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Mardi
7 mai 2024

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 mai 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR
LA FACTURE ÉNERGÉTIQUE
À UN NIVEAU ABORDABLE

Mr. Todd Smith moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / *Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.*

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to be splitting my time today with my very energetic parliamentary assistant, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, otherwise known as the Yak.

I rise today to begin third reading of Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024. To start, I think we need to talk about why this bill is so timely. We know that families across Ontario, right across our province, are dealing with some tough challenges these days. My colleagues and I talk about it every day in question period, with question after question about the punitive carbon tax. All families, not just those here in Ontario, but across Canada, are being hit every day by the terrible Liberal carbon tax, which is driving up the price of everything—but not just that; they're also dealing with the impacts of high inflation, and they're dealing with high interest rates right now. That means higher costs at the grocery store, and it means higher costs at the gasoline pump. As you're fuelling up your vehicle, it means less money to put away for a rainy day, and it means higher mortgage costs.

Let me tell you, Speaker, the last point is really a sore spot for so many families, including those who don't even own a home yet. So many people are striving for that dream of home ownership. They've saved up for a down payment in many cases, they've had their eye on a new house, and they've done everything right. But they're

dealing with a government in Ottawa that just continues to raise the price of living, which makes it all feel out of reach—and they're doing it every April 1. That's no April Fool's joke. It's causing a lot of pain for families right across our country.

That's why we're doing things differently here in Ontario than the way the federal government is operating in Ottawa. What we're doing here includes things like Bill 165, which, if passed, will help keep housing and energy costs down and provide some real relief for Ontario families.

Speaker, as you probably know, one of the biggest drivers of Ontario's increasing demand for energy is our government's plan to build 1.5 million new homes by 2031. It's critical that new homeowners have options available to them, including for affordable home heating. For some families, that will be electric or hybrid heating, where you pair your natural gas furnace with an electric heat pump, just like our Clean Home Heating Initiative has done in communities across the province. But for many others, they're looking for the reliability and affordability of natural gas. I don't think that should come as any surprise, because natural gas is already the primary heating source for about 70% of households in Ontario. Seven out of 10 homes are heated by natural gas in our province. With affordability already a top concern for the people of Ontario, we can't make a family who's accessing their preferred home heating option pay even more.

That's why I was extremely disappointed in the Ontario Energy Board's decision from December of last year that would have effectively increased the cost of new homes. Under this decision, they—and apparently the NDP and the Liberals, based on their votes at second reading in the Legislature, anyway—would like to see families pay 100% of the cost to connect to the natural gas grid upfront. That would lead to thousands of dollars being added to the cost of new homes. Those are costs that, today, are currently spread out over 40 years—just like a mortgage, amortizing it over 40 years, making it much more manageable for families buying their first home or moving to a bigger place as their kids grow up. In fact, according to the OEB's own decision, the cost of a new home would increase by about \$4,400, on average, across the province, and it would cost significantly more than that—in the tens of thousands of dollars—for those in rural Ontario, on farms and residences in more rural and remote parts of northern Ontario, in particular. That type of change wouldn't just be a huge departure from the realities of our energy system, but it's also a huge departure from the historical practice which has been in place since 1998.

This bill, Bill 165, would keep costs down by allowing these costs to be paid over 40 years instead of all up front. Going from 40 to zero was the decision of the OEB, which is far from rational and pragmatic. What we're doing is, for the time being, going back to the 40-year amortization period. That's a win for the taxpayer. It's a win for the business owner. It's a win for the farmer. It's a win for the homebuyer. It's a win for everyone in Ontario.

Ontario, like the rest of Canada, is already grappling with high interest rates and inflationary pressures, along with the impact of this terrible federal carbon tax. So how can we, in good conscience, take any action that would raise prices on the backs of first-time homebuyers and moms and dads who are looking for a bigger space for their growing families? As a government elected with a mandate to rebuild Ontario's economy, keep costs down for people and businesses and build the homes our growing province needs, we simply can't and won't stand for this. We definitely can't stand for it when we've had well over 200 requests from Ontario municipalities to expand access to natural gas in their communities. I want to say that again, because that's almost half of the municipalities in Ontario that are actively calling for more natural gas in their communities.

Bill 165 would allow us to reverse this decision, to protect future homebuyers and keep shovels in the ground. But reversing the decision alone isn't enough if we don't address the issues that got us here in the first place.

While the Ontario Energy Board makes hundreds of decisions every year, this particular decision raised concerns instantly about public engagement in the decision-making process. In fact, in the decision, one commissioner noted that the decision on natural gas connection costs was reached without input from a number of key stakeholders. Home builders, contractors, farmers—the people and businesses who actually build the homes and feed our province—weren't able to provide input on a decision that affects their industry drastically. That same commissioner also noted that this split decision, despite having a significant impact on electricity demand, was reached—this is really important—without input from the province's Independent Electricity System Operator, the system manager for our electricity grid in the entire province. To quote that dissenting commissioner: “Is the scenario of no-new-gas-connections, replaced by construction of all-electric developments, feasible? For example, would electricity generators, transmitters, distributors and the IESO be able to meet Ontario's energy demands in 2025? I don't know,” was the answer.

As Ontario's Minister of Energy, I find it extremely concerning to read that quote, especially when our government is focused on a pragmatic approach to supporting the electrification of home heating, transportation and manufacturing, with a focus on keeping costs down and our energy reliable so we can keep the lights on in our province and continue to see the record investment that we've seen in our province.

0910

Part of our pragmatic approach—and we started this a number of years ago—was the establishment of an Electri-

fication and Energy Transition Panel. This panel was put together to advise our government, our ministry, on the highest-value short-, medium- and long-term opportunities for the energy sector to help Ontario's economy prepare for electrification and the energy transition. While the OEB was aware that the panel's report was to be released around the same time of their decision, they decided to go beyond their role as an energy regulator and make a major energy policy decision without waiting for the government's response stemming from that panel's report. The final report, as I say, was due around the same time as the decision was made, just before Christmas. It's unfortunate, because the panel's recommendations and our government's response will have a significant impact on the sector and Ontario's planning decisions going forward.

Ultimately, more than 200 stakeholders, Indigenous partners and communities, government departments and agencies, and members of the public provided input to that panel. So all of the stakeholders that you would want participated in that panel's discussions and deliberations. In the end, all that work resulted in serious and some very well-thought-out recommendations for the ministry and our government to consider.

For example, one of the key recommendations of the Electrification and Energy Transition Panel's report, Ontario's Clean Energy Opportunity, was for the government to issue a natural gas policy statement, providing clear direction for the long-term role of natural gas in Ontario. As laid out in the report, natural gas will continue to play a critical role as a source of energy in the province for a number of years to come. That recognizes the fact that any major shift away from this fuel source would require a significant build-out of our grid that could not be accomplished quickly.

We're in the process of building new nuclear facilities at Bruce Power; small modular reactors at Darlington and other new non-emitting generation through competitive processes through the Independent Electricity System Operator; and battery storage facilities procured competitively through the IESO to ensure that those renewables that we have on the grid now and those that we will add in the future are able to provide electricity to the grid in an efficient manner and provide stability for electricity customers around the province.

No one would think that going from a 40-year period to zero years and adding thousands of dollars to the price of a home during a housing crisis is a pragmatic or responsible approach, which is the way that we've taken on the energy file. Even one of the OEB commissioners recommended only reducing the horizon to 20 years. When talking about the horizon, they mean the revenue horizon for paying for these pipelines.

Given these concerns, our government saw an opportunity to continue our work, originally started back in our first mandate, to modernize the Ontario Energy Board. In 2019, my predecessor, the member for Kenora-Rainy River and the Minister of Northern Development, took steps to enhance trust and transparency in Ontario's

energy sector by restructuring the OEB's governance and operational framework. That was part of our work under the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

As you will recall, this government was largely elected in 2018 to a massive majority government because of the failed energy policies of the previous Liberal government. Everyone remembers the tripling price of electricity during their 10 years in power.

Today, we're continuing to fix the hydro mess that was left to us. We're continuing that work. And we're responding to the concerns raised in the December 2023 decision by proposing legislative changes that would ensure major OEB decisions with far-reaching implications on our constituents, like on natural gas connection costs, don't happen again without adequate stakeholder consultation and without all the facts about government policy priorities.

Specifically, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act requires the Ontario Energy Board to conduct broader engagements when conducting both natural gas and electricity hearings.

If passed, Bill 165 also gives the government the authority to introduce regulations that require the OEB to notify and invite participation of testimony from specific stakeholders or economic sectors. For example, if we know a decision is going to have a major impact on a particular sector, like transit operators, low-income service providers, the construction industry or a particular government agency like the Independent Electricity System Operator, we would require, or could require, the OEB to notify them and invite their participation in the hearing.

These changes would also provide the government, through the Minister of Energy, with the authority to require a separate hearing, more formally known as a generic hearing, on any matter of public interest that could arise during an OEB proceeding. This would further ensure that Ontarians' voices are heard on matters that will affect their families, businesses and communities. That was a change that was very much welcomed during the committee hearings that were held here at the Legislature last month.

Just take the comments of the president of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, Jan VanderHout—he was here last night; I saw him with TOGA. He presented on behalf of Flowers Canada. It's amazing—my goodness—the success that Flowers Canada is having, with something like \$325 million worth of flowers exported to the US last year. It's a growing industry. Maybe my parliamentary assistant should buy some for his wife. He probably hasn't done that in a while.

Jan VanderHout from Flowers Canada said, "This legislation will ensure that Ontario's energy transition is practical and inclusive of a broader range of economic and social impact considerations. The consideration was poorly given to many of the rural areas, and like my colleague at OFA," the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, "we were also not consulted—not to my knowledge, certainly—before this OEB decision was made." He went on to say, "It really becomes important that they understand the nuances of the various aspects of industry and

agriculture in the province and, certainly, I think that was entirely missed, because the dynamics of the high-rise buildings here in downtown Toronto are significantly different than the challenges that we face in rural Ontario, which is a large area."

Jan, as usual, is absolutely right. If the OEB is making a decision that's going to have an outsized impact on families and businesses in rural Ontario, then they need to make the effort to hear from those stakeholders in rural parts of Ontario.

But it's not just rural versus urban—representatives from the OFA, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Association of Power Producers of Ontario and more also highlighted the importance of broad consultation to ensure decisions don't have unintended consequences, especially on government priorities, including getting more affordable homes built. It's also important to keep other priorities in mind, including making Ontario an attractive place to do business, and access to affordable and reliable energy is also a critical part of our sales pitch.

That's why to further protect consumers, we're also proposing to make regulatory changes that would prohibit customers from being required to financially contribute to the construction of certain gas transmission projects. These proposed changes would preserve the historical treatment of natural gas transmission projects under OEB jurisdiction when those projects are specified by government direction. Maintaining the current approach, where customers are not required to make upfront payments, will ensure Ontario continues to attract critical investments in sectors like the greenhouse and automotive industries in southwestern Ontario.

Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, doesn't stop there. It also proposes to streamline the leave-to-construct process for small energy projects, making reliable and affordable energy options available to communities, homes and businesses in a more cost-effective and timely manner. Today, anyone looking to connect a new home or business to Ontario's natural gas system with a pipeline must obtain leave-to-construct approval from the OEB if the expected cost of the project will be \$2 million or greater. The OEB reviews the application and grants leave to carry out the project if it's deemed to be in the public interest to do so.

Over the past couple of years, we've heard concerns from mayors and councils and agricultural organizations at places like the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and AMO conferences from all across the province on this leave-to-construct issue, and they're frustrated that the \$2-million threshold for small pipeline projects that was first set back in 2003 hasn't been updated to reflect inflation and increased construction costs, like the ones we talked about earlier. They're concerned that even the smallest projects to connect something like a new housing development would no longer receive the exemption, as was the original intent. The changes we're proposing would allow the government to prescribe conditions in regulation to exempt small projects from leave to construct, while also maintaining the crown's obligations related to rights-

based consultation with Indigenous communities, ensuring opportunities remain for their input into proposed new projects.

Through Bill 165, if passed, the government intends to introduce regulations to streamline the leave-to-construct process by exempting small pipeline projects that cost between \$2 million and \$10 million, provided the crown's duty-to-consult obligations with Indigenous communities have been met.

I want to stress that both the government of Ontario and the OEB are ensuring that Indigenous communities have a continued opportunity to bring their views forward and to inform any decisions that may impact their rights or their interests. These changes would improve the timelines for pipeline construction and expansion by cutting red tape and expediting the installation of natural gas to rural, remote and underserved communities while also helping to support a reliable and cost-effective provincial energy supply. Project applicants would continue to contact the Ministry of Energy early in the planning process and provide the ministry with a description of the proposed project, including the need for the project, its terminal points, characteristics such as the length and diameter of the pipeline, and the proposed route. Along with any additional information requested, the Ministry of Energy will assess whether the proposed project triggers the duty to consult. Where it is triggered, the OEB would then determine whether the crown has adequately discharged its duty to consult prior to granting such applications.

I also want to be clear that for all projects, whether there is a leave-to-construct proceeding or not, proponents will continue to require authorizations from Ontario ministries and municipalities. This will include permits and other approvals relating to technical, safety and environmental requirements needed to support the construction of the pipeline.

All of this work is going to build on the important action that we have taken to move Ontario forward as a leader in economic growth and clean energy, including:

- cutting the gas tax through December of this year;
- saving families an additional \$312 a year through our Ontario Electricity Rebate;
- investing an additional \$50 million in the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which is delivered by the OEB, to help those who need help the most;
- launching the Clean Home Heating Initiative, with incentives of up to \$4,500 per household to roll out electric air-source heat pumps paired with existing natural gas furnaces;
- scrapping the previous Liberal government's cap-and-trade carbon tax that punished people and businesses; and
- introducing legislation to protect the people of Ontario from any future carbon tax, and a whole lot more.

All of this has made us increasingly attractive to business and industry, with companies and investment surging into our province at a record rate. It brings us so many benefits.

Just take the Honda announcement from two weeks ago that was landed following a lot of work by Minister Fedeli

and Premier Ford and other members of our team: This \$15-billion investment will create the country's first comprehensive electric vehicle supply chain, and it's all going to be located right here within our provincial boundaries. That includes four new manufacturing plants—not one, but four: a new stand-alone battery plant at Alliston, a new EV vehicle assembly plant, a new cathode active material and processing plant, and a new separator plant, as well. This investment, which was a number of years in the making, represents a vote of confidence in Ontario's status as a leading jurisdiction in the global production and development of electric vehicles, batteries and battery materials.

It's just one example of the growth that we're experiencing in Ontario. In addition to Honda, Ontario is already working, as you know, with Stellantis in Windsor, Volkswagen in St. Thomas, Umicore in Loyalist township, all of whom are making great progress on their multi-billion dollar investments.

We're also seeing major investments in green steel-making in places like Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie, with Dofasco and Algoma Steel. While the traditional steel-making process uses coal, one of the largest sources of emissions in the province, our government is working with the federal government and the steel industry to end coal use and electrify their operations to support the production of green steel, fuelling our growing automotive sector.

As a result of these investments and our housing goal that I mentioned earlier, for the very first time since 2005, almost 20 years ago, Ontario's electricity demand is on the rise. For almost 20 years, we've either seen electricity demand stay the same or even diminish as manufacturing jobs fled the province for other jurisdictions. In fact, an expert analysis from the IESO, our system operator, shows that electricity demand could more than double by 2050 if we stay on the rate that we're on right now. That's why we're taking action now—actually, it's why we took action a couple of years ago to ensure that we have the energy that we know we're going to need down the road.

Last summer, I released the comprehensive Powering Ontario's Growth plan. This plan lays out our road map to provide families and industries with the reliable, low-cost and clean power that we need to power Ontario's future. Powering Ontario's Growth builds on the key strengths of our system, including our diverse supply mix made up of nuclear, hydro, natural gas, other non-emitting resources like renewables and, soon, batteries that are currently being built across the province. It also builds on the significant action our government has already taken to meet demand through the end of the decade with major projects and procurements, including a \$342-million expansion of our energy efficiency programs that are offered through IESO and, as I mentioned, energy storage procurement, which is actually the largest such procurement in Canada's history and one of the largest in North America.

This plan also builds on Ontario's international leadership on nuclear power and small modular reactor development. It builds on our legacy as the birthplace of the Candu

reactor—which is still among the safest, most reliable reactors in the world today—and our reputation as a world-leading source of life-saving, cancer-fighting medical isotopes, which are harvested from our Candu reactors at the same time that they're producing almost 60% of the province's electricity every day. It's an amazing success story—part of our nuclear advantage.

Nuclear power, as I mentioned, makes up more than half of our current electricity supply in Ontario. It's a source of affordable and clean power. Nuclear energy is why Ontario is able to maintain one of the cleanest electricity grids in the entire world. That's why expanding our province's nuclear fleet is a key component of our plan to meet future demand. That includes innovative new solutions like the SMR, as I mentioned, that's currently under construction at the Darlington OPG site. In fact, we're making progress on developing the country's first commercial-grid-scale SMR at that Darlington nuclear site. It's not just Canada's first; it's not just North America's first; this will be the first SMR producing electricity on the grid in the entire G7 or the Western world.

