per year for the last 15 years. They need to graduate more vets. They are going to start to graduate more veterinarians, but I think we need to even increase the number they're going to graduate. I want to talk about the process that has enabled them to have a few more vets that they're graduating, and it relates to the comments from the member from Kiiwetinoong. I think it demonstrates what can happen in this House—and it sometimes too rarely happens in this House—when we can work across party lines to get things done.

I want to give a quick shout-out to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who I approached probably two years ago, and I said, "People at the University of Guelph are telling me we need more veterinarians and we need more veterinarians in the north, and they have a proposal they put forward to partner with Lakehead University to make that happen." And I'll give a shout-out to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who I also approached, as a graduate of the University of Guelph, and said, "Can you help me work on this? We've got to convince the minister"—who was pretty easy to convince—"but then we have to convince the Minister of Colleges and Universities that this is a good program to support." And we got that minister on board. Then, leading up to the budget last year—and I

know budget day is next week—we all did, I think, a pretty strong push to the Minister of Finance that that should be included in last year's budget.

To me, it's an example of how we can work across party lines and how an MPP who may be in opposition but can still advocate for something good in their riding can actually work with government to get something in the budget.

When Steve Paikin, on TVO's *The Agenda*, last year, asked me, "Mike, what's one good thing?"—because I was giving the government a pretty rough time on the budget last year, and Mr. Paikin asked me, "Can you tell me one good thing in that budget?" I said, "Funding for the University of Guelph and Lakehead University to partner together to graduate 20 additional veterinarians each and every year over the next four years—hopefully, 80 additional veterinarians—with a focus on serving the north."

I want to say to the member from Kiiwetinoong, my hope is that members from Indigenous communities go to Lakehead, start their first two years in that program, and then come down to Guelph and tell them to reach out to the member for Guelph, go to his office. He'll be there to support them, welcome them to Guelph, hopefully show them a good time in Guelph for the two years they study in Guelph, so they can return to the north and provide care for the dogs you talked about and also provide care for the large animals in the growing farm sector we see in northern Ontario. And that's something Ontario desperately needs. It's something I can get behind and I think all members of this House can get behind.

But I want to make one final push to the finance minister before next week's budget: Our post-secondary educational sector needs more resources and support. I know the government announced some additional funding, but it's going to be insufficient. Universities like the University of Guelph, who do so much to educate students and their research, does so much to promote our food and farming sector—and the Ontario Veterinary College does so much to support our ag sector and people's pets. Let's increase the number of spaces at OVC so we can even graduate even more veterinarians to serve the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Time for questions.

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciate the member opposite's presentation. We agree on most things, not everything. But when it comes to our love and absolute support of the University of Guelph—being a graduate, we certainly share that in common.

As I said yesterday in my remarks, throughout the pandemic, it has been stated that we had over a million more pets or dogs in this country, obviously needing support for veterinary care, animal health. Where I think this legislation really helps is the expansion of vet technicians. Think of them as nurse practitioners in a veterinary sense. So can you speak to that in terms of how that will not only help companion animals, but on our large commercial farms as well?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I appreciate the member's question. Expanding the scope of practice for veterinary technicians is critical to helping address the shortage of veterinarians we have. Absolutely, think of how important it is to have on our health care professionals for human health operating at their full scope of practice, and they continue to push the government to do that. But it's a good thing that we're doing with vet technicians in this legislation, and I think it will create more opportunities, especially for team-based care. Prior to the pandemic, we had one in five veterinary practices actually reducing their hours of care. This will help reverse that trend.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would thank the member from Guelph, particularly for bringing up the importance of the work that's done at the University of Guelph, not only the veterinarian college, but the Ontario agriculture centre.

As you mentioned, we had the folks here from OCUFA yesterday, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I was lucky enough to have met with a woman that works at the Ontario Agricultural College who said that Guelph is running a deficit, and it's having a direct impact on faculty members at our institution. She works in the plant agriculture lab, and they're losing three plant-breeding faculty, which means that important crops for Ontario agriculture will have no public breeding and research, including corn, which is a predominant row crop grown in Ontario, and the research that they do to identify resistant strains.

So they were here saying that the universities need to be properly funded, that we are losing our edge that we have had in research and training, because our universities are all running a deficit. Can you speak to how this directly speaks to being able to implement and act on the intention of this bill, which is to have enough veterinarians and vet technicians to serve our animal friends?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I appreciate the question from the member. You obviously must have spoken to Helen yesterday when she was here, a fantastic plant scientist.

You're absolutely right: They're going to be losing three positions. That's going to directly affect research, especially for grains here in Ontario, which will negatively affect our agricultural sector, especially when it comes to disease-resistant plant breeding. So to me, it just highlights why it's so important to invest in our colleges and universities.

The University of Guelph, like so many universities right now, are going through program reviews which may mean the loss of certain courses and programs. Certainly we've seen a reduction in staff, which directly affects research, which then directly and negatively impacts our agri-food sector, which is a \$50-billion contributor to our economy.

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

1400

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm pleased to share my time with my colleague, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston.

Madame la Présidente, c'est un honneur de parler de ce projet de loi. Comme je l'ai déjà dit, rien pour moi, en tant que solliciteur général, n'est plus important que la sécurité de notre province, parce que nous croyons en notre province et notre avenir.

Public safety and Bill 171 that we're talking about today, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, have a lot in common. I want to say, Madam Speaker, that when we look at one of the elements that I wanted to speak on as well in the debate about food processors, I think of a wonderful success story in Ontario, St. Helen's meats. Many of us buy their products in the stores. It's honestly a wonderful Ontario success story, created and founded by the Bielak family. Why is this important? Because companies like St. Helen's need to have the confidence of the supply chain to ensure the highest standards of animal care.

My colleague the Associate Minister of Housing knows a lot about animal care. He comes to this Legislature himself a farmer, somebody that has shown by example how we have to ensure a safe supply chain. The members opposite spoke recently on the other component of animal care. It's not only the supply chain, to make sure that we have animals that are raised safely and that are part of a safe supply chain, but it is also our love for our own pets. That's personal to many of us. Just speaking to our colleagues across the aisle in this chamber, one hears stories of how a pet adopted to a family changes one's life.

When we look at this bill, Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, we look at the important component of how veterinary medicine has evolved over the last 35 years. That's a long time. Things change. The number of pets that people have adopted—and literally adopted. Most of us think of our pets as our own sons and daughters because we can't separate ourselves from them and how much joy they bring to us.