As a result, we're attracting incredible interest from around the world, helping us open new export opportunities for our province.

I had the opportunity yesterday morning, down at the Invest Ontario offices at the Eaton Centre, working alongside our former colleague Bill Walker, who's now the head of the OCNI, the Ontario coalition of nuclear industries—I was thinking "Canada" was in there. They had a group in from Brazil. They're looking at our SMR and our expertise in nuclear to deploy in their jurisdiction.

But we didn't stop there. Through Powering Ontario's Growth, we've also begun the planning and licensing for three additional SMRs at the Darlington site, to bring that total to four. Speaker, 1.2 gigs of clean, reliable, affordable electricity is on its way, supporting the 65,000 people who work in our nuclear sector in Ontario.

In addition to our SMR expansion, we're working with Bruce Power to begin pre-development work for the province's first large-scale nuclear station build in more than 30 years. This new supply will complement the extensive work that's already going on in the sector, including the significant progress that's being made on the refurbishments and major component replacements that are happening right now, ahead of schedule and on budget, at Darlington and also at Bruce Power. The refurbishment of Candu reactors at Darlington and Bruce represent the largest clean energy projects in Ontario, securing a steady supply of clean baseload power through our province.

0930

Our government is supporting OPG's plan to proceed with the next steps toward refurbishing Pickering nuclear station's B units. That plant is operating at an incredible rate right now. It's because of the expertise from the skilled trades, our power workers, and those who work in our nuclear sector.

I'm not exaggerating when I say that Canada, and Ontario in particular, is an international leader, a

powerhouse, when it comes to nuclear power. Nations around the world are looking to our province to leverage our expertise as they make decisions on their own SMR deployment to help them achieve energy independence and meet their climate goals. That was apparent during my recent nuclear trade mission to Dubai. I attended COP28. I attended the World Nuclear Exhibition in Paris, France, as well and met with folks in the United Kingdom, in London, who are also looking to our expertise on the SMR as they build out their plans for small modular reactor deployment in the UK.

Beyond nuclear energy, Powering Ontario's Growth is also continuing our competitive approach to procuring a diverse set of resources to meet our growing capacity and energy needs. Just like with home heating, natural gas generation is part of our pragmatic approach to keeping the lights on. It's our insurance policy, an approach that has been reinforced by the Independent Electricity System Operator, whose natural gas phase-out study stated that natural gas generation plays a crucial role in the reliability of the electricity grid and provides a range of services that no other resource today can provide on its own.

In short, while most of the time Ontario can meet its electricity generation with nuclear and hydroelectric—which we're also investing in refurbishing—and bioenergy and renewables, we need to face the reality. We need a pragmatic approach, one that keeps energy affordable, keeps the heat on and helps families afford their first home.

Interjection.

Hon. Todd Smith: It is the Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries—what did I say? I don't know. Anyway, thank you. I'd like to correct my record. I see the good people of Hansard looking me straight in the eye. OCNI is the Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries.

I can't finish by correcting myself. I have to talk about the fact that we have one of the cleanest, most reliable electricity grids in the entire world, something that we should be very proud of as we continue to invest. It's going to take us a while to get those refurbishments done at places like Bruce and at OPG in Darlington, and then at the Pickering plant, where we're refurbishing the B units there. It's going to take us some time to build those battery storage facilities. They should be on the grid by mid-to-late next year. We'll roll out more non-emitting resources after we get those storage facilities built in the province to ensure that our system operates more efficiently.

As a result of this pragmatic approach—and industry is seeing it, the people of Ontario are seeing it, and our farmers and agricultural sector are seeing it. They're able to make investments in their business, in their homes, in their farms because of stable energy policy. It's finally come back to Ontario after 15 years of skyrocketing electricity bills, uncertainty with things like the global adjustment. We brought that certainty back to Ontario.

Bill 165 builds on that certainty for people looking to invest and buy new homes in our province.

With that, I'll turn it over to my good friend my parliamentary assistant.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't mean to throw the minister off like that, but I didn't want Bill Walker to hear about that. He's a good friend to all of us.

It is a pleasure for me, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy as well as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, to echo Minister Smith's remarks on the importance of the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act and what it means for Ontario families and businesses across the province. After serving for years as the opposition energy critic, it is now my honour to serve as Minister Smith's parliamentary assistant and to speak to third reading of this important bill.

I must preface by reminding people—some of them would have been here—of when the Liberals brought out the soon-to-be proven-disastrous Green Energy Act. It was passed in 2009. I was the critic at that time. We had a third-party assessment and analysis done of the Green Energy Act that concluded exactly what would happen and what it would mean to the province of Ontario and the people who call it home and have businesses here—how many would lose their jobs, how many businesses would leave the province because of what it did to electricity pricing, which, as the minister indicated, went up triple during the Liberals' term. That is one of the prime reasons that this Liberal government ran out of runway. They couldn't fool the people any longer when 2018 came along, and the people said, "Hey, no. It's time for you to go." We have to remember that from 2009 on, the NDP supported that Green Energy Act that turned out to be such a disaster, and we're seeing the effects of that still today.

I'm going to confine my remarks mainly to this prepared speech that has been given to me—but it is critical to Ontario, and critical, certainly, to Ontario's municipalities.

In particular, Bill 165 proposes to streamline the leave-to-construct process for small energy projects, making reliable and affordable energy options available to communities, homes and businesses in a more cost-effective and timely manner.

This is all about building Ontario. I do want to say—I'm going to digress a little bit here.

Bill 165—I was there, of course, for the hearings on the bill and the clause-by-clause, and one of the things that we kept hearing from the official opposition was that they were absolutely opposed to the minister intervening to change a decision that was made by the Ontario Energy Board. Well, the Ontario Energy Board is there for a very important purpose. In fact, it was our old Premier, Bill Davis, who brought in the Ontario Energy Board. It serves a very, very important role here in the province of Ontario, but its role is not to write or rewrite government policy. That's a critical difference, and that's where they strayed off, out of their lane. The minister, to his credit, moved swiftly to correct that error so that we could continue to build homes.

I say to the honourable member the critic on the opposite side, who I respect very much—I actually quite

have a liking for him. He is very passionate, but he is wrong about many of these decisions. This one here, about wanting each and every homeowner to be responsible for the cost of bringing that natural gas to their home, would have been a disaster not only just in urban Ontario, but an absolute, critical disaster in rural Ontario, where obviously you've got more gas lines to build in order to serve those homes.

On one hand, they keep telling us that we need to build more homes; on the other hand, they're standing in the way of things that will actually lead to building more homes. I don't understand the conflict that they're living within themselves on that issue. Building more homes means all hands on deck and doing everything we can to get that done.

I want to talk about the leave to construct. Bill 165 proposes to streamline the leave-to-construct process for small energy projects, making reliable and affordable energy options available to communities, homes and businesses in a more cost-effective and timely manner. I just repeated that.

As it currently stands, anyone looking to build a new home or business and connect it to Ontario's reliable and affordable natural gas supply must get a leave-to-construct approval from the Ontario Energy Board if the expected cost of the pipeline will be over \$2 million. The Ontario Energy Board reviews the application and grants leave to carry out the project if it is deemed to be in the public interest to do so. However, the existing exemption of \$2 million, which has been in place for more than 20 years, is causing major delays for cities and towns all across Ontario. This is especially true for rural communities, like my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Like Minister Smith and many other MPPs across the province, I have heard concerns from municipal leaders who want to build new housing and who want to get their constituents off more expensive and emitting forms of energy, like home heating oil. This includes communities in my own riding that still do not have access to natural gas. These leaders are as frustrated as our government is, since the \$2-million threshold for small pipeline projects, which was first set in 2003, has not been updated to reflect inflation and increased construction costs. These municipal leaders are concerned that even the smallest projects will no longer receive the exemption that was originally intended. These projects can include something as small as connecting a new home, which should receive an exemption, especially during a housing crisis. As a result, they have put forward clear asks specifically in support of raising the current leave-to-construct cost threshold.

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The changes we are proposing would allow the government to prescribe conditions in regulation to exempt small projects from the leave-to-construct process, while maintaining the crown's obligations related to rights-based consultation with Indigenous communities, ensuring opportunities remain for their input into proposed new projects. Specifically, if Bill 165 is passed, the government intends to introduce regulations to streamline the leave-to-construct process by exempting small pipe-

line projects that cost between \$2 million and \$10 million, provided the crown's duty-to-consult obligations with Indigenous communities have been met.

I want to be clear: Whether there's a leave-to-construct proceeding or not, proponents will continue to require authorizations from Ontario ministries and municipalities, including permits and other approvals relating to technical, safety and environmental requirements needed to support the construction.

These changes would improve the timelines for pipeline construction and expansion by cutting red tape and expediting the installation of natural gas to rural, remote and underserved communities, and helping to support a reliable and cost-effective provincial energy supply.

It is well known that natural gas in Ontario is more affordable for home heating than other sources of energy, such as oil or propane. Expanding this access makes the cost of living more affordable for all constituents, but specifically for rural residents, especially those in northern Ontario, where even high-efficiency heat pumps may not be an option on the coldest days of the year. Not only is natural gas more affordable, but expanding it will also increase economic development and job opportunities within communities.

I want to make it very clear: Natural gas plays an important role in meeting Ontario's energy needs. If you look broadly at our province's entire energy needs, natural gas currently meets 39% of demand, while electricity only meets 21%.

When you look at home heating, natural gas plays an even bigger role. It is the primary heating source for approximately 70% of the homes in the province, or about 3.8 million homes. While our government understands that some households will choose new options, such as a switch to hybrid electric heating systems, we need to ensure that all Ontarians have access to all forms of heating, including natural gas.

Expanding natural gas makes the cost of living more affordable for all constituents, but especially those in rural and northern Ontario. Just take Quebec, which uses mostly electric heating: Over the past few years, Ontario has had to step up to supply electricity from our natural gas generating stations on the coldest days of the year to keep the heat on for Quebec's homes and businesses.

Maintaining access to natural gas ensures reliable access to heat on those coldest days. In fact, natural gas will need to continue to play an important role in meeting Ontario's energy demands for the near to medium future.

The changes to the leave-to-construct process will make it easier to develop and connect to natural gas pipeline projects, which is not only essential for heating, but it also contributes to overall energy efficiency and improving the quality of life for residents.

To give members an idea of how desperately Ontario needs the leave-to-construct threshold increase, I'm going to speak to what the Minister of Energy's office has heard from municipal leaders.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which represents my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, is the

voice for 103 rural municipalities, representing about 800,000 residents. They expressed their concern with the current exemptions. Renfrew county, of course, is within the region, and this region spans 50,000 square kilometres. To give you an idea of that expanse, it's about the size of Nova Scotia. We continue to see significant growth throughout this region, which brings with it increased pressure to develop the gas pipeline network. Under the current leave-to-construct threshold, municipalities represented by the EOWC are seeing significant delays in getting natural gas to development sites.

It's just a fact that gas pipeline costs in Ontario have significantly increased due to higher labour and materials costs over the past 20 years, just like they have across Canada, and \$2 million is no longer a meaningful threshold. Ontario is constantly growing, and we need to ensure that every sector in this great province stays modern so that we can continue to keep shovels in the ground and create those all-important jobs.

Meredith Staveley-Watson, who is the manager of government relations and policy for the EOWC, reached out to the Minister of Energy's office directly to highlight the importance of modernizing the leave-to-construct threshold. She stated: "Modernizing these outdated regulations would reduce delays and costs for economic development initiatives including new industries seeking to locate in Ontario and create jobs"—or continue to expand existing jobs—"transit projects, community expansion projects, housing developments, connections for low-carbon fuel blending (... natural gas, hydrogen), as well as residential and business customer connections." She's absolutely right.

Our government understands how important this modernization is to Ontario's families and businesses. And to help modernize Ontario even further, if passed, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act would allow for the development of regulations to exempt small pipelines that cost between \$2 million and \$10 million from the leave-to-construct process.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus also made the point that increasing the cost threshold to \$10 million in Ontario would more closely align with the situation in other Canadian jurisdictions. For example, the thresholds in British Columbia are \$15 million for electricity and \$20 million for natural gas.

The South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corp. has also expressed their frustration with the current leave-to-construct threshold. SCOR is a not-for-profit corporation owned by the counties of Brant, Elgin, Middlesex, Norfolk and Oxford, and represents just under one million residents in southwestern Ontario. This group of municipalities supports our government's direction in modernizing the leave-to-construct process and recognizes that the \$2-million cost threshold established in regulation in 2003 is outdated and does not reflect the current costs associated with infrastructure projects.

The steps we're proposing in Bill 165 will update this threshold and support our government's objective of building 1.5 million homes across Ontario, helping to

expand transit, cut red tape, and lower the cost of access to our affordable, reliable and resilient natural gas system.

The delegation from the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus also expressed support for an increase in the leave-to-construct threshold. The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 municipalities, 300 communities, 250,000 businesses and 1.5 million constituents across rural western Ontario. This group aims to enhance prosperity and overall well-being of rural and small urban communities across the region, which have seen significant growth in the past decade—once again, bringing additional pressure to build out the gas pipeline network.

Speaker, much like the previous organizations I have just mentioned, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus recognized that Ontario's outdated regulations are causing the current leave-to-construct threshold to apply far more broadly than intended when it was established more than two decades ago.

In fact, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus expressed concern that rural western Ontario could lose out on significant opportunities for economic development in their regions, due in part to the current threshold, which was never updated by the previous government. It's unbelievable that they did all that with the Green Energy Act, which just about bankrupted the province, but they couldn't update the leave to construct.

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Our government understands that these lost economic opportunities are simply unacceptable. This is why Ontario needs to act now to modernize the Ontario Energy Board's leave-to-construct process in order to bring reliable and affordable energy options to communities, homes and businesses in a more cost-effective and timely manner. We simply cannot lose any more jobs and economic opportunities in Ontario.

The leave-to-construct changes proposed in the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act will help to promote and protect economic development and job creation opportunities, especially in rural municipalities across the province.

The united counties of Leeds and Grenville have also expressed how their municipalities are facing delays and problems in ensuring natural gas expansion into commercial and industrial parks, as well as some residential areas. There are significant economic development implications to these delays, as you can understand, Speaker. It goes without saying. Of course, we know the only real solution is to improve the necessary infrastructure.

Like many rural communities, economic development in eastern Ontario and the united counties of Leeds and Grenville has been historically driven by a competitive tax structure, the availability of serviced land, and an educated workforce. However, we know that today's economic development efforts require a more comprehensive and collaborative strategy, particularly in our post-pandemic era.

That's why our government is focused on supporting a broader regional network of infrastructure to reflect and

support the reality of business, industry supply chains and trade. This is true in all rural communities across Ontario, like the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, that are constantly in competition with larger urban markets for commercial and industrial business.

Not only is natural gas more affordable; expanding access to natural gas would help to increase economic development and job opportunities within communities.

Ontario's natural gas expansion initiatives, like the natural gas expansion program, have helped to bring natural gas to a number of underserved rural communities. For example, the township of Huron-Kinloss expressed that the expansion has provided residential and commercial ratepayers in Huron-Kinloss with more choice in how they meet their energy needs. The clerk from Huron-Kinloss stated: "The township has benefited from natural gas expansion initiatives of the province, making it affordable to bring natural gas to underserved rural areas. This has provided residential and commercial ratepayers with choices in how they meet their energy needs in an affordable manner, and helps to provide heat sources, during even the worst winter storms."

Our government understands that it's more challenging for rural customers to transition to natural gas as it currently stands. That's why Ontario is focused on bringing regulations forward that would allow equal opportunity to natural gas supply that is built in a sustainable manner. And it truly spans across the map.

The municipality of Red Lake, up there with Mayor Fred Mota—which is in northwestern Ontario, not far from the Manitoba-Ontario border—expressed their need for the threshold increase. This small community is poised for significant economic growth over the next decade as a result of several nearby mining projects—another thing, that our government has turned Ontario into a mining powerhouse again, after languishing under the former Liberal government. However, they do not currently have the capacity to provide the needed natural gas and electrical power service to support these projects or support the additional housing and services that will be required with the influx of workers and new residents who will be coming to their community.

Similar natural gas concerns were brought forth by the municipality of Oliver Paipoonge, where other energy sources like wood, electricity and propane are very expensive for heating. The municipality expressed concern that their residents are experiencing issues with insurance companies becoming increasingly reluctant to insure properties that use wood for heating.

These are just some of the municipalities and municipal organizations that have voiced their concerns to our government. Similar concerns were shared during last year's Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Our government knows that the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act is a step in the right direction to preserve customer energy choices by ensuring that natural gas remains an available and affordable option for all Ontarians. Our government understands that supporting new

projects in municipalities is critical not only to help communities grow, succeed and thrive, but for Ontario's economy to prosper as well.

A streamlined leave-to-construct process that exempts small pipeline projects, while maintaining rights-based consultation opportunities with Indigenous communities, will help get small pipeline projects that support new housing and new jobs built by cutting unnecessary red tape and putting shovels in the ground faster.

Speaker, I want to stress that both the government of Ontario and the OEB will ensure that Indigenous communities will continue to have an opportunity to bring their views forward and to inform any decisions that may impact their rights or interests.

Project applicants would continue to contact the Ministry of Energy early in the planning process and provide the ministry with a description of the proposed project, including the need for the project, its terminal points, characteristics such as the length and diameter of the pipeline, and the proposed route. Along with any additional information requested, the Ministry of Energy will assess whether the proposed project triggers the duty to consult. Where it is triggered, the OEB would then determine whether the crown has adequately discharged its duty to consult prior to granting such applications.

The Keeping Energy Costs Down Act builds on Powering Ontario's Growth and the work we are already doing to ensure we have affordable, reliable and clean energy for all Ontarians and to ensure this province remains an attractive place for businesses to invest and families to call home. The changes we're proposing in Bill 165, including increasing the leave-to-construct threshold, would cut red tape and get housing and energy connections built faster while controlling costs for new gas customers.

In addition, Bill 165, if passed, would improve Ontario Energy Board processes, building on the work of OEB modernization started back in 2018. They will ensure that the entire energy sector and other impacted sectors have more input into OEB decisions, and that future OEB decisions take into account government policy priorities, including protecting ratepayers.

As we plan for a prosperous future for our province, we must ensure we have an energy system that can deliver reliable and affordable power for all Ontarians, including those in smaller, rural communities, including the ones I have talked about today, and particularly in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Making life easier and more affordable for Ontario families and businesses is at the heart of the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act—as well as in every decision we make.

As energy demand continues to grow across Ontario, we will continue to work hard to ensure a reliable supply of energy continues to be available for all Ontarians, now and in the future.

I urge the members of this House to think of every Ontarian across our great province and support the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act.

Speaker, I don't have a lot of time left, but I do want to reiterate how important this entire act is.

When we think of many years ago, when they were building an electricity system across the province, a distribution and transmission system across the province—this is where I differ greatly with the position of the New Democrats.

By the way, spreading the cost of gas pipeline expansion has been the way we've done it in the province since 1998. I never recall in my time here the NDP ever bringing forth a motion in the House to change the way that that was done, and I don't ever recall them having that in one of their election platforms. But all of a sudden now, this was the biggest issue for them in this bill. How critically wrong they are.

When we had the energy expansion across the province of Ontario many decades ago, do you think we would have actually gotten electricity to parts of Ontario like where I live, in Renfrew county, in a big way—other than the small little local generators—if we didn't have a program that provided that Ontario saw the importance of getting electricity to as many people and communities as possible and built out the transmission grid to supply all across Ontario? That was done so that those communities would have electricity without having to bear all of those costs, and each homeowner didn't have to bear the costs of building those wires all across the province.

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The same thing happened with the Bell telephone system. All across Canada, the people made sure that people would have access to those services. Yes, it was a little slower in coming. Some people may remember what they called “party lines” in rural Ontario—you might remember, Speaker; I remember. Those changes were made—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, Associate Minister of Housing—he remembers that.

Sometimes you have to do things for the good of all. This program that we have in Bill 165 to continue that is absolutely necessary to continue to build those 1.5 million homes. That's why I say to our colleagues across the floor, don't get caught up in your old ideology. Think about what is important for the future. Building 1.5 million homes is the highest priority we have in this province today. Don't get caught up in your own ideology. Support this bill. It is good for the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions and answers.

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

This government will never miss an opportunity to shovel some more of our tax dollars into their corporate donors' pockets—but this time, it's not our tax dollars; this time, it's the fees that we pay as consumers of Enbridge Gas in this province. This government is going to be shovelling our bills over to Enbridge to maximize their profit margins, so that we will be subsidizing the laying out of new pipelines or new gas infrastructure—

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a terrible thing to do.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a terrible thing to do, and it's bad for the environment. And it would actually be cheaper for those homeowners if we built them heat pumps.

So my question to the member is, instead of subsidizing Enbridge's profit margins, why aren't you subsidizing heat pumps, which are a green alternative to expanding natural gas?

Hon. Todd Smith: Madam Speaker, if you want an example of how the NDP simply don't understand energy policy, exhibit A was the question that we just experienced from the member opposite.

This change in policy reverts back to the policy that was in place five months ago. This is a policy that is going to ensure that we can build homes in Ontario at a lower cost for the people of Ontario. That's why we brought forward Bill 165—to ensure that the people who wanted to get a home in our province wouldn't have to pay more to do so.

And if they had bothered to read the commissioner's opinion, it says right in there that it will drive up the cost of building new homes in our province.

The NDP are ideological. They listen to folks like Environmental Defence. They're not listening to the folks who are building homes or those who are buying them.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Since day one, our government has delivered policies to keep costs down. I'd like the Minister of Energy to cite some of those examples, please—through you, Speaker.

Hon. Todd Smith: What an incredible question from the member from Whitby, who I know is rooting for the Oshawa Generals in the upcoming OHL championship. He's right on the mark.

Our government has done a lot to reduce the cost of living in Ontario. While the feds have implemented this punitive carbon tax on the people of Canada, we have reduced the price of living in Ontario, reducing red tape—the Minister of Economic Development talks about it all the time—by \$8 billion, the cost of doing business in Ontario. For those who drive, the gas tax—10.7 cents a litre. Eliminating that very, very costly Drive Clean program—you will remember what a scam that was. We ended that. The member is from the Durham region. We eliminated the tolls in the Durham region. There are folks in Durham and across Ontario who take transit—implementing One Fare, which is going to save the people of Ontario \$1,600 a year. At every step, we're considering the people of Ontario and their ability to pay. That's the difference between our PC government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, and Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the minister.

We were at OFIA last week—and by the way, I really enjoyed your comments about the Premier and the axe; I think it was very funny. What was interesting was hearing from Finland and what they do with biomass, and the huge potential that we could have here in northern Ontario.

I know GreenFirst in Kapuskasing is working on a project to build a co-gen to reduce their costs, have electricity, heat and everything. My question: Will you work with the community and move this forward—because that will be the difference between maybe seeing other mills go down. That will be also a solution, maybe, for Terrace Bay, so that we can take that biomass and save—maybe take this mill that sits idling and could be more profitable—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Energy for a response.

Hon. Todd Smith: I thank the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay for the question. As I hope he knows, we have taken the step to ensure that we are reinvesting and re-signing contracts with biomass facilities across northern Ontario—ones that accept the wood waste, the chips, the scrap wood from our forestry industry, which is allowing our forestry industry to survive.

Under the previous Liberal government—I know the member will remember this—they referred to the north as “no man's land.”

We believe that northern Ontario is a land of opportunity for forestry, for mining—ensuring that we get clean electricity to these jurisdictions.

Absolutely, we're working with those who are investing in our biomass sector in places like Atikokan and Hearst; the Calstock facilities; Kapuskasing; also, in Thunder Bay, at the former Resolute facility there. We're re-signing all of these contracts—Hornepayne; I can't leave them out. We're re-contracting all of these biomass facilities, and we're continuing to talk with the folks in the forestry sector about how we can ensure that they are a viable industry for our province moving forward.

And I love the axe. It was great.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Natural gas is a really important component of all of our energy utilization in Ontario, but my favourite has to be nuclear energy, not only because it's clean and green energy, but also because the by-product is medical isotopes.

I think this is our best-kept secret: Ontario actually produces close to 50% of the world's supply of medical isotopes.

Can the minister tell us a little bit more about how Ontario is the leading force in medical isotope production?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Mississauga Centre, a nurse who cares about the health care aspect of our nuclear facilities.

Not only are our nuclear facilities ensuring that we have clean air in our province—the single largest greenhouse gas emissions accomplishment in North America, in eliminating coal-fired power with nuclear power—but these medical isotopes are an enormous opportunity for us to save people's lives, not just in this country and across North America, but around the world. We are one of the superpowers when it comes to medical isotopes.

Things like cobalt-60—we provide almost 50% of the world's cobalt-60 from our Candu facilities here in Ontario, from places like Bruce and Darlington, and soon in Pickering. Lutetium, molybdenum-99, yttrium-90—all of these medical isotopes are going to be sent around the world to help cure cancer. It's an unbelievable story—all part of our nuclear energy advantage in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I received an email from London West constituent Sue Fotheringham, who shared her grave concerns about the minister's decision to reverse the OEB ruling, which, of course, is an independent regulator in this province. She said that pushing the cost of natural gas installation onto current homeowners is absurd, given the struggles that Ontarians are facing in finding affordable housing and putting groceries on the table.

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Why is the government siding with Enbridge to increase their profits and legislating increased costs for existing natural gas consumers when the OEB has determined that this is not in the public interest?

Hon. Todd Smith: I hope that the member's constituent will understand that nothing new is happening here. We're reverting back to the way it was prior to December 2023, five months ago. The same process that was in place for 40 years is in place again until we can get a new decision from the Ontario Energy Board, after we set a natural gas policy statement for them to consider.

The one thing that is clear from the commissioner's report is that they didn't hear from the necessary stakeholders in this process. That's why we had to step in. They didn't consider the impact that it would have on our electricity grid and the ability to bring the electricity to keep people warm in the wintertime. That's why we stepped in—and to ensure that people can get into the new home market.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for one quick question.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the minister for his excellent comments this morning. I also want to highlight the fact that his Trenton Golden Hawks were playing off against the Collingwood Junior A Blues in the Buckland Cup. It was a tough series. Congratulations to the Golden Hawks, but Collingwood came out on top.

My quick question for the minister is—to just make sure that people in this House and across Ontario understand the difference between natural gas in the heating sector versus natural gas in the energy generation sector.

Hon. Todd Smith: Congratulations to the Collingwood Blues.

Natural gas in the home heating sector keeps people warm.

Natural gas in the electricity sector makes sure that we can keep the lights on, our elevators running, our traffic lights running, and our manufacturing facilities operating, and we need it. It's our insurance policy to keep the lights on in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We no longer have time for questions or answers.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We'll now move to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABILITIES CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY AWARDS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Last Friday, I attended the second annual Accessibility Awards at the Abilities Centre in Whitby. The winners this year were Luca Demontis, Trevor Smith, Allison Hector-Alexander, Julie Grant and Lorin MacDonald. Each of the award recipients have demonstrated their dedication to making communities more accessible and inclusive, and to ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, has the chance to live happy lives of purpose and dignity.

Through its innovative initiatives, the Abilities Centre has become a beacon of hope and progress, empowering individuals of all abilities to thrive.

Over the last two years, our government has provided \$8 million in support of the Abilities Centre. The staff at the centre provide important supports for our loved ones in Whitby who have varying levels of ability. It is an excellent example of how a local facility can help create a strong community of inclusion.

Our government is committed to building an Ontario where individuals with varying ability have the opportunity to fully engage in their communities and live the lives they choose.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Last month, I held a meeting where I informed my community about fraud and the abuse of a type of lien against a property called a notice of security interest, or NOSI for short.

As you know, people across our province, especially seniors and vulnerable members of our communities, have been victimized by unscrupulous door-to-door salespeople who have used every trick in the book to try to scam them into a bad contract. Many of these scams involve NOSIs without the knowledge of the victim. So these liens sit unnoticed until the time comes to sell, take out a loan, or refinance your home. During this stressful time, the victims are extorted to pay large amounts to have the lien removed, or spend loads of time and money in the courts trying to reverse this vexatious registration. These liens are often in the tens of thousands. A family in my riding had over a dozen NOSIs placed on their home—a dozen.

In many cases, the personal banking and identification of these victims are trafficked and used to commit other types of fraud. In extreme cases, the victims are tricked

into signing reverse mortgages in an attempt for the thieves to steal their homes.

At my town hall, residents couldn't believe that the government hasn't put an end to this yet. I let my residents know about our private members' bill to ban NOSIs, and they all insisted that it be passed immediately.

Once again, I call on this government to ban NOSIs in Ontario and to notify all Ontarians who have a NOSI on their property, free of charge.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Rudhro Prince was like any other happy eight-year-old boy. But one thing made him different: He had asthma. In 2018, Rudhro was having a severe asthma attack. His mother, Rumi, called 911. Rudhro looked at her and said, "Mommy, I cannot breathe. I'm going to die." Rudhro died in a coma two weeks later.

Since that tragic day, Hasan and Rumi Prince have devoted their lives to raising awareness to the severity of asthma. They say that our hard-working and tireless respiratory educators and first responders need more support.

Each year, in Ottawa, they host the Rudhro Prince Memorial Walk to raise money for Asthma Canada, CHEO, and St. Mary Elementary School. This year will be the sixth year of the Rudhro Prince Memorial Walk—on September 29—and I look forward to joining, along with many people in the community, as well as our first responders.

Every day Hasan and Rumi fight through their pain to focus on the legacy they have created for their son. No matter how dark the skies are in their world, they have never given up hope—hope that the legacy they created for Rudhro can help save the lives of others.

Today is world asthma awareness day. Today, on World Asthma Day, I recognize Asthma Canada marking their 50th anniversary, working towards their mission to enhance the quality of life for Canadians with asthma and empower them to live active, symptom-free lives. It is a day to remember Rudhro and other victims of this disease, and it's a day for us to learn and be more aware of the severity of asthma.

GARY PARENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today I rise to honour Gary Parent. He's tough, he's kind, he's honest, and he has always been on the side of not just working people, but everyone in Windsor.

For 57 years, he has been married to the love of his life, Arden. He has two children, Jason and Jennifer; two granddaughters, Emma and Dana; and a sister, Darlene.

A Unifor member—formerly CAW—he worked at Chrysler and was elected in 1967 as a steward, wanting to follow fellow labour giant Charlie Brooks's vision. In 1982, he became president of labour council. In 1987, he was elected financial secretary of Local 444, serving in that position until his retirement.

Gary served in labour roles for 26 years, but his service to community extends well beyond that. Gary's belief that public services should be built on and strengthened, for the betterment of everyone, has never wavered, and his contributions to my community is why we have the Gary Parent Labour Activist Awards every year.

His belief in me is a driving factor of why I am here today as the MPP for Windsor West.

Gary is facing declining health and is in palliative care.

He asked me to share this message: "I have to say how amazing I feel, my children and grandchildren all went into a job in public service.

"Public services matter! Please let's all come together, be better and do better. We must fight to protect our public services.

"Representing union members and our community was what I wanted to do. Little did I know I was a mentor. I just wanted the best for everyone."

Thank you, Gary, for everything you have done. We love you, brother.

VICTOR LAURISTON PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Trevor Jones: On Tuesday, April 30, I was so proud to tour Victor Lauriston Public School in Chatham to observe their initiatives for elementary students in STEM learning, literacy and coding in every classroom from senior kindergarten to grade 8. Principal Eryn Smit and his staff are fully committed to ensuring all students have a strong focus on the study of science, technology, engineering and math, including cross-curricular and integrative study, and the application of those subjects in real-world contexts.

Victor Lauriston Public School was built in 1948 and is neatly situated in an urban Chatham neighbourhood, with a school population of around 380 students. The school is maintained immaculately and boasts high morale, low employee turnover and high staff seniority, with several staff having been students there themselves.

I was thrilled to see senior kindergarten students in action, participating in applied coding exercises, and grade 5 and grade 6 students using specialized invention kits—also known as Makey Makeys—with circuit boards, alligator clips and USB cables to create a closed-loop electrical signal to literally create music and phrases from hand drawings.

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Most inspiring was the school's nutrition program, led by parent volunteers, that provides every student with fresh, healthy food offerings every day—like the expansive salad bar I helped to serve.

Thank you to Principal Smit and everyone at Victor Lauriston school for your commitment to excellence.

Go Lions!

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Nearly 4,000 pages of documents that we released yesterday paint a very disturbing picture

of backroom dealing and preferential treatment at the highest levels of the Ford government. The records provide clear proof that Ford officials went to great lengths to conceal their true motives of removing precious greenbelt lands to benefit wealthy speculators and developers. We see the Premier's own office director being looped into meetings with developers whose lands were conveniently opened up. Text messages reveal misleading public statements as ministry staff worked secretly to strip away environmental protections. And incredibly, just days after a developer attended the Premier's daughter's wedding, that same developer's proposal to pave over the greenbelt was prioritized. So let's be honest. This was never about the housing crisis, and it certainly wasn't about the well-being of the public.

These bombshell documents tell the real story—one of corporate favouritism, conflicts of interest, and a government putting sprawl developers first, at the expense of farmland, at the expense of our green spaces, and certainly at the expense of future generations, and at the expense of faith in democracy and good government.

There's an old adage that democracy has to be more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner. But that's what this greenbelt scheme reveals. It reeks, and it's the worst kind of cynical cronyism that makes people lose faith in governments and, frankly, in basic decency.

This is another broken promise and more rock-solid proof that this government will always put their insiders ahead of the interests of the people of Ontario.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Today is World Asthma Day, an important reflection on the profound impact of asthma on our communities, particularly here in Ontario, where millions grapple with this chronic inflammatory disease.

A staggering 4.6 million Canadians live with asthma, making it the third most common chronic disease in our country.

Asthma narrows bronchial tubes, leading to restricted airflow and difficulty to breathe. It's a leading cause of emergency department visits and absenteeism from school and work.

When I work in the ER, asthma exacerbation is a common chief complaint for the patients I care for, especially our little ones—the children.