We know that it is hard to get an appointment with your veterinarian. That's a fact. The veterinarians play such a crucial role in ensuring that our pets are safe, that the supply chain of our animals are also healthy and safe. What I like about this piece of legislation is, as the other members have spoken about, we're expanding the role of veterinarian technicians to support our vets.

We looked just recently on how the support function has played out in other sectors of our health care as examples. Nobody understood how productive—that we could have the pharmacist help take a lot of pressure off booking a doctor's appointment to get certain things done in a pharmacy.

Madam Speaker, my own mom's dad, my grandfather Murray Penwick, who was born just at the footsteps of the Legislature at the turn of the last century, was a pharmacist. Who would have dreamed that in 2024, you can go to a pharmacy to get a flu shot and other vaccinations and other prescribed medication of common ailments that, again, you don't have to go to a doctor's office for? So this concept of veterinarian technician is so important.

I also wanted to acknowledge, as the member from Guelph spoke about, that the government has supported 20

more vet student seats at the University of Guelph, which is a wonderful facility, and Lakehead. And the member from Kiiwetinoong also spoke about the need to have veterinarians, and I would also add veterinarian technicians, go up to First Nations communities, because that's very, very important. So this legislation, Bill 171, takes us a long way. It allows the College of Veterinarians to define a scope of practice for veterinarian technicians and bringing them under the same regulatory college and legislation as veterinarians.

And I just wanted to go back to the role that the Ministry of the Solicitor General has in regard to animal welfare. Our commitment to animal welfare is very important. It's unwavering, and it's absolute. The Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act will be a complementary piece to other pieces of legislation that we helped introduce to help protect our animals in Ontario. In 2019, we passed the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, also known as the PAWS Act. The act established Canada's first provincially led animal welfare services agency. Through the PAWS Act, we developed a robust and accountable system to protect animals in Ontario. The PAWS Act boasts some of the strongest penalties for non-compliance in Canada.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when I was in Brantford last summer, I saw the newest cadre of animal welfare inspectors from all over the province, and I was so proud of them. Animal welfare services, AWS, often works hand in hand with veterinarians to determine whether standards of care are being met. My colleagues opposite know that they've had examples in their communities where this has absolutely helped. I'd like to extend my thanks to everyone part of AWS for working in communities across Ontario to keep our animals safe.

This bill was produced after long and thorough and robust stakeholder engagements. The list is so long that I would eat up all of my time if I just read it. But suffice it to say, we are constantly listening to the people of this province and are always ready to find solutions. But we rely on the experience and expertise of those working in the sector to tell us how.

It's not lost on me that animals are also a part of our communities. Whether you have a pet or livestock, as the member opposite does, it is likely that at some point you might need a vet. From personal experience, my daughter adopted a rabbit from the Toronto animal shelter 11 years ago, at nine years old, named Hal, and now she's in her fourth year of university at Queen's. Of course, my wife and I and our sons became the protectors of Hal, because my daughter didn't want to take him to university.

So it's our job as legislators to ensure that Ontarians have access for care for their animals. We've come a long way, and as the member from Guelph said, we worked across the aisle. That is important, because caring for our pets and caring for our food supply chain is very, very important.

I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for seeing it to the finish line—we're almost there—and for my colleague the Associate Minister of

Housing and Municipal Affairs for educating so many in this chamber about the food supply chain. It is very important. Finally, by expanding the availability of veterinary services for both large animals and pets, we will ensure that they continue to enrich our lives and maintain the safety of hard-working communities across Ontario. Thank you. Merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. John Jordan: I consider myself privileged to rise today to speak to the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act. Last Tuesday, I was also honoured to speak on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at the opening of the Ottawa Valley Farm Show, a vendor-sold-out event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ottawa Valley Seed Growers Association for their dedication to the Ottawa Valley Farm Show since 1959 and recognize president Barry Dean for his contribution, and all past presidents and volunteers for making this show a huge success. This show is important to demonstrate new technologies and innovations in agriculture so farmers can continue to advance their production and increase their production for all of us.

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Let's talk about innovation and the problem-solving skills that farmers need to possess to survive. When machinery breaks down, the first thing a farmer does is not call the machinery mechanic: A farmer will invent, he or she will compromise, they will weld and they will fix the problem. Only as a last resort will a farmer call for professional help.

Now let's talk about livestock. A farmer knows how to pull a calf when they need to administer colostrum. They know the necessary vaccinations and when and how to administer them. The minister told us about her goats, the quadruplets, and the minister knows and her family knows how to take care of those goats so they get a good start in life.

But, Speaker, when a farmer needs a vet, a farmer needs a vet. That's what this bill is all about. Sometimes we're faced these days, in particular in rural and northern Ontario, when, despite their long hours and dedication—a vet just is not available. This Bill 171, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, 2024, addresses that access problem and will help in a big way.

I want to congratulate the minister and the PA—the MPP for Chatham-Kent-Leamington—and the OMAFRA staff for their work on this bill. As the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said yesterday, the collaboration and consultation is a major factor in the value and perfection of this bill. Stakeholders, including the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians and many others were consulted. Twenty associations attended the introduction of Bill 171. Yesterday, the minister provided many quotes from stakeholders supporting this bill and recognized Jack Riddell—a former Minister of Agri-

culture who we recently paid tribute to in this House—for laying the groundwork for this bill.

This Bill 171, Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, will repeal the Veterinarians Act and replace it with the Veterinary Professionals Act. The bill proposes to recognize that veterinarian care is delivered by a team and acknowledge the roles of both veterinarians and veterinary technicians:

- to enable the regulatory college and government to define a broad scope of practice for veterinary technicians that reflects their skills and training;

- to include a list of authorized activities that describe the specific activities that make up the practice of veterinary medicine;

- to enhance clarity and better enable non-veterinarians to provide care to animals using lower-risk forms of treatment without the legal uncertainty that exists now;

- to continue from the current Veterinarians Act the exemptions for animal owners, including those who care for their own animals.

The proposed bill will not restrict low-risk animal services such as grooming, hoof-trimming, physiotherapy and massage.

The proposed legislation also includes greater diversity on the governing council, enhanced ministerial oversight and updating the name.

We know that accessing veterinary care has long been a challenge, especially in rural and northern Ontario. Farmers need our help. Pet owners need our help. All animals need our help.

I believe one of the most important components of this bill is to recognize the value of our vet techs. I spoke earlier about the acquired knowledge of farmers relative to animal care. Can you imagine the untapped value of our veterinarian technicians with not only their professional training but their work experience? This bill, our proposed legislation, will, if passed, recognize the important role that veterinarian technicians play in delivering care to animals. Over the past 35 years, delivery of veterinarian care has become a team endeavour. However, vet techs are not recognized in the current Veterinarians Act. This new modernized act will, if passed, regulate both veterinarians and veterinary technicians, reflecting a “one profession, two professionals” approach to delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario.

In order to reflect that change, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario will be renamed the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario. The renamed college will create regulations subject to the government’s approval that will outline the scope of practice for veterinary technicians.

For those who aren’t aware, the vet tech program is a two-year diploma program offered at Algonquin College, Collège Boréal, Georgian College, Northern College, Seneca College, Sheridan College, St. Clair College, St. Lawrence College and at University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus.

A quote from Algonquin College, in my riding, is provided from Shannon Reid—Shannon is a professor and

program coordinator, veterinary programs: “I am encouraged that the modernization of the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act will lead to registered veterinary technicians ... having an opportunity to fortify every sector of the veterinary industry, from small animal private practice to large animal medicine and agriculture.

“An expanded scope of practice will enable Algonquin College graduates to use their education and training to embark on rewarding and long-term careers, benefiting not only the animals in their care, but the veterinary teams they serve and the community at large.

“This recognition will empower RVTs to continue to uphold the highest standards of care, foster innovation while utilizing their unique and specialized skill set, and ensuring the well-being of all animals, thus bolstering the integrity and advancement of the entire veterinary industry.”

Two additional components which I believe are very important to our supply of new veterinarians are the Veterinary Incentive Program encouraging new veterinarians to work in large animal practices and receive \$50,000 over five years to work in an underserved area and \$14.7 million for the creation of veterinary medicine seats, which will result in 20 additional veterinarians graduating each year.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs provided a number of supportive quotes. I would like to share some more from my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

From Jennifer Doelman, instructor, livestock business operations, Algonquin College’s agricultural business program, Perth campus: “The inability to access veterinary care can jeopardize family farms and, ultimately, places the food system at risk. These proposed changes to the veterinary act will support the whole health care approach to animal care—allowing competent professionals to work together to decrease the demand on veterinarians, increase access to essential medical care and ultimately allow our farms and agricultural businesses to continue participating in Ontario’s growth.”

From Craig McLaughlin, president, Beef Farmers of Ontario: “Many beef farmers in Ontario have long experienced issues accessing veterinary care for their cattle especially those who farm in northern Ontario and parts of eastern and southern Ontario. We fully support the government of Ontario and Ontario’s veterinary organizations in their efforts to modernize the Veterinarians Act and the scope of practice for veterinary professionals in Ontario. This work will go a long way in improving how veterinary teams, specifically veterinary technicians, provide care on farm and how they support our farmers.”

From Don Badour, cow-calf director at Beef Farmers of Ontario, and Sheila James, vice-president of Lanark County Beef Farmers: “Beef farmers in the Lanark, Frontenac and Kingston area support efforts to modernize the Veterinarians Act. It is our hope that the changes related to incorporating veterinary technicians within the act, and clarifying the roles around the scope of practice and authorized activities that can be performed by

veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other professionals, will provide more opportunities for farmers to access veterinary care on-farm. For example, if the local veterinarian is unable to attend, the veterinarian may delegate to a veterinary technician at the clinic to visit the farm to assess the situation and assist with lower-risk veterinary activities. We look forward to further discussions and subsequent development of regulations following the act coming into force.”

There are many more quotes. However, in closing, I want to thank the minister for the opportunity to speak to this bill and trust that all members of the Legislature will join me in supporting this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the remarks. I’d like to direct my question to the Solicitor General. In his remarks, he talked about the PAWS Act. The PAWS Act is another act that was unanimously supported and is still unanimously supported, but it has come to our attention, as the act has been implemented, that there are some issues regarding the cost of treating animals after they are dealt with through the PAWS Act. We’re not complaining about the PAWS Act—but it has come to our attention, and I was wondering if the Solicitor General would be open to having a discussion about how we could improve the PAWS Act for the farmers, as well.

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Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I also want to acknowledge my colleague who just spoke, because he brings his own experiences to his remarks. So I wanted to say thank you. Also, to my friend opposite from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who himself is a farmer and has educated us, as well, about how important the supply chain is—I might add, a safe supply chain. I’ve been up to Cochrane, so I’ve seen for myself just how wonderful the community is.

Our government is always open to listening to our stakeholders on how to make regulations and legislation better, when it comes to animal welfare.

So the short answer is, this is evolving, this is real, this is something that will live and breathe.

Again, our government takes animal welfare extremely seriously, and we’re proud of that.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: It’s great to see my colleague from eastern Ontario, who is also a fellow beef farmer. I would ask him, as we share in eastern Ontario—perhaps, at times, veterinary service is a little further apart than we’d like. I’m fortunate that I have a vet close by—but sometimes not always available. Could he explain how he believes the additional improvement of scope for veterinary technicians is going to benefit not only his farm but all farmers in eastern Ontario?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the Associate Minister of Housing for the question.

He said a great comparison with the nurse practitioner program and what we’ve done with that program to improve services in Ontario for all people to get primary care.

Similarly speaking, by regulating and increasing the scope of our vet techs, it will free up time for our veterinarians to increase their capacity to get to our farms and address the more acute illnesses that your livestock may suffer from.

I think the vet techs are very important and the changes in the regulations are very important, so that a vet does not have to be beside that vet tech all the time in order for them to do that work. It will definitely increase the capacity of those veterinarians.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Solicitor General.

I know that we share our love of animals. I’ve talked to you about Hal, and I’ve talked about my dog, Nellie, and all the animals we’ve known and loved through our life.

I also want to commend you for the work that we did together. In Hamilton, there was a disturbing incident where a dog named Merlin was maltreated. I received so many calls in my constituency office about that, and you were in touch with me, keeping me posted on what the progress was, and I appreciate that, and my community appreciates that. Thanks for that.

I would just support what the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was saying. You say the PAWS Act is new, but we just want to make sure that the money that we’re dedicating to this is being spent well and that we are continuing to improve, for enforcement and to protect our animals.

Without putting you on the spot, I do want to ask you a little bit about some of the maltreatment and the deaths we’ve seen at Marineland, and if there’s anything that you want to add to the enforcement around that and what we’re going to do to make sure that people don’t see deaths of these beloved marine animals, like our whales. So if you wanted to comment on that, I would certainly appreciate it.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I very much appreciate the question from my colleague opposite.