Speaker, there is nothing worse than not being able to breathe.

While some patients face severe limitations, for most, proper diagnosis and treatment can effectively manage the condition.

I would also like to highlight that this year marks the 50th anniversary of Asthma Canada—with many representatives with us here today. This organization has been a beacon of hope, support and advocacy, empowering Canadians with asthma to lead active, symptom-free lives through education, research and advocacy.

Looking ahead, Asthma Canada and the Ontario government share a vision for improved asthma care. We are committed to a future where research thrives, awareness is heightened, and health care is proactive.

That is why, earlier this year, our government expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists, enabling them to treat and prescribe asthma medications.

Today, as we commemorate this day, let's reaffirm our commitment to supporting those affected by asthma, working hand in hand with great organizations like Asthma Canada.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Ted Hsu: Last week I visited farmers in Wilmot township and learned about how the government tried to hoodwink them. After the Premier ordered land to be assembled for industrial use and non-disclosure agreements were signed by local officials, the region of Waterloo made offers to farmers in Wilmot township north of Bleams Road. One such offer was \$4.3 million for 85 acres, or about \$51,000 an acre. I have a photo of the written offer. Subsequently, a neighbouring farmer had his land appraised as if it were unserviced, industrial land. Valued at \$680,000 an acre—more than 10 times what was offered by the region of Waterloo.

This attempt to swindle farmers and buy their land for a song through an opaque process reminds me of the great \$8-billion greenbelt giveaway that spawned the ongoing RCMP criminal investigation.

When will it stop? When will this government care about farmers and preserving our remaining prime agricultural land, and care about transparency instead of looking for places to refill its gravy train?

STUDENT HOUSING

Mr. Graham McGregor: Speaker, Brampton is fortunate. We're a diverse city, we're a growing city, and we are a young city. Perhaps our biggest asset is our talent pool. There's a new generation of Brampton residents who are leading the country and the world when it comes to business, athletics, music, culture and innovation.

We are lucky to have a growing post-secondary sector, including Algoma University, which operates in downtown Brampton and educates thousands of students every year. But one of the challenges Algoma faces because they're growing so quickly is a lack of housing options for their students. We have too many students in Brampton who are living in subpar living conditions—conditions that no member of this House would consider acceptable for one of their family members.

Well, I'm happy to announce that right now, while I speak in this Legislature, Algoma University is in downtown Brampton announcing a brand new 500-plus-bed student residence expected to open doors by 2028-29. This new student residence will include over 500 beds and a mix of single and double bedrooms in four- to six-bed suites, with each suite including two bathrooms, a kitchen

and a living space. Thanks to the policy changes that this government has introduced, it's likely that construction will be expedited.

Getting shovels in the ground and supporting our next generation is a priority for the people of Brampton; it is a priority for this government; and I commend Algoma U for making it their priority, as well.

UNITED WAY WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITIES SPIRIT AWARDS

Mr. Brian Riddell: Recently, the good people of Cambridge gathered to celebrate another successful United Way campaign. The sixth annual Spirit Awards ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate that in 2023 the United Way raised \$5 million to be shared among more than 90 local charities and non-profit organizations. Those organizations assist nearly a quarter million individuals and families in need across Waterloo region. The evening was an opportunity to celebrate individuals and businesses in the region who work to support our most vulnerable and marginalized residents.

Spirit Awards were presented in seven categories.

Nutrition for Learning was awarded the Community Impact Award.

Sandi Young was named volunteer of the year.

The Spirit of the Community Award went to Reliance Home Comfort.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario won the Labour Community Partnership Award.

The outstanding workplace campaign awards went to Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada and EY.

Last but not least, the Ken Seiling Community Leader Award was presented to a very deserving individual: John Neufeld, executive director of the House of Friendship. This award recognizes a public figure—and John is definitely that person.

Thank you to United Way CEO Joan Fisk and her team for coming to the aid of all our community groups this year, and year after year.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have some very special guests in the west Speaker's gallery from the township of Centre Wellington: Mayor Shawn Watters, Councillor Lisa MacDonald, Councillor Barbara Lustgarten-Evoy, CAO Dan Wilson, and someone else who I'm quite familiar with, but I'm not sure if I recognize her.

Welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to have you here.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. It's always an honour to welcome leadership from the Chiefs of Ontario and the First Peoples of these lands. We welcome you.

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In the House, we have Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare, Deputy Grand Chief Stacia Loft, IPCO President Darren Montour, Grand Chief Abram Benedict, Grand Council

Chief Reg Niganobe from Anishinabek Nation, Chief Rodney Nahwegahbow, Chief Wilfred King, Chief Claire Sault, Deputy Grand Chief Marsden, Chief Warren Tabobondung, Chief Mary Duckworth, and Chief Kelly La Rocca.

So there are a bunch of leaders who are here today. And I'm sure we welcome the drum that came to Queen's Park, as well. Meegwetch.

Mr. Will Bouma: Just to add on, I needed to make special mention: Welcome, Claire Sault, Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and also Six Nations Police Chief Darren Montour, to the House today. Welcome to the people's House.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my great pleasure to welcome my friend Chief Mary Duckworth of Caldwell First Nation; Chief Claire Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit; and Mississaugas of the Credit councillors, my friend Larry Sault, Jesse Herkimer, and Erma Ferrell. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'd like to welcome Zehavi Zynoberg to the House. He's the associate director of government relations at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. He is also here to host a Jewish Heritage Month reception which will be happening later in the day. All are welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: As you know, this is Nursing Week. Happy Nursing Week to all the hard-working nurses out there.

I would like to introduce four of their leaders who are here today. Karen McKay-Eden, a registered nurse, is the region 3 vice-president of the Ontario Nurses' Association. Dianne Martin, a registered practical nurse, is the CEO of the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, better known as WeRPN. Jackie Walker, a registered practical nurse, is the executive vice-president of SEIU Healthcare. And Lucy Morton, a registered practical nurse, is the chair of the OPSEU/SEFPO Community Health Care Professionals sector.

Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I have several guests in the gallery today. First, I want to introduce Natasha Restrepo Rivera, who is a new member of my team. She is new to politics, so she is in for a whirlwind.

Of course, I have several folks from Asthma Canada, as we celebrate their 50th anniversary: Jeffrey Beach, president and CEO; Jenna Reynolds, director, programs and services; Pauric Keegan, communications and marketing specialist; Megan Leigh, director of development; Zoe Ullyett, research and communications intern; and Vibhas Bapat, board chair.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jill Andrew: This morning, we have two fabulous guests from St. Paul's coming to Queen's Park: Kathleen Christie and Maureen Callon.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for your advocacy on health care in Ontario.

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm delighted to welcome my constituents from Markham-Unionville, Jennifer Ng and Ernest

Ng. They are the proud parents of page Victoria Ng, who serves as page captain today.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: It's not too often I get guests from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I would like to welcome Grand Chief Abram Benedict from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. Welcome.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the members of the Chiefs of Ontario for being here in the Legislature today and for that drum ceremony that opened the day.

I also want to welcome to the House my staffer Alesha Cabral. Welcome to the Legislature, Alesha.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to now ask our pages to assemble for their introductions.

It is my pleasure to introduce this group of legislative pages: from the riding of Whitby, Raisa Anand; from the riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Jeslyn Chui; from the riding of Niagara Centre, Antonio Geremia; from the riding of Hamilton Mountain, Charlise Hillen; from the riding of Scarborough North, Anika Karthik; from the riding of Orléans, Lise MacDonald; from the riding of Durham, Diya Gokul Nathan; from the riding of Markham–Unionville, Victoria Ng; from the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's, Sophie Obee Tower; from the riding of Kenora–Rainy River, Woodland Parent; from the riding of Oakville North–Burlington, Soyul Park; from the riding of University–Rosedale, Kai Peski; from the riding of Barrie–Innisfil, Hriditya Patel; from the riding of Mississauga–Malton, Aaldrian Pynadath; from the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, Alexander Rose; from the riding of Vaughan–Woodbridge, Rhys Tweedie; from the riding of Parkdale–High Park, Norah Tysoe; from the riding of Toronto–Danforth, Glynnis Vaughan; and from the riding of Scarborough Southwest, Liam Yumul.

Welcome to the Legislature. We're very grateful to have you here.

Applause.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have a point of order, I understand, that's going to be raised by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hsu is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

FIRST NATIONS POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Today, the Chiefs of Ontario are launching a lawsuit against Ontario and Canada for failing to provide First Nations with equal access to policing services as other Ontarians.

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In First Nations across Ontario, we have communities in crisis. We have deaths every day, and we have communities being grossly under-policed and underserved.

Will Ontario ensure First Nations have sufficient resources and mechanisms to uphold our laws?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: As this matter is before the court, it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further. Again, it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: On April 1, this government sent a clear message that community safety does not matter in First Nations. They had five years to make sure that when they changed their policing act, it would not discriminate against First Nations.

Speaker, I ask again, how does this government plan to keep our communities safe and ensure First Nation laws are enforced throughout the province?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: As this matter is subject now to litigation, it is inappropriate to comment any further. Again, it would be inappropriate to comment any further at this time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: In a press conference today, the regional Chiefs of Ontario said we don't have to go to court. It's up to the government to come to the table and say, "Include us in the process."

Speaker, being able to enforce First Nation laws on-reserve will allow First Nations police forces to keep drug dealers at bay, using trespassing laws. It can also help non-dangerous offenders break free from destructive cycles and reintegrate into the community.

The government can actually fix this matter today.

Will Ontario pass a simple regulation under the CSPA making enforcement of First Nation laws mandatory?

Interjections.

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

The Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: As a statement of claim has been issued, the matter is now before the courts. Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate to comment any further.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier.

Under its agreement with the federal government, this government promised to build nearly 20,000 new affordable homes over 10 years, but six years later, they've barely managed to build 1,000.

You've fallen so far behind that the federal government is punishing you and refusing to hand over affordable housing funding to this government. Whatever you're doing is not working.

My question to the Premier: What is this government going to do differently to ensure we build the tens of thousands of affordable homes that Ontario needs and get the funding that we are owed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I said to the member yesterday and today, earlier, in committee, we've actually, through our partners and through our service managers, built 11,000 of the 19,000 homes that we were asked to build. And we were asked to, I think it was, rehabilitate, renovate and repair 26,000—we've actually done 123,000 units. So, by any measure, it is a smashing success for both the province of Ontario and our municipal partners, our service managers.

Nobody is being left without funding, because the province of Ontario is paying the federal government's bills. We want to ensure that the most vulnerable get the housing help that they need. So we are paying the federal government's bills. Eventually, hopefully, they will decide to pay the people of the province of Ontario back, but if they don't, we'll still be there for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: In fact, the province has cut funding to municipal housing and homelessness programs.

AMO estimates municipalities are on track to lose \$2 billion over 10 years because this province has banned them from collecting fees to help pay for homelessness programs, at a time when shelters are full, and cities and towns have permanent encampments in parks and sidewalks.

What is this government's plan to ensure every person in Ontario who is homeless is provided with shelter and permanent housing?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's a good question by the member opposite.

What I did was increase funding for homelessness prevention programs by 28% in the member's riding, and then I actually didn't stop there. This government and this caucus, with the Minister of Finance's help and Progressive Conservatives on both sides of the House, decided that we had to do even more, and that is why, in ridings across the province, we have increased funding to the highest level ever.

But it goes even further than that—it's the work that the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is doing; it's the work that we're doing to bring jobs and opportunity back to the province of Ontario.

We're building communities, whole communities, that are not only affordable housing, attainable housing—all types of housing. We're building more schools. We're building more bridges. And we're doing this all in the context of having inherited a province that was on the brink of bankruptcy, that had an infrastructure deficit, whose affordable housing stock hadn't been renovated in over 15 years.

We're getting the job done for the people of the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: The federal government introduced a \$5-billion housing infrastructure fund in April, with conditions. Ontario must pass policies like making fourplexes as-of-right to access this money, yet the province's latest housing bill doesn't address this crucial requirement.

My question to the minister: Can this government fix the bill, allow fourplexes as-of-right and ensure we get the infrastructure funding we're eligible for?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, let me put that in context. The federal government is going to spend \$5 billion across the entire country, from sea to sea to sea, on infrastructure. We're spending \$3 billion just in the province of Ontario to get sewer and water and roads built across the province of Ontario.

And then we're going a step further. We're spending—what is it—\$2 billion to build more schools across the province of Ontario, because when you build homes, you need schools.

And do you know what else we're doing? We're building transit and transportation, and we're building new automotive manufacturing capacities—so 700,000 jobs—because the people who are coming to work in the province of Ontario need to be able to get to work. They need the housing.

The federal government is, right now, trying to hold provinces hostage. There's not one province across the entire federation that supports what the federal government is doing right now—only the Ontario NDP.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Recently, we obtained government records that showed that just two days after Shakir Rehmatullah attended the Premier's daughter's wedding, ministry staffers were looking for ways to open up Mr. Rehmatullah's greenbelt property in Nobleton for development. Mr. Rehmatullah attended the wedding on September 27, 2022. By September 29, this had been deemed a "priority project."

Who deemed development of Mr. Rehmatullah's property to be a priority project, and why?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: In my community, it was the mayors of both Markham and Stouffville who deemed that those projects were a priority and asked the province of Ontario to move forward with ministerial zoning orders so that we could build more homes. That is who made it a priority.

We want to build more homes.

Do you know what the stumbling block is, colleagues, to building more homes across York region? It is the infrastructure deficit that we inherited from the Liberals when they were in power for 15 years.

Now, the federal Liberal government is providing Toronto with a billion dollars, I think it is, to build 2,000 homes—a billion dollars to build 2,000 homes.

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The investments that we are making in infrastructure will unleash thousands of homes across York region, thousands of homes to help support the thousands of people who will be working in the province of Ontario.

There is more work to be done, but we'll get the job done.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: That answer had nothing to do with my question.

On the day that the changes to the greenbelt were announced, the minister's chief of staff, Ryan Amato, asked ministry staffers to confirm that Mr. Rehmatullah's Nobleton property in the greenbelt could be developed. Mr. Amato told staffers, "PO has asked me for a picture to make sure it's captured." Ministry staffers responded with assurances that changes to York's official plan would do just that.

Who in the Premier's office wanted to make sure that the Nobleton property belonging to the Premier's friend was captured in the changes to the greenbelt, and why?

Hon. Paul Calandra: News flash to the member opposite: Nobleton and King are actually in York region, and York region is suffering from an infrastructure deficit.

York region was also suffering from a school deficit until this Minister of Education came on board—because what we're doing is building communities.

This is what they do: They make enemies out of everybody who wants to move the province forward; so if you build a home, you're an enemy; if you're a manufacturer, you're an enemy; if you drive a bus and want to buy a home, you've got to be an enemy as well. They are all about making people enemies.

What we are about is fixing the devastating damage that we inherited from the Liberal-NDP coalition government in the province of Ontario that left us with an infrastructure deficit, that left us the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world, that left us with the most highly regulated province in the world. Jobs were fleeing the province. We are working every single day to repair the damage. The job is not done, and that is why we are going

to double down to work even harder to continue the economic progress in Ontario.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

The excitement from Honda's historic announcement on April 25 continues to grow. Throughout the Alliston area and throughout Ontario's automotive sector, from Windsor to Loyalist township, enthusiasm is building. Honda's workers are proud, their suppliers are confident, and our entire EV ecosystem is supercharged for success.

Ontario's auto and manufacturing sectors are winning again and thriving again under this government.

What a contrast from the industrial graveyard the Liberals left behind after 15 years of lost opportunity. Speaker, 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost under their watch.

Can the minister please update the House on how Honda's investment will position Ontario's economy for the long term?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, April 25 was a historic day for Ontario and, quite frankly, all of Canada. Honda announced a \$15-billion investment right here in Ontario to build Canada's first comprehensive electric vehicle supply chain. Honda will build an innovative EV assembly plant in Alliston. They'll also build a stand-alone battery manufacturing plant in Alliston—4,200 jobs retained, 1,000 new jobs just on those sites. And to complete their supply chain, they will build a cathode plant through a joint venture with Korea's POSCO, and they'll build a separator plant in a joint venture with Japan's Asahi Kasei. Those two announcements are coming in the very near future, in the coming days and weeks, which will add a significant amount of employees here in Ontario.

Their investment reaffirms that Ontario is the EV powerhouse.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

I was at the announcement on April 25, and you could feel the electricity in the air, and that was fitting because they're going to build electric vehicles and electric batteries.

Honda's investment proves that our government's targeted and responsible economic plan is working.

Under the previous government, 300,000 manufacturing jobs fled the province as hydro rates soared, red tape grew, and taxes rose—Speaker, countless headlines over the last 15 years told of companies packing their bags and leaving Ontario.

But now we are reading headlines repeatedly and daily, almost weekly, about companies investing billions to move their operations to our province.

Can the minister tell us about the state of Ontario's automotive sector today in comparison to where it was just six short years ago?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: The minister was kind enough to loan me this one question. Thank you, Minister.

As the minister was saying, a \$15-billion investment with Honda; another massive investment, a multi-billion dollar investment we're announcing next week—so by all means, show up.