We take animal welfare very seriously. Whether it be at Marineland or anywhere in Ontario, it doesn’t matter; animal welfare inspectors will not hesitate to issue an order or other compliance orders if required, if deemed necessary. And it’s not just issuing an order; it’s the animal welfare inspectors going back and making sure that compliance is done. If compliance is not done, then there are further remedies that the PAWS Act speaks of.

But I think what the member opposite agrees with is the government’s commitment to make animal welfare a serious matter. It’s raising awareness. It’s telling people who might be new to the province that there’s an expectation and a duty of care that we must always have for our animals. And for those who are entering the food processing business who might be new, again, there’s a duty of care and a professional standard.

For our government, we take this seriously and we appreciate working with all sides in this House to strengthen animal welfare protection—the best possible not only in Ontario, but in Canada and around the world.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the members for their comments on this important piece of legislation. I represent a rural riding. I'm certainly not from the industry, although I'm told through Scottish heritage, a "byre," which is my last name, is a cow barn, so I guess in some way I'm connected to this legislation.

Hon. Rob Flack: But you're never full of it.

Mr. Rick Byers: Yes, a fair point, as long as that's not on the record.

I want to ask my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston: When I'm around the riding, I hear a lot from farmers about access to veterinarians and how that makes their business more challenging and how, when they look to pass on the business to their family, lack of access to vets makes that more of a challenge in the future. I'm interested in his thoughts, given his actual experience in the industry, how this bill may improve on both those points.

Mr. John Jordan: I appreciate the question. My oldest son is quite keen on pursuing a career in farming and has been doing the beef farming in my absence and pursuing that in addition to his construction career. I have to say, right from the get-go, he knows more about animal care at this stage than I do, just from his enthusiasm and his learnings that he does on his own. It's just the way it is. So I learn a lot from him, too.

I think the education of our farmers is another aspect of addressing and building the capacity of our veterinarians. But again, like I said in my presentation, we've got an untapped resource in the vet techs because some of them have a farming background; they've been working alongside veterinarians; they have their professional training, and we haven't been tapping that resource to its full potential. This bill will make that happen.

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

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'm very pleased today to talk about Bill 171 because quality veterinarian care is essential to Ontario. I want to commend the government for going ahead and modernizing veterinary care legislation, which hasn't been updated since 1989. The nature of veterinary care, both technologically and organizationally, is changing, and its legislative framework needs to reflect that. Team-based care is becoming more common in veterinarian practices, and this act's recognition of vet technicians is a step forward in addressing and regulating the reality of team-based care and taking full advantage of the expertise and the energy that we can tap from that resource.

There is a shortage of veterinarians in this province, and that's been known for years. The shortage is due, in part, to a higher demand for veterinarian services and the type of practice vets are choosing, with notably fewer choosing livestock care in favour of companion animal care. In 2021, the College of Veterinarians wrote that, "In Ontario, the demand for veterinarians, as indicated in job postings,

reached a new record high each of the past four years, and continues to rise." The shortage is especially true in rural and northern communities, which have been underserved for years.

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One of the veterinarian college's recommendations was to enable veterinarians to better utilize the knowledge and skills of vet techs. By bringing in vet techs under the umbrella of veterinarian professionals in this bill, the province is formally recognizing the growing importance of vet techs, their scope of practice, their place in team-based practices and the need to include all of that and support it in legislation.

There are incentives to encourage students to go into large animal or livestock care rather than companion animal care, and I want to see how it works out. The former is harder—irregular hours; more travel—but it's also more essential to the \$50-billion-a-year agri-food sector. That's why incentives are needed.

I was hoping to see that this act had a specific section on climate change preparedness and veterinarian care for livestock. In the climate change report commissioned by this very government, published in January 2023—so just a year ago—there were stark warnings that Ontario's livestock will be at high risk by the mid-2050s. Well, I think we have to admit that they are at risk now. It's not out of the realm of possibility that Ontario this summer will experience abnormally hot heat waves or plumes of toxic wildfire smoke drifting by our nostrils that could severely affect the well-being of livestock.

So we must help the agri-food sector, our largest economic sector here in Ontario, prepare for climate change, but I don't think this government takes climate change seriously enough. The Ontario Veterinary College has taken steps already to begin researching how certain types of dairy cattle can better endure heat waves, but I think the Ontario government should lead by example by working collaboratively with the OVC to prepare all of the veterinarians for climate-change-related incidents—incidents more likely to occur in the future.

There are new accountability measures in this bill that will push veterinary professionals to hold themselves to a high standard, and that is good. It introduces new reporting measures. For example, members of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario must report if they learn that a veterinarian's fitness to serve is impaired. Changes like these could ensure the veterinary field maintains its solid reputation and that all professionals are exercising safety around themselves, their colleagues and animals.

At the forefront of modernizing legislation is ensuring means of accountability. The previous Veterinarians Act was introduced 35 years ago, and since then, Ontario's veterinary profession has not had legislated reporting requirements or a quality assurance committee. They did not have a public register to show the status of members.

Much of this bill's details needs to be revealed later in regulations, which are not yet specified. Regulations still need to determine what exactly the quality assurance committee will do, what exactly the scope of work will be

for vet techs and even what the practice of veterinary medicine is defined as. This bill is a good start for ensuring accountability, but we are still waiting for the clarifications.

The quality assurance program has many elements to it that need to be thoroughly investigated as to how and by what specific mechanisms it will enforce the ends it is trying to achieve. Many of these directives have the potential to ensure that the veterinarian industry is an ever-improving, safe and caring place for the animals we love and care for. However, I'd like to see more direction from the minister about what exactly they are looking for. It is the elected minister's duty to ensure that their mandate to the College of Veterinarians of Ontario is as clear as possible.

We'll support this bill. The nature of veterinary medicine has changed since 1989, and legislation needs to reflect this. I am hopeful that this bill will positively impact veterinary professionals and the communities they serve, yet this bill has left lots of work to be done in addressing the complex challenges facing Ontario's veterinarian sector.

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

Ms. Thompson has moved second reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinarian Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Please assign it to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington has referred it to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Orders of the day—I apologize. I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to now see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**STORMWATER FLOOD
PREVENTION ACT, 2024**

LOI DE 2024

**SUR LA PRÉVENTION DES INONDATIONS
DUES AUX EAUX PLUVIALES**

Mrs. McCrimmon moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to implement the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual and to report on stormwater management guidelines periodically / *Projet de loi 168, Loi mettant en oeuvre le Manuel d'orientation sur la gestion des eaux pluviales par un aménagement à faible impact et visant la rédaction de rapports périodiques sur les lignes directrices en matière de gestion des eaux pluviales.*

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you to all my colleagues. I'm here today to talk about Bill 168, the Stormwater Flood Prevention Act of 2024, and why I believe that it is so important that we work together to move this bill forward. I will briefly explain what the bill does and provide some context.

The bill asks the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to update the design guidelines with regard to the proper management of stormwater. The current set of guidelines have been in place since 2008. Since then, there is a wealth of new information and techniques that should be included in our guidelines. There is also a changing environment, and we must expect that our stormwater systems will be stressed and tested in new ways. It is vital that our guidelines keep up with a rapidly changing world.

Secondly, this bill requires the ministry to continue to report on the adequacy of stormwater management guidelines every 10 years. As I've just described, 15 years has left a gap in the province's guidelines that needs to be addressed. A report every decade following this bill will help direct the upkeep of future guidelines and ensure that they are meeting the evolving needs of the province. I will expand on what these guidelines are later, but first, I want to discuss the need for these guidelines.

Firstly, Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. This is something that cuts clearly across party lines and is fully worth supporting. We found that 30% of the members in this House have had stormwater flooding in their ridings in the last 15 years. This is an issue that touches every corner of our province: 20 members of the government bench, 10 members of the official opposition bench and six independent members have all had recent stormwater flooding. If it hasn't affected your riding, turn to one of your caucus members and ask them because I'm sure it will have affected one of your legislative neighbours and their constituents.

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My riding suffered severe stormwater flooding on July 24, 2009; 1,200 homes in Glen Cairn were flooded. The community's stormwater infrastructure was simply not designed to handle such a heavy volume of water. The storm sewers filled. The excess rainwater had nowhere to go except back up into people's basements. That, in turn, filled the sanitary sewer system, overwhelming the pipes, causing further backups and filling homes with sewage. I would love to be able to tell those constituents this was a one-off situation that would never happen again, but they know better. It was the third flood in 13 years.

Now, post-disaster, some mitigation measures have been adopted, but this was a system built to suit the old standards and those old standards are the ones that are still in place today. Are those measures and old standards good enough to prevent future flooding? The planning and design experts don't think so.

To pick an example from the government benches, I know the members from Essex and Windsor–Tecumseh have been severely impacted. In 2018, stormwater flooding cost the Windsor area \$124 million. The title of the article in the Windsor Star was “Basement Flooding Can Cause Prolonged Harm to Mental Health, Study Says.”

Constituents from all ridings are being affected. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, took a notable step in 2019, appointing a special advisor on flooding for Ontario. The special advisor's report recommended that the government implement requirements for stormwater, exactly like the ones in this bill. We agree, and it's time to listen to the experts. There is a desperate need for a proactive strategy to manage stormwater in the province today. If not proactive today, then we know it will be reactive, waiting for the next disaster to push us into action.

The science is already in. We know that proactively managing stormwater and building to manage it is vital, not just to protect our environment but to safeguard our investments, be it homes, streets, towns and cities, or our businesses and our economy. By 2050, total annual precipitation in Ontario is forecast to increase by about 9%. As recently as in 2013, 125 millimetres of rain in just a few hours did \$1 billion worth of damage across southern Ontario. The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario reports that, without adaptation, increases in rainfall—remember that 9% figure by 2050—will likely cost Ontario municipalities an additional \$1.8 billion per year; \$145 billion by the year 2100.

Every member should be invested in our infrastructure's resilience. Talking to engineering associations, they tell us that programs to prevent infrastructure damage are one tenth the cost of repairing that infrastructure. That's exactly the preventative, precautionary mindset we need to have right now.

We're talking about floods which disrupt all aspects of life in the province: our profitable economy, the movement of goods and, importantly, the homes that Ontarians work so hard for. Everyone wants more homes, more affordable homes. Everyone wants a home to call their own in this province. I support increased density and infill. However, it's so vital that these homes and the supporting infrastructure are built to last, that they are safe and secure in the case of weather extremes.

Unfortunately, flooding has an especially damaging effect. Water can seep in and erode someone's home. They might think they have escaped, only to find flood damage in the basement and in the walls of their home. Constituents of mine still talk about the 2009 Glen Cairn stormwater flooding. It's left such a clear community trauma.

We see now in jurisdictions all over the world that flooding is becoming such an issue that insurers won't even cover homes. This is a real risk that deserves the full attention of government because now is the time for action.

Truthfully, this bill and these guidelines are not enough to fully mitigate the forecast increase in precipitation, but it's the important first step of a concerted update of our provincial approach to flood mitigation and stormwater management. The province's own Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment lists flood mitigation infrastructure and urban and rural stormwater management systems in every region in Ontario at high risk. Proactively adapting the stormwater management techniques of Ontario reduces the risk of flooding and is the most cost-effective strategy in the long term. That's exactly what these guidelines seek to do.

The first requirement of the bill is that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks publish and endorse the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual. This is a manual that was prepared by the Ministry of the Environment. It's an excellent document: 350 exhaustive pages of research into what could best help our developers and municipalities use the most modern best practices, techniques and standards for stormwater management.

So what considerations does the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual actually address? It is, firstly, an expansive description of the techniques that can be used to manage stormwater in a way that reduces runoff. But it also establishes a vital new guideline around watershed permeability: i.e., how much water a geographical area should be able to absorb when it rains. What this guideline establishes is that, if we get a storm in the 90th percentile, the watershed as a whole should be able to handle all but 10% of the water. That 10% can be runoff, as in nature, as long as it is absorbed on site.

At 10%, there is a limit above impermeability. Above that—i.e., when we pave over green spaces with concrete and asphalt—flooding vastly increases. Floods that in the past we would only predict to happen once a year will happen with 10 times the frequency. So by setting the guidelines for 10% permeability, the guidance manual sets a bar that keeps our homes, families and investments, and the province's investments, safe for future generations.

The current guidelines have not been updated since 2008. Since then, not only is there a slew of new techniques to incorporate, but there is better understanding of our changing environment that we must adapt to. Speaker, I do hope that the members listening will take the time to consider these guidelines. The province deserves a government committed to the newest techniques and the best practices. We have a chance here to greatly reduce potential stormwater flooding, protect valuable infrastructure, protect our citizens and communities from flooding, protect our economy, reduce the cost of insurance, and save money by avoiding costly infrastructure repairs. If enacted, this bill will save increasing numbers of Ontarians the heartbreak of stormwater flooding.