When the minister was in Germany, he got off the plane, went into the terminal, and took a picture of the big Ontario sign. Another person got off in LA, walked out—and the terminal was all Ontario. The world is talking about Ontario. The world knows that Ontario is open for business.

We've seen over \$43 billion of investment in the EV sector. As Bloomberg said, Canada—which should really be Ontario—is now the number one destination for EV assembly and EV battery production.

We're going to continue telling the world that Ontario is open for business, no matter if it's a \$20-billion investment through the tech sector, \$3 billion through the life sciences, more manufacturing jobs—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to wish the hundreds of thousands of nurses in Ontario a happy Nursing Week, including nurse Dianne Martin, CEO of WeRPN, and Karen McKay-Eden, VP of ONA. They are here today because our health care system is in disarray, with no relief in sight.

Patients, from sick babies to people needing palliative care, face long wait times in emergency rooms and overcrowded hospitals.

Minister, it does not have to be that way. This is not the new normal. BC is implementing mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios.

Will the minister commit to improving patient outcomes and nurse retention, and bring nurse-to-patient ratios in Ontario?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Yesterday, when the Premier, Minister Dunlop and I were at TMU to celebrate and mark the beginning of Nursing Week, I spoke to a nurse who trained and graduated under Bob Rae's NDP government. Do you know what she told me? She told me that only three nurses in her graduating class stayed in Ontario, because there were no jobs. The NDP government was actually firing nurses.

I now look at the Liberal government of the day. Your previous leader, Kathleen Wynne, admitted and acknowledged in her exit interview with TVO that she wished she had invested more in the health care system.

Well, we're doing it. We're getting it done. We're training more nurses. We're retaining more nurses. We're bringing international nurses to Ontario, who want to be here. We have two years running of historic highs of internationally trained clinicians licensing in the province of Ontario. We're getting it done.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, Ontario lost 4,500 RNs under this minister. They also lost 460 RPNs under this minister.

Let me tell you, Speaker, the state of California implemented nurse-to-patient ratios 25 years ago, and the numbers speak for themselves: better patient outcomes and less nurses burning out—two challenges that this Minister of Health and Premier continue to ignore as they rush forward with the for-profit delivery of our health care system.

It doesn't have to be that way. If the government is interested at all in improving Ontario's health care system, there's a very easy first step they can do: Put in place nurse-to-patient ratios. Will the minister do it?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, what we will do is continue to bring forward initiatives, policies, working with the College of Nurses of Ontario, directing them to quickly assess, review and ultimately license internationally educated nurses. What that means is we have, for two years running, over 17,000 new nurses practising in the province of Ontario. When we expand a Learn and Stay program that actually encourages students who want to train as RNs in the province of Ontario, covering their tuition and their books—we have seen historic numbers of young nursing students applying for those programs.

1100

Last week, I was with Minister Piccini and I sat down with nursing students who are participating in an extern program. They told me how that extern program that was brought in under Premier Ford has made them more confident, has made them a better nurse. That's the kind of initiatives we will continue—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

The federal Liberals continue to make life less affordable for Ontarians by hiking the carbon tax. Many families and businesses across Ontario cannot afford the skyrocketing prices for everyday essentials. Unfortunately, the opposition NDP and the independent Liberals in this House are refusing to fight this devastating tax.

While those members want higher and higher prices and higher taxes, our government is working for the people and supporting them during this difficult time.

With summer quickly approaching, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax will continue to drive up costs for Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his question this morning.

The carbon tax, obviously, is impacting the price of gasoline, but it's also impacting the price of everything.

I couldn't help but picture the Harris family of seven as they load into their minivan and maybe head for a holiday this summer—the price that they're going to be paying at the pumps to fill that van, at \$1.65 a litre or whatever it is today. That family of seven—incidentally, when I think about it, if the Harris family was a caucus, they'd be almost the same size as the Liberal caucus here in the Legislature—can rest assured that they're getting a 10.7-cents-a-litre break from Premier Ford and our government here in Ontario. They're also not going to have to pay the tolls if they come visit me in eastern Ontario. The tolls are gone in eastern Ontario. Licence plate sticker fees are gone.

This is the contrast between our government and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and the federal Liberals. We're looking to save people money. They're making life more expensive. It's time for them to scrap that tax.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Not only seven members—but probably higher approval ratings too.

It's good to hear that the minister is paying attention to what the people of Ontario are looking for.

It is truly unfair that the Liberals continue to punish Ontarians who are already struggling to pay their bills, make ends meet, and provide more for their families with the Liberals trying to hike taxes.

What's even more disturbing is that the Liberal members in this House, knowing how much Ontarians are suffering, still refuse to rise up and do the right thing and tell their federal counterparts that this tax needs to go. It's unacceptable. Our government will not stand for their silence and inaction. Our government will continue to fight and tell the federal government that this is a tax that Ontarians don't want and don't deserve.

Can the minister please tell this House why the people of this province cannot afford this disastrous carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: It's not just the Harris family from the Kitchener area who are feeling the pinch of the punishing carbon tax; it's families right across Canada who are feeling the pinch. We knew that this was going to happen. Back in 2018, we fought the federal government on the carbon tax. We ended the cap-and-trade here in Ontario, in trying to make life more affordable.

As the NDP and the Liberals always look to increase taxes or make life more expensive for the people of Ontario, we're trying to drive costs down through things like I mentioned earlier: the gas tax break; eliminating the

licence plate sticker fees; income tax breaks; ending the tolls; making One Fare for our transit operators a possibility, saving people up to \$1,600 a year. These are real, tangible impacts on families like the Harris family of seven and other families right across Ontario. We're going to be there to help those families while Bonnie Crombie, the queen of the carbon tax, and Justin Trudeau continue to make life more expensive for them.

HEALTH CARE

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

Speaker, 2.3 million Ontarians currently have no access to family physicians. Our communities are aging—including burnt-out physicians—and recruitment and retention of professionals is waning. The Ontario Medical Association referred to this as “the perfect storm.” They need support now to establish interprofessional, team-based models of care. Right now, only 70% of doctors have access to a team. Family doctors have said that access to an interprofessional team would help reduce their workload so they can see more patients, the fundamental basis of our health care system. But this government is moving at a glacial pace to approve new primary care teams.

Why won't this government act with the urgency that the primary care crisis requires?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Oh, Speaker. I'm not sure where the member was in February, but we actually announced the largest expansion of multidisciplinary primary care teams in Ontario.

And of course, last month, with the budget, we announced another over \$500 million to expand primary care multidisciplinary teams.

I am hearing from multiple communities that have said they have already recruited, hired, and started to bring online new patients with these multidisciplinary teams. We're hearing about it in Kingston. We're hearing about it in Palmerston. We know that this is happening across Ontario.

I only wish that the member opposite would support our budget that increases, again, the opportunities for multidisciplinary team expansions in the province of Ontario.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Kathleen Christie, a retired senior citizen from my St. Paul's community, is here today and she's “very distressed with this government's disinterest and incompetence in solving the family physician crisis in Ontario.” I guess the minister didn't talk to Kathleen.

She went on to say, “I want my tax dollars to be allocated to the part of the health system that affects me and every citizen most—access to family doctors. Enough is enough, Premier. Value the family physician and compensate them fairly!”

Kathleen is also very worried about this government's health care privatization scheme, as we all are here in this Legislature.

Will the Premier tell Kathleen his plan to attract, recruit and retain family doctors, while also paying the health professionals properly and not scamming them the way he has done nurses?

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Which word was that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I don't need any help from this side of the House, thank you very much.

I'm going to ask the member for Toronto-St. Paul's to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

MPP Jill Andrew: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: So much sincerity there, Speaker.

I will say that we had, last week, residency students, medical students, who are matched with their specialty—100% coverage now in the province of Ontario, which, again, is a historic high. We have residency physicians who want to train as primary care doctors, who have been matched and are now working towards those goals.

When I see the expansions that we are doing with medical schools in Brampton and in Scarborough, it is incredible, the amount of investments that we, as a government, have made to ensure that, moving forward, we are never in the position that we were when we formed government, when Liberal and NDP governments continuously ignored the health care system at the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto-St. Paul's will come to order. The member for Brampton North will come to order.

The next question.

WATER QUALITY LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, my question today is about protecting us from contaminated groundwater. The Kingston and Area Real Estate Association is circulating a petition about this issue.

After repeated questioning two weeks ago, the government has finally said yes to continuing free testing of well water, but it failed to commit to keeping the Public Health Ontario laboratories that do the testing.

1110

Why won't this government commit to protecting us from contaminated groundwater by continuing to keep open the regional public health laboratories in Peterborough, Orillia, Hamilton, Kingston, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I have regularly and consistently reinforced the value and importance of well

water testing in the province of Ontario. I grew up on a farm in rural Ontario. My riding is primarily served by well water. I absolutely understand the value and importance of having well water testing available through our public health units. We will continue to do that, as we have, for decades to come. More importantly, we will also invest in Public Health Ontario, something that the member opposite, under their leadership, did not do.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: There's potential for contaminated groundwater in Wilmot township, where this government has told the region of Waterloo to assemble farmland for industrial use. Not only is that prime farmland at risk—across the road and downstream, you'll find a cabbage farm where they make St. Jacobs sauerkraut; you'll find a dairy farm where they also make award-winning Mountainoak Gouda cheese. In this region, if you need water, it has to be drawn from the underground aquifer. The Waterloo region is one of the largest groundwater users in Canada. Does this government realize that the aquifer must be protected?

How can these valuable agri-food operations be protected from contaminated groundwater with all the secrecy and non-disclosure agreements around assembling Wilmot's prime agricultural land for industrial use?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Health can reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will say it again, because clearly there seems to be some misunderstanding: The public health system that we have continued to invest in as a government will continue to be there. We did it through a pandemic. We made sure that public health officials, our medical officers of health and the critically important registered nurses and clinicians who work in the public health system will continue to be a very important part of our health care system. We understand the value of it, and I think, respectfully, the people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Milton understand the value and importance of it, which is why we are celebrating two new members.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade—although if the Premier wants to jump in, I'm good with that.

A little over a week ago, our province welcomed an historic generational investment in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. It is an investment that, before we took office, no one would reasonably imagine coming to Ontario. Economic development was at such a low priority for the previous Liberal government that no one could fathom global companies willingly choosing Ontario as a destination to invest and expand in. The Liberals' high-tax

policy chased out countless numbers of businesses and left our auto sector on the brink of collapse.

Thankfully, under this government, Ontario is in a much different place today. We have secured tens of billions of dollars in new investments in our auto sector and right across our economy.

Can the minister please tell this House more about Honda's generational investment in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Honda's \$15-billion investment is the largest investment in Canadian auto history.

Ontario has now attracted \$43 billion in new auto and EV investments in the last four years. That is more than any US state.

What does that tell you, Speaker? Think about where we were under the Liberals—high taxes, red tape that was out of control, everything the Liberals could possibly do to hurt business. We step in, under Premier Ford, and what happens? Lower taxes, reduced red tape, lower electricity rates—\$8 billion in lower cost of doing business every single year. That's what's bringing companies here into the province of Ontario. The lower cost of doing business has brought 700,000 workers here into Ontario since we were elected. This is what's attracting businesses all over the world. They look at Ontario as this beacon, this light that's happening here. They want to be part of it and now we're at—

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Honda's investment indeed is a game-changer for this province. It will create good-paying jobs for my constituents in Alliston and the surrounding region. It is a testament to the competitive advantage that Ontario now has in the automotive sector.

Ontario's more than 100,000 auto workers are the best in the world. Automakers recognize this, and that is why they are doubling down in Ontario. They see an automotive ecosystem that has been revitalized over the last six years. It is now thriving and robust and leading in the world. They see a province that has everything they need—talent, low costs, an abundance of clean energy, and so much more. That is why they are choosing Ontario.

Can the minister tell us what Honda's investment means for our automotive ecosystem?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, think about when we were elected. Reuters, the news agency, reported that there would be \$300 billion invested in EV supply chain over the next few years, but the bad news was that zero was intended in coming to Canada, and that means zero into Ontario. That's the climate that the Liberal government developed. Not a dime was coming here.

Look at today. Bloomberg has announced that Canada—and, as the Premier said, ostensibly Ontario—is now ranked number one in the world supply chain. We went from zero to \$43 billion. We went from zero, last place, to number one. That is what's happening.

We came so close to seeing the end of our auto sector under the previous government. Our workers were almost permanently sidelined because of the legacy of the Liberals.

From day one, as I said, our approach was to lower the cost of doing business—

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

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Given the destructive effects of Bill 124, it is no surprise that senior health care workers have left their hospital positions and that even new nurses are being drawn into the nursing agency vortex—a situation that is pushing almost every hospital in Thunder Bay–Superior North into massive debt.

What is the government doing to attract nurses back into full-time positions and stop the flood of health care dollars going to shareholder profits?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, we've been supporting our health care partners through our two budgets—both last year and this year. We have committed to increase annual operating dollars for hospitals by 4%. Those are two historic high years in terms of investments into our health care system. And specifically as it relates to how we are assisting on the health care resources, we're doing so many pieces, whether we talk about Learn and Stay—but I really want to talk about externs.

I made mention of Minister Piccini and I sitting down with some nursing students who are externs right now, working in the hospital sector. I asked them, "Where are your pathways? Where are you going when you graduate?" They said because of the extern program, they are more confident as students, they are better employees as registered nurses. They are excited to join the health care sector in the province of Ontario, and we are opening our arms to make sure that we make them welcome.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The wage disparity between public and private health care wages is also impacting nurse practitioners in my region. The scope of practice of nurse practitioners has increased exponentially with no acknowledgement or financial recognition. The result is that nurse practitioners are leaving community clinics to set up fee-based, for-profit practices. This is two-tier medicine.

When will the government address the wage gap identified in the Hay report and bring nurse practitioner wages up to levels appropriate to their skills and responsibilities?

1120

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite references scope of practice. Let's talk about some of the things that our government has been doing with our health care practitioners specifically as it relates to scope of practice.

Of course, we all are aware, because over 700,000 Ontarians have accessed it, of a scope-of-practice change that happened with our pharmacies. That is a direct

patient-benefiting outcome that we have seen. Scope of practice just announced with midwives, ensuring that they can continue to serve their patients and the babies they help deliver in the province of Ontario—those announcements were just made very recently. Scope-of-practice changes for registered nurses and nurse practitioners—we are making sure that clinicians who work in our health care system in the province of Ontario are practising to their highest level of education, because we know it leads to better patient outcomes.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier.

I met with the Toronto child care advocates and London child care providers, and they're very concerned about this government's lack of accountability and transparency in the implementation of the \$10-a-day child care system. It's astonishing that, two years later, there are still looming questions. They want answers, and they want to know where the money is being spent.

Will the Premier commit to requesting that the Auditor General provide a full audit of the government's spending on the \$10-a-day child care program?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government of Ontario came in in 2018, inheriting the highest child care prices in Canada—roughly \$50 to \$60 a day, a 500% increase under the former Liberals—and it really was unacceptable. We priced parents out of the market. Mothers often had to make a choice of working or raising their kids, and that's a false choice for so many.

And so, we got to power. We rolled up our sleeves. We negotiated a better deal, and we now have cut fees by 50%, saving at least \$8,000 a child in this province. That's a meaningful action that puts money in the bank for working parents. We're also increasing spaces—86,000 more to go.

If the member opposite wants to be constructive in her advocacy for London families and operators, then stand with us. Stand up to the federal government for a deal that allows them to fund for-profit child care so that 30% of the operators in London could receive the funding they deserve, so that all parents receive affordable, accessible child care in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What advocates and stakeholders are asking about the financial spending on this program—and let's face it, the lack of trust in this government in the implementation of the \$10-a-day child care program is warranted. This government can't even publicly report on how many of the 41,000 child care spaces they have created since 2019—which ones are subsidized of that 41,000 under this national child care program. When the government doesn't provide financial records, it breeds speculation.

Can the Premier tell the London child care advocates and providers—who actually sit on the government's

advisory group, and they haven't met since June—who is the government consulting with for the funding formula advice?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I was proud to be in London with your mayor to announce over 9,000 spaces being committed for the people of London. This is an increase of spaces for working parents. They no longer have to wait on a wait-list.

The member opposite speaks about accountability. We are, right now, because the province of Ontario had the fortitude to negotiate a mid-term review, which allows technical officials, public servants, between the Ministry of Finance at the federal government and the Ministry of Finance at the provincial government—working through technical analysis of the numbers. What it will prove to the feds, and what I hope the member opposite will stand with this government and articulate to the federal government, is that there is a delta; there's a gap. We knew this when we signed the deal. And what we should be is united, as a Parliament, to demand more funding and more flexibility from the feds so that we actually support all families and all kids in all regions of this province.

TAXATION

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My question is to the Minister of Energy.

The failed Liberal carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything, including basic necessities, and is punishing communities across the province, including my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Speaker, driving is the primary form of transportation for most residents in rural Ontario. The carbon tax has placed a heavy burden on my constituents who now have to pay more for fuel, food and heating.

That's why our government has not stopped fighting against the carbon tax. We are fighting for the people of Ontario.

Can the minister explain how our government is reducing energy costs for the people of Ontario as we combat the negative impacts of the carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from the Cornwall region for his question this morning.