Thank you, colleagues, for your time and consideration.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: The fact that we're speaking of low-impact development is just manna from heaven for me, as a civil engineer, as the low-impact development lead for the city of Windsor for the last number of years prior to my election. I've built a number of low-impact development projects in my career, including some that actually didn't work all that well, and you learn from every project that you're involved with.

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I can certainly appreciate where the member from Kanata–Carleton is coming from. The Ministry of the Environment's stormwater management guidelines were last updated in 2003. That's separate and distinct from these, but really, a lot of time goes by for the passage of these guidelines. If anyone ever wants to print them out it's probably about an inch thick of paper that you'll get—a lot of text. Actually, it's an interesting read, but at the same time, as a practitioner, it may not be the most practical effort to look at those 2003 guidelines and say, "Okay, I'm going to design properly." In fact, that was one of the biggest challenges I had as practitioner: How do I understand the consequences of my design? What were the best ways to design a project?

This is where the Credit Valley Conservation Authority as well as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority really took it to heart to create a different ecosystem specific to low-impact development. It's called Sustainable Technologies. The website is sustainabletechnologies.ca. They published a guide in 2010 which ultimately became recognized throughout the province by practitioners as being the best standard that we have for looking at low-impact development and how we should build, including—one thing that was novel for 2010 was doing the overall cost in terms of the life cycle of the project. That's something I actually haven't seen in many previous sets of guidelines. That came from Credit Valley Conservation's sustainable technology consortium.

Since the publication of that guide in 2010, Sustainable Technologies has evolved. They're no longer going to publish a guideline document. What they've done is go to a wiki type of system where, as new elements of the knowledge base come online, they can be added, they can be evaluated and you can learn from the experiences of others in a more dynamic fashion. These guidelines aren't the sole evolution to wiki; I'm a Scout leader on the side, and Scouts Canada has moved to a wiki for their ongoing changes as they delve into topics such as child protection and child safety etc.

Just to elaborate a bit about what low-impact development truly is: It's taking out the stormwater component of what otherwise gets sent down to the waste water treatment plant. I built two parking lots as my first projects for low-impact development, each of which had an infiltration trench, which was effectively acting as a reservoir at the edge of the parking lot. All the water would trickle down from the pavement, end up in this big, deep

gravel pit and then it would be dispersed underground so it didn't end up going through the sewer system. You would contain the work on site.

In the most recent project I was a part of, that I designed, we used tree cells—the same kind of concept, but outside of some of our planted trees we were going to direct some of the stormwater that would have gone onto the streets into these tree cells. The tree would actually drink the water and grow more and be more prosperous because of that low-impact development.

I'll commend the federal government for the DMAF program that they had because they asked for low-impact development to be brought forward as part of their funding allocations, so it actually gave a challenge to us as practitioners: How do we actually make this work? What are the best tools in the tool box for these technologies?

The member opposite is quite right: My community of Windsor–Tecumseh is pretty low-lying. It's adjacent to Lake St. Clair. We had not only a significant threat of flooding; when the wind was high we actually had overland flooding coming from the lake, and it made it onto Riverside Drive.

Basement flooding is something that we're all well aware of. I can think of a couple of days that stand out during my time as a municipal councillor. Those days when we had a big storm and people were flooded out, really, those were unproductive days in my day job to respond to those times. Sure enough you want to help your neighbours pull out. Basement flooding is a public health issue. You end up developing mould if you have a flooded basement. You also have so much damage, so much that gets trucked to the landfill. Think of carpets, think of drywall and the different pieces of furniture that are affected. So it's imperative that we do our best to take stormwater out of the system, provide for those high-risk storms the most capacity possible within the pipe. That's truly where low-impact development comes into play.

I was very thankful to actually see that the Ministry of the Environment is in the process of looking at the low-impact development guide, and in tandem with the Credit Valley effort with the wiki.

When it comes to the guide, I had a chance, in preparation for this debate, to read through it, and I was reminded immediately of the 2003 stormwater management guide, and, when push came to shove, for the designing of a project—really, the guide was a great tool to show the background and the whys, but for the actual implementation, I did have to rely on resources that were outside of those guidelines. The guidelines set what the expectation is, but it doesn't really tell you how to get there. It does tell you the different types of technologies, and it's a useful tool to have, and it should exist. And I fully support having the Ministry of the Environment—I know the government does; otherwise, it wouldn't have been actioned and it wouldn't be on the registry at the moment.

What's the future of this document? Is it going to be a living document? The 10-year update cycle? I look at the 2003 guide, still not updated, but it's also still relevant in

some ways because it's not something we would rely upon to actually figure out how we're going to develop the low-impact development projects. Looking at the guideline that's on the registry today, I would say—really, the same. It is there to provide the background, the whys and the opportunities that exist, but when push comes to shove, you are going to have to look to something that's a bit more dynamic in order to make the design decisions that you need, as a practitioner, to actually implement the low-impact development.

The member opposite mentioned the Windsor Star, and, coincidentally enough, there's an article from February 10, 2002, titled "Riverside Residents 'Delighted' with New Anti-Flood Improvements." This is actually the last article that I appeared in as an engineering subject-matter expert before being elected. It gets into a couple of cases. We had, in Tranby Park, two reservoirs; there's a permeable parking lot, an on-ground dry pond at the back of the park—my colleague Tiffany worked on that. There were references to the initiatives that I had done and a couple of others in the neighbourhood, with permeable pipes underneath residential streets such as Matthew Brady. My boss at the time cited that these projects were absolutely making a difference. Actually, members of the community were quoted as saying they've noticed changes to their frequency of flooding as a result of the implementation. I won't go that far, because sometimes the intensity of the storm is different in a given location, and that may not actually be the reason why they're experiencing relief. But on a theoretical basis, for sure, when you take stormwater out of the system, that means that water is not occupying the piece of the pipe, and you're gaining valuable capacity when you have a high-intensity storm in your neighbourhood.

Ultimately, those low-impact development projects are more frequent; however, they are more maintenance-intensive. They don't have the same lifespan as normal projects that have the big, full sewer, full reconstruction. You do have to take out the sediment. You collect a lot of sediment when water gets collected into a sewer system, or, in these cases, the infiltration trench. You need to clean out the aggregate that's used as a filter, and that has a frequency of probably about a 10-year time frame.