We're doing a lot here in Ontario to ensure that we're combatting the punishing impact of the carbon tax on the people of Ontario, and that includes the gas tax break, eliminating tolls in eastern Ontario, ending the licence plate sticker fees, ending that very costly and wasteful Drive Clean program which was just another scam, and ensuring we're bringing in One Fare.

We're also investing in clean infrastructure for the future that's going to ensure we have the energy we need that's affordable, reliable and clean.

I've mentioned a few times in the House that a couple of weeks ago I was down at Sir Adam Beck talking about our billion-dollar investments in refurbishing our hydro-electric facilities in Niagara.

I'm really looking forward to joining the member from Cornwall a little bit later on this week, when we're going

to be making a similar announcement in his riding, ensuring we've got clean energy for the future.

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the minister for that great answer. I can't wait to welcome you to Cornwall.

It is encouraging to see our government continue to build on our clean energy advantage while keeping costs down for the people of Ontario.

The governor of the Bank of Canada stated that the carbon tax contributes 15% each year to the upward pressure on inflation and that scrapping the tax altogether would lower inflation.

It is clear that the carbon tax is not helping Ontario; it is hurting us.

Our government must continue to deliver affordability by fighting the terrible Liberal carbon tax as we roll out real, practical solutions to make Ontario's electricity grid not just more affordable, but also cleaner and more reliable.

Can the minister please explain how our government is achieving our energy objectives without introducing a costly carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: I referred to the refurbishments that we're doing in our hydroelectric facilities across the province, and I look forward again—maybe he'll buy me a Blizzard at his family restaurant when I'm in Cornwall a little bit later on this week.

We're also refurbishing our nuclear facilities, and this is a tremendous story. The world really is watching what's happening here in Ontario—not just in the evolution of our EV sector and EV battery sector, but in our nuclear sector. We're building the first small modular reactor in the Western world at Darlington. We're refurbishing the Candu reactors that we have—multi-billion dollar investments that aren't just coming in on time and on budget; they're coming in ahead of time.

We are building battery storage facilities and other non-emitting resources to make sure that our system is operating as efficiently as possible, investing in energy efficiency programs like the Peak Perks program and the ultra-low overnight rate for charging the EVs and cars of the future.

We have a plan, and it's—

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

ONTARIO PLACE

ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

Mr. Chris Glover: On the weekend, I attended a Jane's Walk at Ontario Place organized by Ontario Place for All. We toured the incredibly beautiful, iconic parkland down at Ontario Place, where 190 bird species have been identified—many of them at risk, some of them on the verge of extinction.

This Premier saw that there was a problem with Ontario Place. He thought, "Do you know what? No one is making

money from that iconic parkland on the waterfront in Toronto." So he's giving it away to a European mega-spa company that is now promoting an immersive wellness experience that allows people to pay money to connect with nature by watching videos of trees.

Why is he spending 650 million tax dollars to cut down 800 real trees so people can pay money to watch videos of trees?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: The member opposite mentioned iconic space. I would not agree with that statement at all. Perhaps back in the 1970s when it was first built, it was an iconic space which families enjoyed. They do not enjoy the space anymore. The island is falling apart. It is flooding. In fact, Live Nation had to cancel its shows back in 2017 because of the flooding.

But not to worry, Mr. Speaker. Under the Premier's leadership, we're bringing Ontario Place back to life, and it will include 50 acres of public realm space, more trees, more vegetation, food and beverage, a brand new marina, a science centre, a wellness centre by Therme, and a brand new Budweiser Stage for families and all Ontarians to enjoy.

1130

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Well, although the minister tried not to release it to the public, the documents show that 2.9 million Ontarians enjoyed Ontario Place in 2022.

On the weekend, there was also a Jane's Walk at the science centre. The Ontario Science Centre was one of the first of three built in the world. They develop exhibits that are used in science centres around the world. But this government—and it has been shown by the Auditor General; the Auditor General has said that this government is going to be spending \$500 million in tax dollars to build a new science centre that's half the size, which is more than \$300 million more than rejuvenating the existing science centre.

My question: Why are you disrespecting the people in the Flemingdon and Thorncliffe communities? Why are you disrespecting the students at Marc Garneau collegiate? Why are you disrespecting the taxpayers of Ontario by wasting at least \$300 million in tax dollars to destroy—

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the House that they make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Infrastructure can reply.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, why is the member opposite disrespecting Ontarians by standing in the way of us building a new science centre that will be enjoyed for another 50 to 75 years?

In fact, do you know what the member opposite would like? He would like the science centre, like Ontario Place, to just fall apart so that it ends up being closed. But we will not do that, because we believe in science education, as does the Minister of Education.

But again, Mr. Speaker, not to worry; under the Premier's leadership, we will have a brand new science centre with more exhibition space for families to enjoy, and a brand new Ontario Place.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business.

Small businesses in the restaurant and foodservice industry are not only vital job creators, but they have an integral role in our economy and in our local communities. Our province would not be the same without restaurateurs who foster job growth, support local agriculture, and put Ontario's culinary scene on the international map.

That's why it is shameful that the federal government continues to strain all these small businesses with their costly carbon tax.

Our government knows the carbon tax makes it more challenging for businesses to survive, and we won't stop fighting until the federal Liberals finally scrap this tax.

Can the associate minister please share with the House what foodservice operators across Ontario are saying about—

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

The Associate Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member from Newmarket–Aurora for the question.

Speaker, food entrepreneurs are core ingredients in the recipe for thriving local economies and strong communities we can all be very proud of. That's why I was thrilled to recently attend the Restaurants Canada 2024 trade show. And the message came through loud and clear: The federal carbon tax is taking a huge bite out of these businesses. I heard from the owners of a popular family diner, who said their monthly natural gas bill for operating ovens, fryers and kitchen equipment has increased significantly over the past year because of this tax. This is, sadly, just the tip of the iceberg. Across Ontario, restaurateurs, cafe owners and food truck operators are being threatened by escalating expenses on all fronts, thanks to the federal carbon tax.

I hope now the opposition will listen to the restaurateurs right across this province and tell the federal Liberals to—

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

The supplementary question.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the associate minister for her response.

The Liberal carbon tax is not only forcing our favourite restaurants to reduce their staff levels or raise prices on customers, but it is also squeezing every penny from the farmers and agricultural producers who supply these small businesses.

Farmers across the province have been speaking out against the federal carbon tax because it is raising their already-high expenses and cutting into their bottom line. It is unacceptable for them to face an additional tax burden from the Liberals, and it is unacceptable that the Liberal

members in this House are content to see Ontario farmers and small businesses being taxed more.

Can the associate minister please explain why small and family-run farms, as well as food producers, cannot afford this regressive carbon tax?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member for the question.

Speaker, Ontario farmers, growers and food producers are the foundation of our economy and food supply chain. From the tender fruit orchards of Niagara to the innovative greenhouse operations around Leamington and the Holland Marsh, these multi-generational family businesses work tirelessly to feed us while sustaining good jobs.

The Liberals need to get out of their urban bubble and talk to the working people of Ontario.

Speaker, imagine you're a fifth-generation egg farmer. Thanks to the carbon tax, your natural gas heating costs have tripled, but your sales have not. That's money going out of your pocket instead of being reinvested into modernizing your operations and hiring more locals.

So you can thank a Liberal the next time you pay more for a carton of eggs at your local grocery store.

This Premier and government will continue to fight for Ontario's small businesses, and we're going to continue to call on the federal government to scrap the tax.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

Since this government opened the floodgates to profit-driven private health clinics, extra-billing and add-ons are all too common.

My constituent Gerald had a prescribed diagnostic procedure. Afterwards, he was told he had to pay to get a copy of his results. When he questioned it, he was offered a smaller fee to get them online instead of on paper.

Why is this Conservative government allowing extra-billing to happen?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member opposite knows, there are OHIP-covered, funded services that we continue to expand and provide in the province of Ontario.

I want to talk specifically about those individuals who, under our changes, an expansion only in cataract surgeries—we have seen the wait times for cataracts in communities decreasing dramatically. We specifically chose cataracts because it had some of the highest wait times in the province of Ontario. What does that mean? It means people who couldn't continue to drive, who couldn't work, who couldn't volunteer, who couldn't read a book to their grandchildren—by expanding cataract surgeries in four communities, in existing publicly funded, OHIP-covered divisions, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the wait times. We're going to continue to do that because that's what the people—

Interjections.

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

There are a lot of private conversations taking place in the chamber such that the cumulative volume is making it difficult for me to hear what is being said by the people who have the floor, so I'd ask everyone to please quieten down. Thank you.

Start the clock.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, in listening to that answer from the minister—the only thing the minister has expanded in health care are extra-billing and privatization.

Gerald had the very same procedure before this Conservative government allowed clinics to squeeze patients. And guess what? There was no fee. Did the government hear me? There was no fee. Now this clinic offers membership plans for a monthly fee, a yearly plan, or a one-time record collection fee—all extra fees that are unethical and ought to be illegal.

There's an affordability crisis across this province. People are struggling to make ends meet.

My question: Will the Premier kill these fees or double down on this disastrous health care privatization agenda?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, there you have it. You have an NDP that believes undeniably that they cannot have any kind of innovation in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to give you a very specific example. Ontario invested \$5 million in the Centre for Integrated and Advanced Medical Imaging, for a 3,500-square-foot facility to harness cutting-edge innovation. Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joe's Healthcare Hamilton, who are partnering with Mohawk College and McMaster University to harness cutting-edge technology—their improved system, a partnership between private hospitals as well as hospitals, colleges and universities, means that they have found MRIs that will enable centre staff to reduce scanning times by 50%.

That's the kind of innovation that our government will continue to fund, because the people of Ontario deserve to have—

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Kingston and the Islands has given their notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to their question given by the Minister of Health regarding Public Health Ontario and groundwater. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's a true privilege to welcome Andrew Daher from the city of Windsor. He's the commissioner of human health services, and he's visiting us today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PATIENT-TO-NURSE RATIOS FOR HOSPITALS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LES RATIOS PATIENTS-PERSONNEL INFIRMIER DANS LES HÔPITAUX

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to maximum patient-to-nurse ratios / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les ratios patients-personnel infirmier maximaux.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill is quite simple. It mandates the maximum number of patients that a nurse could care for. The ratio would be:

- one to one for critical care patients on ventilators;
- two patients to one nurse for critical care patients not on ventilators or people needing very high mental health care;
- three patients to one nurse for specialized care;
- four patients to one nurse for palliative care; and
- five patients to one nurse for rehabilitation care, except on night shift, where it would be seven patients to one nurse for rehab on night shift.

It's as simple as that. It needs to be done.

PROVINCIAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION RESERVES AMENDMENT ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PARCS PROVINCIAUX ET LES RÉSERVES DE CONSERVATION

Mr. Dowie moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 193, An Act to amend the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 193, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: This bill amends the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act to add an urban class park as a new class of provincial park. The objective of this is to improve access to compatible nature-based recreation in or near urban centres.

The bill also authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations adding new classes of provincial parks and specifying the objectives of such parks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear a kaffiyeh as requested by the Palestinian—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is this a point of order?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for London North Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm requesting the unanimous consent of the House to wear a kaffiyeh during the reading of the next petition, as requested by the Palestinian community in my riding of London North Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London North Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear a kaffiyeh while he presents a petition in the House this afternoon. Agreed? I heard some noes.

PETITIONS

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It is my honour to present the following petition on behalf of the Palestinian, Muslim and Arab community in my riding of London North Centre. It's entitled "Reverse the Kaffiyeh Ban."

On Friday, I had the opportunity to meet with leaders from London's Palestinian community to discuss this petition and the ban on the kaffiyeh in the Legislature. It was one of the most important meetings I have ever attended as they signed this petition.

The kaffiyeh, as they explained, represents the Palestinian people as a powerful cultural item. They spoke about the symbolism of fishing nets, the trade routes, the olive trees, all these vital industries and things that are important to the Palestinian identity.

We also heard how the Palestinian flag was banned in Gaza and the West Bank. As it turns out, Speaker, they also explained how paintings involving white, black, red and green were also banned. They were threatened that these paintings would actually be seized as a result. Since then, the watermelon, because it includes all those colours, has become a powerful symbol for Palestinian identity.

The kaffiyeh represents the Palestinian people's right to exist, their right to be alive. It represents their identity. I'm thankful, Speaker, that you listened to the advocacy of the

official opposition and reversed the kaffiyeh ban on the legislative precinct, because the banning of this cultural item within the people's House and the legislative precinct had to change. Banning it—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Nepean.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm just wondering, would the member opposite allow me to just write out whatever I wanted to read instead of presenting a petition? Are there any rules around petitions in terms of reading exactly what the petitioners have signed?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will remind the House of a recent change to the standing orders. Standing order 42(b) now reads: "A member may present a petition in the House during the afternoon routine 'Petitions.' The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached thereto but shall not read the text of the petition."

I haven't heard the member read the petition, but I would ask him to briefly summarize his petition so that we can move on.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

As they were signing this petition, they did ask the question, if the kaffiyeh is not allowed to be worn in the visitors' gallery, will there be a similar prohibition on people who wear a piece of clothing that has a watermelon on it, for instance? With this kaffiyeh ban they ask that this should be something that is allowed not only in the legislative precinct but also within the visitors' chamber.

I fully support this petition. I want to thank the Palestinian community for a brilliant meeting. I'll affix my signature and deliver with it page Liam to the Clerks.

LANDLORD AND TENANT DISPUTES

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition for the assembly here with regard to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It was brought to me by my constituent Jenny Song, who has been experiencing problems with small landlords getting justice or access to justice in terms of a bad tenant. In the petition, she summarizes the kind of measures that the Landlord and Tenant Board could take to avoid the unreasonable, unfair and costly delay that she's experiencing.

1510

I agree with this petition, and I'm going to give it to page Soyul and thank her very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for summarizing your petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Nicole Lafrenière from Garson in my riding for these petitions: "Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury."

Basically, the people have signed this petition because the rate of neurological movement disorders in northern Ontario is the highest in all of our province. It's actually the highest of many provinces in our country. There are specialized neurological movement disorder clinics that exist in Ontario, but none of them are located in northern Ontario, where the people that have signed their signature come from.

They recognize that in northeastern Ontario, it is Sudbury that is the health care hub for services. So they are asking for such a clinic to be set up in Sudbury so that the many, many patients in northeastern Ontario that have a neurological movement disorder do not have to travel to southern Ontario to gain care, but the care would be available in Sudbury—easier to get to.

I fully support the petition—I would love to have a neurological movement disorder clinic in Sudbury—and I would ask my page Sophie to bring it to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition here to support access to spine care in Ontario.

To summarize this petition, essentially, it's very difficult for people with complex spinal diseases and injuries to get surgery, and that's because the compensation for the physicians who perform surgery is complex and takes an incredibly long amount of time. Also, the time for surgical rooms to be available is causing a great deal of grief and pain and suffering for people with conditions like scoliosis and other diseases and injuries to the back.

I'll give it to Aaldrian, and he will take it over. Thanks, Aaldrian.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Carole Blanchette de Foley dans le nord de mon comté pour ces pétitions : « Réparons les subventions aux résident(e)s du nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales. »

Comme vous savez, monsieur le Président, dans le nord de l'Ontario, nous avons droit à des subventions pour voyager vers le sud de l'Ontario lorsque les soins ne sont pas disponibles. Ça nous permet d'être remboursés pour les hôtels, pour le millage, des choses comme ça. Malheureusement, les fonds qui nous sont disponibles n'ont pas été mis à jour depuis très longtemps. Maintenant, le gouvernement l'a changé : on aura le droit à 175 \$ par nuit, plutôt que 100 \$ par nuit, et un petit peu plus pour le millage. Mais ça reste quand même que plusieurs, plusieurs familles, surtout des familles avec de jeunes enfants, ne sont pas capables de se rendre à Toronto pour les soins dont ils ont besoin.

Un médecin, un pédiatre de Sault Ste. Marie, est venu me voir pour me parler d'un couple. Le bébé risque de perdre la vue s'ils ne sont pas capables de l'emmener à

Toronto et les parents n'ont pas d'argent pour l'emmener à Toronto. On aimerait que le programme soit changé pour que les familles dans le besoin aient droit à des fonds avant le voyage, pas avoir besoin d'attendre le remboursement.

Je suis en faveur de cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à Charlise de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ORGAN DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Nicole Sabourin from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions: "Saving Organs to Save Lives."

Presently, we have over 2,700 people in Ontario—that was as of Monday. It could have changed; it changes every week. But as of Monday we had 2,037 people on the wait-list for an organ transplant in Ontario. Unfortunately, every three days one of those 2,037 people will die because there are no organs available to help them.

You know, Speaker, that organ and tissue donation can save up to eight people's lives and help the lives of 75 more.

If you ask Ontarians, over 90% of us want to be organ donors, but unfortunately only 36% of us have registered. So what the petition wants to do and what the people that have signed the petition want to do is to go to a presumed consent, exactly the same as what Nova Scotia has done in their province, which would make more organs available for people who want to be an organ donor. There would be plenty of opportunity to opt out, all the way to the time of death, where someone from your family will have to guarantee that, yes, you wanted to be an organ donor. For the 2,037 people waiting, that would be a life-changing change.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask a very patient page to bring it to the table.