So there are some tricks of the trade that are part of designing low-impact developments, that are more dynamic. You have to gain that knowledge and experience as you try these out. They aren't in wide application; they should be. And I certainly commend the member opposite for bringing this forward, because there's a lot of unmet potential with the development of low-impact development guidelines.

I referenced the wiki earlier, and this is actually—to speak of how dynamic it is, we will gain knowledge, just as I did. My first project, I'd call a failure. What was happening is, the water table ending up being so high close to the Detroit River that my infiltration trench had groundwater enter it, and so when the water came and drained into it, there was nowhere left to go. The capacity was eaten up by groundwater. Okay, lesson learned. As a

designer, we've since fixed it by having an overflow sewer. That bit was installed years later.

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This is the kind of knowledge that a practitioner will gain. They learn from their mistakes, and we gain our knowledge base. So a practitioner will not be reliant on this guide to keep them up to date. This guide will show what the outcome should be, but really, the experiences we live will be put into the wiki, sustainabletechnologies.ca, and really, that will be the tool for keeping practitioners up to date.

As I say, I applaud the efforts of the member opposite. From a functional perspective, a practitioner will not need an update in 10 years. They're not going to rely on this to do their design. They're going to be looking at a more dynamic source of information, whereas this will be the archival piece. It is not destined to be something that will have much added to the knowledge base as a result of a 10-year review.

With that, I won't be able to support it. I certainly appreciate the effort by the member opposite.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like to begin by saying how disappointing it is to hear that this Conservative government will not be supporting the sensible piece of legislation. It's sensible, practical. It's a disappointment to hear the government not supporting this again, but are we surprised? How could we possibly be surprised? This is a government that has not once, in the almost six years that they've been in power, taken climate change seriously, taken the impact on our infrastructure—

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. Climate change is real, folks. Like, what—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yoo-hoo. I'm going to take a page out of Mary-Margaret.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Tick-tock.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Tick-tock. Climate change is real. This is an easy step to implement that would cost this government nothing and would signal to the people of the province of Ontario that you understand that it's in fact your responsibility to protect municipal infrastructure, to protect people from having their basements flooded, protect their property and also, really, to make sure that they're not put at risk.

I just have to say that I think it's timely that the member is bringing this forward, because this year is the 70th anniversary of Hurricane Hazel. And what did that teach us? This was back in 1954. Hurricane Hazel at the time was a real tragedy for the city of Toronto. I remember my mother talking about it. She was a young girl at the time. Eighty-one people lost their life during Hurricane Hazel and the ensuing floods. Over 1,900 people were homeless. And it incurred about a billion dollars in damage in today's standards. So this was a huge, huge disaster in the province. At the time, the province of the day worked in co-operation with local municipalities to come up with

ways that they could make sure that they were protecting and preventing this kind of loss of life and loss of property from happening again.

I do think this is an important bill, but I have to say, and I think that you will agree, that good stormwater regulations, which this bill represents, will not replace the loss and the damage that we're seeing to natural heritage land, farmland, wetlands, green lands, the kinds of important properties that we need that are going to protect us from the impact of severe weather and the flooding that we can only expect to happen more and more.

In fact, my colleague here referenced the report from the—let's see what the report was called. It was the provincial climate impact assessment report. This painted a grim picture. This report painted a grim enough picture that the government commissioned this report and it was released but hidden. The government hid this report because the impacts were so severe, it would seem to me that they didn't want the people of the province to know that we are in trouble when it comes to climate change and flooding and severe weather on the way. And so the cost of flooding—the member from Kanata-Carleton did explain that it's not just the loss of life; it's the impact to our properties and our municipal infrastructures, which we all pay for.

I have a report here from the University of Waterloo Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation. It's called Treading Water: Impact of Catastrophic Flooding on Canada's Housing Market. They identify that "the most costly impact of climate change affecting Canadians is residential basement flooding, that is often made worse through poor land-use planning and management."

You mentioned the flood that you experienced in the Ottawa area. There was a flood in Burlington, Ontario, in 2014; I think something like two years' worth of rain fell in an hour or so, and it cost millions upon millions of dollars for the municipality of Burlington. Also Toronto in 2019: We were in this House at the time when that happened. Downtown Toronto flooded. People were trapped in their cars. A GO train had to be evacuated because of the sudden flooding. So these things are real, and they're increasing.

From this report: 3.3 million Canadians live in a 100-year flood plain and 3.9 million Canadians live in a 200-year flood plain, so people are already living in flood plains, and these flood plains will only continue to be expand and be made more vulnerable by the decisions that this government takes when it comes to protecting our natural heritage and our natural lands, like the greenbelt and like wetlands.

I would just like to add that after Hurricane Hazel, the province of the day worked in co-operation with local municipalities and conservation authorities to allow conservation authorities to acquire lands and to regulate the vulnerable lands. Why did they do this? They did this because they recognized that, for example, stripping the Humber River drainage system at the time amplified the impacts of the damage. The flood plains couldn't support the rain. That was what happened then, and that's what's

going to be happening now if we build in the wrong place, if we continue to impinge on the greenbelt, if we continue to expand urban boundaries in areas where we shouldn't, and if we continue to disregard and disrespect important tributaries, wetlands and waterways in the province.

I would say that in Hamilton—the Speaker will know this full well—we saw the damaging impact of flooding. It wasn't flooding particularly, but it was Cootes Paradise where this beautiful natural area—it is actually a provincially significant wetland—was flooded by 24 billion litres of raw sewage that spilled into this area.

This spill was the result of a failure of oversight. It was a failure of aging infrastructure—the signals to show that this system wasn't working failed—but it also is a lesson to show us that we have aging infrastructure across the province in municipalities, and that these severe storm weather events impact our ability to treat sewage in our municipalities.

And so, the city of Hamilton is continuing to monitor bypass events, where our sewage water and waste water treatment system can't support the flood of water that's coming into these systems and they have to bypass. Rather than going through the treatment facility, they have to bypass. In the case of Hamilton, it bypasses into the Hamilton bay, and in the case of, for example, Burlington, that happens as well.

So these have serious implications not just for people and for property, but for our important waterways, and it is shocking to me to say in the context of this, in the context of climate change and in the context of aging infrastructure and wanting to protect people, that this government continues its assault on our protected land. This government now has passed—or will pass on April 1, which is kind of ironic; April Fool's Day—new regulations that will come into effect that, again, kneecap our conservation authorities' ability to do their job and their ability to protect us from climate change flooding impacts. These regulations that come into effect will affect the 36 conservation authorities that we have across the province. Those are 31 in southern Ontario and five in populated areas in northern Ontario. Over 90% of Ontarians live within the jurisdiction of a conservation authority. So when conservation authorities are undermined and they longer have the ability to protect us, this impacts 90% of Ontarians in those areas.

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And so I would like to say that these regulations, they're shocking. They came along with Bill 23, which required conservation authorities to identify surplus lands that could be sold for housing. So this government has got the conservation authorities going through lands that were meant to be protected in perpetuity, lands that were there to protect us from flooding—this government has tasked, charged conservation authorities and their boards of directors to find surplus lands that could be sold.

I would say, if there is a mass sell-off of conservation lands, the outrage that we saw in the province of Ontario when it came to the greenbelt grab will be nothing compared to people's outrage when their protected areas,

when their trail areas, when their protected species like woodpeckers and owls and butterflies and just natural areas that people love are now going to be sold off.

These regulations not only change the buffer zone for development from 120 metres from a protected land to 30 metres, they also allow the minister of the day to force conservation authorities to issue development permits whether they want to or not.

They've also changed the definition—which is insane, that they have changed the definition—of what a headwater is. A headwater, really, if you think of the ground, is essentially a depression in the ground, because in Ontario, all of our tributaries and our lakes and rivers come from a headwater that's under the ground. That's how it works here. And so this government is saying now that they can't protect headwaters and said what they will be doing is, if it has a defined bank or running water, that can be protected.

But I would like to remind this House that the Grand River starts from, essentially, a depression, a hole in the ground, north of Kitchener. Is this government saying that we cannot protect the headwaters of something such as the Grand River? This weakening of the powers of the conservation authorities is part and parcel of this government's problem when it comes to understanding the importance of our conservation authorities.

And I would like to just end in the minute that I have left to say that I would like to remind all of us that we have a duty to protect the water. We are all treaty people through being Canadian citizens. We're subject to the Between the Lakes Treaty between the British crown and the Mississaugas of the First Nations, and also the Fort Albany Treaty with the Haudenosaunee. And these treaties, they're not just important treaties that we have an obligation to, to First Nations; they teach us and provide guidance on how we should treat water and how we should respond based on cultural practices, not just now but for generations to come.

I think this is a very good bill and we will be supporting it. But I appreciate the opportunity to show that this government not only is supporting this bill, but they have done—they're going further and further to put our properties, our people and our lives at risk with their undermining of protecting important areas in our province. I think that's disastrous, and I think that we're going to pay the price one way or another.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Today, I'm honoured to stand up and debate Bill 168, Stormwater Flood Prevention Act, 2024. I'm extremely proud of my colleague the member from Kanata–Carleton for introducing and debating her first piece of legislation in this chamber, and I'm hugely supportive of this bill and what it is trying to achieve.

Bill 168 acknowledges the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and takes proactive steps to adapt Ontario's stormwater management system. By investing in flood mitigation infrastructure and up-

dating development guidelines, the bill aims to protect communities across Ontario from the devastating impacts of flooding, safeguarding homes, businesses and public infrastructure. This is crucial legislation. Flooding is the number one cause of public emergency in Ontario and it's the most common natural disaster in Canada, costing Canadians more than any other climate issue.

I'm sure everyone in this House fondly remembers when I put forth my private member's bill, Bill 56, Fewer Floods, Safer Ontario Act, 2022. Those were good times. It was, like this bill, aimed at protecting Ontarians from the risks of flooding.

I spoke with every member in this chamber about Bill 56. Many of them had experienced flooding themselves, as we heard from my colleague today how many ridings have been affected by flooding, and they've had to deal with it first-hand with their constituents. Riddled with hardship, floods have environmental, financial, mental and, of course, physical impacts.

Naturally, this government that claims they are addressing the major issue of flooding killed my private member's bill. Well, Speaker, I'm hoping my colleague has better luck today, as the government has yet another opportunity to address flooding in Ontario and protect our communities right here and right now with Bill 168.

I'm not sure that the government reads the news, so I will let them know: The Desjardins Group recently announced it will no longer offer new mortgages in high-risk flood zones in Quebec. It's the canary in the coal mine, because if other mortgage providers follow their lead, experts warn there could be major consequences for homeowners and the housing market. So wake up.

We also know, thanks to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, that 10% of homes in Canada are no longer insurable relative to flood risk. It is alarming. We cannot let this crisis get any worse. And yet—and yet, Speaker, the Premier said today he is only interested in building single-family homes. I can imagine that means they will want to do more of what they do best: sprawl on top of flood plains; more disasters endangering the people of Ontario, their well-being and their wallets.

They have slashed conservation authorities. They have killed environmental protections. They voted against Bill 56, and from the sounds of their debate, I doubt they will be supporting Bill 168 here today. I truly hope I am wrong in that thinking.

I want to once again thank and congratulate the member for Kanata–Carleton. Your hard work and advocacy for your community, the folks of Kanata–Carleton and all Ontarians is felt and heard so strongly today and every day in this chamber. I am in full support of your great legislation and will be voting for Bill 168, and I urge all members here to do the same. It's a smart bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member now has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you, members, for your questions and contributions.

I just want to clarify a couple of things: An important aspect of how the guidelines are actually written is that

they don't stifle innovation. They're goal-based. They seek a provincial understanding of best practices so that everyone has the most up-to-date guidance they need when they're building to manage stormwater.

The engineers and the developers that I've spoken to have identified best practices—I think that's a great idea—but they also think that it's important that we have a formal standard around permeability. That will allow them to build safely and sustainably right across the province.

A wiki is not a regulatory tool. An update process needs to be formalized, and the regular updates that this bill requires will ensure that future governments will update guidelines on a regular basis. We cannot allow our stormwater guidelines to become obsolete again, whether it's 15 years or 20 years that they have not been updated. This last lapse was way too big and shouldn't be allowed to happen again.

When we prepared this bill, I wanted to design something that was practical, achievable and supportable by all members of this House, because we are all in this together. Protecting our constituents is at the top of all our lists. Protecting our constituents is our job number one, and

your support will guarantee protections for the Ontario of today and into the future.

Time is of the essence. Thank you for your consideration.

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

Mrs. McCrimmon has moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to implement the Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual and to report on stormwater management guidelines periodically. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, March 25, 2024.

The House adjourned at 1520.

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, 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	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	