BLOOD AND PLASMA DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joanne Mann from Hanmer in my riding for this petition: "Blood and Plasma Donations Not for Sale."

You will remember, Speaker, that in the 1980s, 30,000 Canadians were infected by HIV or hepatitis, and over 8,000 of them died because of a tainted blood transfusion. The royal commission was set in place, led by Justice Krever, and he made recommendations to protect the integrity of our blood production and collection.

Recommendation number 2 of the Krever inquiry was that donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations. In British Columbia and Quebec, they have forbidden the Canadian Blood Services to pay for plasma. Unfortunately, the present government is allowing pay-for-plasma clinics to set up shop in Ontario.

We have lived through what it means when we cannot trust the blood transfusion. We don't want to live through that again. So those people have signed a petition to make sure that Ontario adopts a voluntary blood donation act to forbid the privatization of blood products collection and the payment for a donation of blood or plasma.

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

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Dolores Robert, who is from Val Caron in my riding, for these petitions. They're called, "Make PSW a Career."

We all know that there is a shortage of PSWs in every part of our health care system. Whether you look at home care, at long-term care—even hospital care, primary care—we have shortages. The reason for that is that our PSWs are often overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, leading to many of them leaving the profession. The lack of PSWs, especially in long-term care and in our home care system, leaves patients to have to go without and the family having to step in.

What they want is they want to make PSW a good job. They want PSWs to be paid a fair wage, to have sick days, pension, benefits, to have vacation days, to have full-time jobs—permanent full-time jobs. I can tell you, Speaker, that when my hospital, Health Sciences North, posts one PSW position, they have hundreds of people apply. Yet the long-term-care homes, the home care cannot recruit and retain PSWs. Why? Because they don't offer good jobs. A PSW working home care cannot pay the rent and feed their kids. They have to go someplace else, although they are very, very good at what they do. So they want to change this, to make PSW a career that you can raise your family on and make good wages on.

1520

I think this is a good idea. I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Charlise to bring it to the Clerk.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: You're very patient with me, Speaker. Thank you.

I would like to thank Robert Morin, who is from Chelmsford in my riding, for these petitions. The petitions are called "911 Everywhere in Ontario."

Speaker, we all know that when we face an emergency, what you do is you dial 911 for help. Help is available in northern Ontario. We do have police officers. We do have ambulances. We do have fire departments. What we don't have is 911. You have to memorize a 1-800 number. There are many of them through my riding—three of them that I have memorized; another that I don't know, but I have them written in my car. Nobody knows that.

Usually, they find out that 911 is not available when they dial 911. They've just been at the scene of an accident or trauma. They dial 911, and you get, "This number is not in service. Please try your call again." So you dial 911 again, and it's not. Then, you dial 0. And the lady at the other end says, "No, no, you have to dial 911," but 911 is not available.

We are the only province that does not have 911 everywhere. It has to change.

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

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: First, on a point of order: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting has been cancelled.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GET IT DONE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PASSER À L'ACTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to enact the Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, 2024 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 162, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur la protection contre les taxes sur le carbone et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There we go.

Mr. John Fraser: I love afternoon debate, because you're all so lively. Hopefully, we can get to some really interesting questions.

But I'm really happy to be able to say a few words about Bill 162, which could be named as well the getting it undone act. Here's the interesting thing: The most interesting thing I find in this bill is schedule 5, followed by schedule 6.

I'll go to schedule 5 first. Now, schedule 5 says "Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, 2024." So there would have to be a referendum if there's going to be a carbon tax, but the Premier of the Conservative government—well, you've got your own carbon tax, the industrial carbon tax: \$2 billion going up by 23%, I think, next January. You've got your own carbon tax. You're saying to people, "We're going to prevent it," but you have one. I don't really understand how that makes any sense. So are you legislating against yourself? Are you legislating against maybe your future desire to do that again? You've already done it.

We hear about the carbon tax all day long in question period, but we don't hear about the Conservative carbon tax. Next January, it's going up 23%, the industrial carbon tax. While consumers may not be able to see that on their bills, on their invoices, on their grocery bills, it's still there. It's still there. And you guys put it in. You're trying to pretend that you're against it, but you've done it. How could anybody support a bill that did that?

But here's really the one that sticks out. The members from up just past Oshawa, up towards that part of the 407

that the province owns? You're going to do a referendum on tolls—you're going to ban tolls—but you're not going to do anything about the road that we own. The tolls—

Mr. Lorne Coe: We took the toll off.

Mr. John Fraser: No. Maybe you took them off the 412 and the 418, but it's still on the 407, all the way from Whitby, where the member is from, to the 115. I know; I drive it all the time. I use it. It's great. It's too bad that they didn't take the tolls off that, because if you are against tolls, and we own the road, why wouldn't you do it?

I understand the other piece of that road, the 407, was something that your government—not your government, but your party sold off some 25 years ago. You sold it off 25 years ago.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Don't get too excited over there, folks. You sold it for a song, and now people are continuing to have to pay more and more every day—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the member to take a seat.

I'm just not sure which member has the floor at the moment. Maybe the House can inform: Is it the member for Ottawa South or the member for Nepean who currently has the floor? I think it's the member for Ottawa South.

Okay. I'll recognize him. Sorry to interrupt.

Mr. John Fraser: I was getting confused too. Thank you. Now that we've—I know I'm instigating some of this, but it's just so much fun to have audience participation in this place. It's so quiet.

Not only did you sell the road for a song—like a song, literally a song. Guess what? They owed us \$1 billion, and you said, "That's okay. Don't worry about it, folks. Keep it. Keep the \$1 billion." That's what I call the 407 gravy train. It's not one that people know well. It's that gravy train where they said, "Here's \$1 billion for you folks. You know what? You can have it. Don't worry about what you owe us. And you know what? We're not going to try to lower tolls on that road."

If you were so against tolls, like you're saying in this bill, why would you not do that? I thought you were about the people, saving people money. No. Come on, guys. Speaker, we're going to ban tolls, but they keep the tolls, and they keep the tolls on the road that they own. Then they forgive \$1 billion. Come on. Who are you kidding?

You did freeze licence fees, which is good. And you did finally get around to figuring out the licence plate stuff, which was causing some people some grief, because their Premier made an announcement that you didn't have to pay anymore, but nobody told anybody that you had to keep registering, until you figured it out some three months later. I have a number of constituents who had received fines because it wasn't clear. It was communicated once and then not very well at all after that. The government did not spend any time reminding people, "You've still got to do it." You've still got to do it today because this bill hasn't passed. That's totally unfair to people.

It's nice to get a good story. I love it when the Premier says, "We're going to stop doing this, Speaker, because it's good, and I'm for the people." But you don't tell them that they've got to keep doing it for three months, and it costs them 500, 600 bucks—if you're out of province, \$1,000. That's not saving people any money.

The Official Plan Adjustments Act: I don't know at what stage of doing or undoing this schedule comes in, but it's certainly part of the doing/undoing that has been the whole scandal around—well, let's put it this way: the whole scandal around urban boundaries changing for no discernible reason, other than maybe somebody made a donation or somebody knew somebody. Because it does seem like the well-connected insiders do well when it comes to anything that has got to do with land or property—see the 413; see the greenbelt. I think that that's a fair assessment of that schedule that seems to be undoing a thing that you did that got undone.

I do want to add that it's really not right that you're saying you're going to protect the people from carbon taxes when you have one, or that you're going to ban tolls when you keep the tolls on the road that you own, and when you forgive \$1 billion of the road that you sold for a song. It makes it impossible to support this bill.

I'm trying to run the clock here so I can make sure that I get 10 minutes' worth of questions, because I know you're all going to want to have fun. So I might divert a little bit into something different.

1530

I did talk about the 407 gravy train. There's a greenbelt gravy train. Now there's a carbon tax gravy train in there. So there's a lot of gravy going around.

I think, if we wanted to save the taxpayer money, it would have been better for the Premier not to have increased the staff in his office making over \$100,000 a year—the Premier's sunshine staff list—from 16 to 48. It's now 49 because we've added somebody in Ottawa, a new regional minister, a new office in Ottawa. He's got a six-figure salary too. I don't know whether we could have addressed something like that in this bill—which is, the Premier's office should be more modest instead of so bloated; lots of gravy going there.

Here's the other thing: Now they're going to spend—so the Conservative candidate that lost in Nepean-Carleton, that candidate just got a six-figure job because he lost. And guess what? They're going to spend \$1.7 million every year to keep him in a job there in Ottawa. Why are they really doing that? Because they want him to run again in Kanata. That's a lot of taxpayer money.

So, when we talk about protecting the taxpayer, who is going to protect the taxpayer from that? I mean, that's kind of gross. I think most people would say, "Why would you do that?" Why did the Premier's office budget for staff—just sunshine staff—go from \$3 million to almost \$7 million? That's \$4 million. Now, you throw the other \$1.7 million on that, you're getting close to, what, \$6 million? And God knows what else.

Really, folks, I'm trying to get to, like, four minutes, because I want the 10 minutes of questions. So, I've got

all this stuff. If you have any other topics that you want me to discuss, I'll throw it in. It's just—anyhow.

I could go back on the toll thing, because the toll thing is hilarious. It's like, "We're going to ban tolls, but we're keeping ours. We're keeping the tolls on the road that we own. We're going to keep—but we're banning them. And by the way, the highway that we sold? Guess what? We're going to forgive them a billion dollars." If that's not a gravy train—I mean, that's a billion-dollar gravy train: "Here, guys. Forget it. I know you owe us the money. It's okay. Nobody's watching."

Come on. It's like, you're not really against tolls; you have them. You're not really against the carbon tax; you have one. So why are you putting this in the legislation? Are you trying to fool somebody—as I say, pull the wool over their eyes? I don't know.

Guys, I'm getting down there. I've only got 12 seconds left. I'm just going to stand here in silence for 10 seconds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, you can't do that.

Mr. John Fraser: I can do that. Oh, wait—damn. You blew it. Okay.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I ruined your moment of silence.

The moment that we're facing in this House should be actually really quite serious, which is this government continues to meddle with planning in the province, and really, the question of the day is, why does the government keep doing that? We released 4,000 pages of documents yesterday that I believe provide the answer, that this government—it was not about housing. That was never the question. The question was, how could they benefit their developers and their speculators? This is part of an RCMP investigation—ongoing.

You talk about the gravy train, the bloat. Can you just talk about how this really is the station, where the gravy train left the station when it came to the greenbelt scandal?

Mr. John Fraser: I do like to talk about the greenbelt scandal and say that all roads lead to the Premier's office. Well, they do, and they were toll roads.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a rather brief overview of this bill, but I would say that I agree with a lot of your opinion as to what was in this bill. When we talk about the pressure that we see right now, whether it be on the cost of living or on our health care system falling apart or schools not being able to meet the needs of students—often students facing barriers—do you see anything in this bill that will help us get that done?

Mr. John Fraser: No, I don't see anything in this bill that will help us get that done. It is a serious thing. I know I tried to liven everybody up here a little bit, but the reality is that people are hurting, and when they see something that isn't quite as advertised—they're hurting, right?

When you say "no tolls" and still charge tolls on a road that you own, or forgive a billion dollars when maybe that billion dollars could be used to make schools better, make

our health care system better or help people build more housing—that would be, to me, the thing that we want and that we need, that all of us want in our communities. We want people to be successful. We want to make sure that people just get that bit of help that they need. I don't see that here.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the opportunity to interact with my friend from Ottawa South. We always have a good time in the House here. I appreciate the fact that we sit on the same side of the House so that we can develop that relationship.

He brought up the question of carbon tax, and I watched with interest an interview a few weeks ago with the Liberal leader, Bonnie Crombie. She was asked specifically about the carbon tax, because obviously we've had a member here in the House from the Liberal independents say that Ontarians know that they're better off because of the carbon tax.

The Liberal leader was asked point blank whether she supported the carbon tax or not, and she didn't have an answer to that question. She had hoped to go on a listening tour across Ontario to hear from Ontarians what they thought of the carbon tax. I was wondering if the member, because I know he spent time as the interim leader, probably very commonly in contact with Bonnie Crombie—if she has had the chance and if he had an interim report on what she has heard about the carbon tax from the people of Ontario out on the street.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, it was very clear. I think she said, and we've all said, that we don't believe that a consumer-based carbon tax is the way we should go and that we're developing our own plan.

Mr. Will Bouma: No, she didn't.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, she did. I do want to say that we need a plan for climate change, however you do it. If you don't have a plan for climate change—

Mr. Will Bouma: We do.

Mr. John Fraser: The government doesn't have a plan for climate change. It doesn't. Our GHGs went up. They went up. They were supposed to go down. They went up.

The reality is, in a few short years—we'll put it that way—we may not be here, and our kids will have to live with whatever's here. And there is a climate crisis. Unless we do something to address that, we're going to be leaving them short. However we do it, generations that came before us made sacrifices to make sure that we do okay, and we may be called upon at some point to make some sacrifices to make sure that things are okay for those people who come after us.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Ottawa South for his presentation on the get nothing done act. This bill is what has been described by quite a number of people as "performative," and especially when you look at the toll prohibition on roads that don't

currently have a toll, and not removing the tolls on roads that currently do.

I wonder: Would the member like to make any comments about the performative nature and the vacuous nature of this bill, rather than legislation that actually achieves its desired goals?

Mr. John Fraser: The schedule around tolls is without substance.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the response from the member from Ottawa South to my question earlier. Going back to his colleague from, I think, Kanata–Carleton and her comments in the House a few months ago about how Ontarians know that they're better off because of the carbon tax, that seems to be somewhat of a policy comment from the Liberal Party, that the carbon tax is a good.

1540

He wasn't quite clear on that, so I was wondering if he could say in the House if he's personally supportive, and if he believes that the people of Ontario are better off because of the carbon tax.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, here's what I'd say: I think the people of Ontario and the people of Ottawa would be better off if the Conservative candidate who didn't win in Kanata–Carleton didn't get a six-figure job and didn't have an office that costs \$1.7 million annually.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I really appreciated the speech about gravy. We've seen a lot of gravy in the last six years. My question was just simply: Of all the flavours of gravy that we've seen in the last six years, what was your favourite flavour?

Mr. John Fraser: The greenbelt gravy was great because it was so thick. It was so thick and sticky, and actually a few people just about drowned in it. Actually, a couple of cabinet ministers drowned in it, and there's a few people who are stuck. It's like a dinosaur stuck in the tar pit. They're sinking into the gravy, and they will find them as a fossil at some point.

I've got a feeling we should have a poutine party here. I think we should have a poutine party in the Legislature, and we should have a bunch of different types of gravy. I'll take any recommendations as to what kind of gravy or names for gravy that we could test out. I'd like to do that, if people are willing.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member talked about not having to renew your licence plate anymore. This has caused a lot of problems in my riding. The only way you can know that your licence plate is about to expire is if you knew to go into a website and register with the dates and all of this so that you get an email. When you live in northeastern Ontario, like I do, where access to the Internet—am I allowed to say—sucks because this is the level of Internet access we have where I live, are you surprised that people did not do this? Most of the time, the

Internet doesn't work, so a lot of people in my riding, where there's no public transit, have to drive, did not renew their licence in time and got—

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

Mr. John Fraser: This is a sticking point for me. In my household and every newspaper ad I've done since the Premier made that announcement, I've reminded people to get their sticker, to go online, because people were getting \$500 fines. I'm close to Quebec, and Quebec police were knocking off \$1,000 a hit. And they knew; they checked. They just check every Ontario plate.

I know the Premier wants to make a nice announcement. I know he wants to be a good guy and make everybody happy, but you've got to deliver the things that people need to know so they don't actually end up getting penalized. And that was the problem.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you very much, Speaker—great to see you in the Chair today.

To everyone here in the House and for those watching at home, you have to know that our government has the most ambitious infrastructure plan in the province's history. We're making historic investments, including \$100 billion over the next decade to build the roads, the highways and the public transit that our growing province desperately needs.

It's such an easy thing to say "\$1 billion," isn't it? What's \$1 billion? I'd like to have \$1 billion, but how do you conceptualize \$1 billion? I did a little math: If I handed you a hundred-dollar bill every second—every second—do you know how long it would take me to hand you \$100 billion? Does anyone hazard a guess?

Interjection.

Mr. Will Bouma: Obviously, NDP math can't calculate that. It's just a hair under 32 years. If I was handing you \$100 every second, how long would you sit there, Speaker, before you walked away? And how long would it take where you said, "Okay, that's enough. Thank you very much"? But that's \$100 billion at a \$100 every second; it would take just under 32 years—31.7 years—to give away.

I like to do that because I like to simplify things. As an optometrist, sometimes we have to explain difficult concepts to people, and I like to simplify things down into simple concepts for myself, because if I can explain it to you—if you have pink eye, Speaker, and you're trying to figure out what's going on and how to resolve that situation, "Hey, this is what I'm going to do. This is why."

It's an astronomical number that most of us can't understand, but we're going to spend that money here in the province of Ontario to build the roads, to build the highways and to build the public transit that our growing province desperately needs. This includes almost \$28 billion to renew, to build and expand our highway infrastructure in every corner of our province. We've seen the federal government waffle on this, and not long ago I think it was the Minister of the Environment who said there would be no more spending by the federal government on

highways and then he had to backtrack and say that it was only for one specific project in Quebec that they weren't going to support.

The reality is, we're reliant on vehicles. The people of Ontario need to get from point A to point B, and whether those are electric vehicles—and it's so great to hear about the announcements going on from the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. I think it's \$34 billion of investment in the auto sector in the province of Ontario now. That is going to make a difference in northern Ontario in the Minister of Mines' riding. That's going to make a difference in Windsor and Essex and in the southwestern part of the riding and clear across, and I think there will be even more announcements going on.

But we need cars, we need roads and we need infrastructure. We need to act very, very quickly in order to get these critical projects built, but as we all know here in this House, it's so much easier to say things than it is to actually get things done.

This is at a time when many families feel that they're struggling to get ahead. We need to take action to make life more affordable for people and for businesses.

The Get It Done Act gives us the tools to build quicker while keeping more of Ontarians' hard-earned money in their pockets. That's why our government plans to use the Building Transit Faster Act to designate the Hazel McCallion Line extensions as priority transit projects. This will allow us to build these much-needed extensions into downtown Mississauga and downtown Brampton more quickly, connecting communities throughout the greater Toronto area and expanding access to jobs and other opportunities throughout the region.

But that's not all we are doing to transform public transit in our province. We're investing another \$80 billion over the next 10 years to build a world-class transit network for all Ontarians.

Speaker, the Get It Done Act will make it easier to get shovels in the ground on priority projects and build transit-oriented communities for our future. That won't just affect us in our working careers; that's going to affect generations of Ontarians to come. In fact, Speaker, shovels are already in the ground to build new subways like the Ontario Line, and I know we see some of that construction on University Avenue when we're trying to get up here to this building, and yet it's so exciting to see at the same time.

This is monumental, Speaker. With 15 new subway stations, the Ontario Line will accommodate up to 40 trains per hour and nearly 400,000 riders per day. Wait times for a train will be as short as 90 seconds, and we're reducing crowding at some of the TTC's busiest stations. We're putting thousands more greater Toronto area residents within walking distance of public transit and expanding people's access to jobs and other life-changing opportunities.

The Gardiner is under construction. That's now under provincial oversight. I think we've all been stuck on it trying to get here and get away from here. Think what it

will mean to be able to get those cars off the roads and people taking public transit to come into downtown Toronto. We are putting thousands more residents within that.

Contracts have already been awarded for building the southern portion of the Ontario Line: the paved tunnel and underground stations and elevated guideway in stations and contracts. Our government recognizes the importance of building transit that will connect communities and create new travel options for people all across the greater Toronto area.

1550

And for those of you who are watching who are in my riding, that makes a difference. When you come into downtown for a hockey game or for a baseball game and get on at Aldershot from Brantford to take the train in, imagine what it means to be able to get here more efficiently. That's why we aren't wasting any time getting the Ontario Line built, and why we are looking to accelerate construction on other critical projects with the Get It Done Act.

We're working each and every day to make transit a better, more accessible choice for commuters by breaking down financial and accessibility barriers to taking trains, taking buses and taking streetcars. That's what we've done with the One Fare program, and that's what we did by launching credit and debit card payments on GO Transit, the UP Express and the TTC. No Presto card? No problem. If you forget your card at home and haven't had a chance to load funds, that shouldn't stop you from getting where you need to go and when you need to get there. Riders can now tap their physical or digital debit or credit cards to board transit. Speaker, it's that easy, and our transit network will only get better if the Get It Done Act passes.

Ontario is one of the fastest-growing regions in North America, and Ontario will grow by over five million people over the next 10 years. The greater Golden Horseshoe alone is expected to grow by one million people every five years, reaching almost 15 million people by 2031.

We in this House have a responsibility to build Ontario for the next generation of young people, young families and businesses. Unfortunately, the current gridlock commuters face each and every day on our highways and roads costs us more than \$11 billion annually in lost productivity. Gridlock not only increases the cost of the things we buy, but it also reduces access to good jobs and forces too many Ontarians to sacrifice time away from doing the things that they love, just to get to and from work.

Speaker, I can tell you from personal experience that the commute from St. George to Toronto is often greatly hampered by gridlock. I get up at 5, I hit the road at 5:45, and I get here, well, lately between 7:15 and 7:30, and then there's no point, really, in leaving before 6 or 7 o'clock in order to get home at a reasonable time, only to hit the sack, wake up and do it again. But it's worth it, because my daughter gets that kiss in the morning before I leave. I don't even know if she recognizes it, but I know she

always mumbles something under her breath at 5:30 when I do that.

By addressing these issues, I, along with thousands of Ontarians, would be able to spend more time with family and less time stuck in traffic. Despite what some parties want people to believe, you simply cannot fight gridlock without actually building new highways. Highway 401 is already one of the most congested highways in North America, and with other major highways quickly reaching the breaking point, doing nothing is not an option.

That's why we need to pass this act, and I'm going to ask all members in the House here this afternoon to do right by the people of Ontario and pass, with an overwhelming majority, the Get It Done Act.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: As you all know, I represent a northern rural riding, and yes, we do not have public transit, so we use the road to get from Toronto to Sudbury. A lot of things travel on that highway. It's Highway 400 when it is four lanes, and then it becomes Highway 69 when it goes down to two lanes.

I remember, in 2003, the Liberal government made a big announcement that they were going to four-lane Highway 69 all the way between Toronto and Sudbury. It isn't done. This government has been in power for six years. I write to the Minister of Transportation every year to say, how are we moving along with the 68 kilometres of Highway 69 that is only two lanes, that is closed every week during the winter?

Why is it okay to invest in roads in southern Ontario but not on Highway 69?

Mr. Will Bouma: I think that's a great question. I appreciate the question from the member from Nickel Belt. I would say that I have the exact same frustrations when I go to the north. Now being the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development, I completely agree.

But, Speaker, the other question that we have to ask is, how do you eat an elephant? The answer is quite simple: We have to eat an elephant one bite at a time. There are critical projects that need to happen. I see that happening in my own riding. There are things that I would like to see happen.

But what I can't understand is—and I guess my question back to the member would be, why, when you held the balance of power, did you support the Liberals? Which is why we now need to and we have over the last six years been making these massive investments into infrastructure that were, quite frankly, ignored for 15 years under the former Liberal government. When you, the member from Nickel Belt, who has been here for a very long time, had the opportunity and could have brought the government down at any time—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you, I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for an excellent presentation.

We've been extremely focused as a government on building convenient transportation and shrinking commute times for hard-working families so they can spend more time together. Speaker, through you, I'd like the member for Brantford–Brant to highlight a little bit more about the efforts that are proposed in this legislation and how that will improve the situation I just described.

Mr. Will Bouma: I don't know if I have a microphone. That's all right; I'll speak louder. Oh, there it is. Thank you very much, sir.

I think the member brings up an excellent point. Whether it's even just the piece on the tolls, we understand how difficult that is. I know, in speaking to the member from Whitby, the difference that it made to his riding to be able to hear that the 412 and 418 were going to be toll-free. The reality is, we have to help the people of Ontario with pocketbook issues. Some people can complain that it's not exactly as much as they would like it to be, but the reality is that we know the value of what it means to be able to spend more time with your family. We understand how difficult it is for the people in Ontario right now with the carbon tax—which gets supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie. They continue to say no to progress for the people of Ontario and say no to pocketbook issues because they want this to be a high-taxed area. They want to see those taxes go up. And it's unfortunate.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I just want to put on the record that Highways 412 and 418, the member from Oshawa has been a long-time advocate of removing those tolls. I'm glad the government took that initiative. I think on this side of the House, we give credit where credit is due, but that's where the credit needs to go, to the member from Oshawa, for the 412 and the 418. Thank you to the government for implementing that.

But then I go to the billion dollars, the giveaway. You talked about a \$100-billion giveaway over 32 years. I think the recent giveaway was \$1 billion on Highway 407, where we could have collected that money and put it back into infrastructure, but this government chose to waive that bill and give a free pass—really, a lottery ticket—to the 407 corporation.

Can the member explain—under this bill, you say it's getting done—not having tolls on highways that don't have tolls, but you won't stop the tolls on Highway 407. You won't take that away. Why is that?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question. The reality is that these business plans are already under way.

I guess my question back to the member is, I hear no criticism of this legislation, yet they won't vote for it. I can't understand why it's not important for the members of the opposition that people get to spend more time with their families, or why they would be opposed to actually having a plebiscite on whether we have any more toll roads in the province of Ontario. I don't understand why, when they claim to represent the working man—which I think is very much debatable—they would just not do that, why they would not support their communities in building

access to transit, building access to highways so that people can have access to work and have access to their families.

1600

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

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: The member from Brantford–Brant just gave us such a very heartwarming example of the affectionate time you're able to share with your daughter before you go to work. I know the member is very connected with so many of their residents.

Can you just speak to that connection and the experience and the feeling that your residents have shared with you when it comes to being able to have more time to spend with family rather than being stuck on a highway in traffic in the current congestion that we're faced with right now?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question from the minister because it's absolutely true. We live in a world that, in so many ways, is so connected, and yet how often—I'm sure she would say the same thing—that my family could be together in our living room and we're all on our devices. We need to spend more time together, but in order to do that, I think it behooves us as a government to be able to enable that.

We know people have to travel. We know, with the housing crisis, people have to live farther away from work. And so, what are the concrete pieces that we can do, a whole-of-government approach, to make those things a reality for the people in the province of Ontario? And that's why, you know, just simple pocketbook issues: decreasing the costs; not having to renew your licence plate stickers every year; taking off the tolls on highways; committing to not having new tolls on highways, which I honestly can't understand why that's not mentioned by the opposition.

But the reality is, we care. We want people to spend more time—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for his presentation.

In particular, when we take a look at Bill 162, one thing that I am passionate about is our architectural heritage across this province. Some of the consequences of this government's plowing ahead with changing different laws without considering their impacts is that, with Bill 23, it's putting 36,000 heritage properties at risk. They will actually lose their very meagre protections on January 1, 2025.

I wonder if the member could speak about the heritage properties in his riding and how he's trying to convince the government to give an additional five years so that these properties will continue to have protection.

Mr. Will Bouma: Well, I have great news for the member. I think something will be happening on that shortly, but again, we're not actually talking about that today. We're talking about the Get It Done Act. It's unfortunate; he must have been on the wrong page in the

orders of the day. But I look forward to seeing what we're going to be doing on heritage properties in the province of Ontario because we do take that seriously.

But in the meantime, we are committed to making sure that workers spend more time with their families, that their day-to-day costs go down and that, quite frankly, Speaker, we just make life easier for the people of Ontario, all while building critical infrastructure, building the highways, building the subways, building the transit, building the hospitals, building the schools that the people of Ontario need every single day.

And to close off, because we're running out of time, very, very quickly, I would just ask that member, because I know how passionate he is about the people in London, that he would support us in this legislation so that we can unanimously vote the Get It Done Act through.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate. I recognize the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Speaker. Good afternoon. Being proud Hamiltonians, I think that you will appreciate that I wanted to start my speech today by congratulating the Dundas Real McCoys. They won the Allan Cup two consecutive years in a row and so I think that's worth it. And I want to shout-out to Ralph Taggart, Darren Haydar and Don Robertson for all of the hard work and the grit they put into that talented team. It's a historic back-to-back win, and it happened in Dundas, so congratulations.

I also just wanted to quickly congratulate Will Jones. Will Jones is a member of the Royal Hamilton Yacht Club, and he's going to be heading to the Olympics this summer—

Applause.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, isn't that amazing? The Royal Hamilton Yacht Club is the home to many world-class Olympic sailors, and he will be travelling with his teammate Justin Barnes in the 49th class in Marseille, France, which will showcase these sailing athletes of the highest degree. Congratulations to Will Jones as well. Thank you.

Now, here we are. It's crazy, to be honest with you, that we are here debating a bill—follow me on this: This is a bill that is reversing the reversals that the government put in place to the changes that they made to urban boundaries across the province.

Before I even get into the substance of the debate, I want to say the scale and the scope of the wasted time and the wasted resources that this government has spent rolling back all of these bad policy decisions that they made is really unconscionable at the time of a housing crisis.

For a long time, I took this government at their word that the question was really about housing. But the more we see, the more evidence that's revealed—like the 4,000 pages of documents that we just released today—shows that this was not about building housing; this was about making sure that developers and connected individuals of the Premier were given preferential treatment. This goes all the way to the Premier's office.

This kind of meddling, which is the lightest of words that I can call it, has not only set us back on our goal to build housing for people who are desperately in need of good housing, it has left a stain on this province. Really, why are people so cynical about governments and politicians? It's because of this kind of action. It's exactly because of this kind of action.

It is shocking that we are now in a place in Ontario where housing starts are going down, not going up, and that we are in the middle of an RCMP investigation to get to the bottom of this insider dealing and preferential treatment. The time and the money and the energy and the good will that have been squandered by this government when it comes to housing are really, really deplorable.

What I would like to say when we look at this bill that we have before us: People have been making fun of the bill—you know, “Get nothing done.” But I would like to say, as I go through my 15 minutes here this afternoon, I think the question that should be on everyone's mind is, get it done for who? Who is this government working for? Who are they listening to, and who are they getting it done for? The evidence will show that it is not for the people of the province of Ontario.

I would like to begin to talk about the very fact that this is a bill that reverses a previous reversal on municipal boundary changes. This is amending legislation that they just passed. And this is all, as I said before, while this government continues to be under investigation by the RCMP for the \$8.3-billion greenbelt gravy train, as would have it.

Again, what we should be debating here this afternoon is, really, effective ways to get people housed. But instead, we're spending this time looking at this government trying to paper over their mistakes to try and get us back to square one.

I'm going to concentrate mostly on schedule 3—well, let me just start. Schedule 1: Here's what I want to say. This government went full frontal, if you will, on the assault on the greenbelt. The greenbelt grab was so clear and obvious. The meddling in municipal planning, the MZOs that are currently under investigation by the Auditor General, the greenbelt grab—this was fully in front of us: “We are going to take these lands, and we are taking them on behalf of our developer friends.” It became quite clear that that is what has happened.

Many people across the province fought this. I had never seen people so engaged because they knew that this was not in their interest, and they could see with their plain eyes that this government was working against their better interests. People all across the province, young and old, rallied and protested against this, and the noise became so loud—I really have to say, I remember when we were in communities in front of MPPs' offices, people were outraged—outraged—by the cynicism of this.

1610

But now what we see is a government that—do we think this government has stopped this greenbelt grab? No. Evidence is showing that you haven't stopped it. You have just learned to do this a little bit more by stealth. What you

are doing now is not a full, obvious assault on the greenbelt; it's little pieces in all your bills, all these, I could say, skirmishes, like little guerrilla warfare to get done what you still want to get done, which is to take public lands, to take farmland, to take good planning away from the people of the province and give it to developers. This bill before us is one in a series of assaults that you can find in this government's policy and legislation.

Let's not forget about the role conservation authorities play across the province in making sure that development happens in appropriate places. That's their job: to protect wetlands, to protect people's basements from flooding. This government now is asking conservation authorities across Ontario to audit the lands under their protection to see if there's surplus land that can be made available for sale. They're also taking away the conservation's authority, undermining their ability to protect these lands and forcing them to issue development permits under duress when conservation authorities identify that this is not in the best interests of the people.

We also have the government that's going to change the provincial policy statement. Despite the fact that municipalities across Ontario have already made infrastructure plans and fiscal plans related to these policy statements, this is going to be changed.

We have Bill 185 right now that is in committee. Bill 185, again, puts the thumb on the scale of justice on behalf of developers. Bill 185 is a clear assault on planning in the province—good planning. What it does is, there's a clause in that bill that will allow developers at any time to go to any municipality and ask for land to be rezoned. If a municipality says no, they can then take it to the Ontario Land Tribunal, which we know is being stacked as quickly as it can by Ford insiders who will side on behalf of the developers. If the municipalities say yes and agree with developers, no third party can appeal. So this is all skewed in favour of development that may or may not be in the right place.

It also provides absolutely no ability for municipalities to plan their infrastructure costs. Let's be clear about it: These costs are borne by taxpayers. Who pays for these unplanned infrastructure requirements if a developer, all of a sudden, in the middle of a municipal planning session, now says, “Okay, we're going to make this development, and we need roads and we need sewers and we need schools and we need fire,” and whatever—all the infrastructure? That's on the backs of municipalities and municipal taxpayers to provide that, whether or not the municipality has the ability to fiscally plan and provide for that.

Again, this is stealth: little pieces here, little pieces there that are going to accomplish exactly what the greenbelt grab was trying to do. They haven't gone away. They're not over it. They're just doing it in a sneaky way, hoping people won't actually be able to identify it because there's parts in all these bills that the government is putting forward. This bill is also proof positive that the government is still at it, still working on behalf of not the

people of the province of Ontario, but insiders and developers.

Schedule 1, which I've talked about extensively before, amends the Environmental Assessment Act, which will expedite the expropriation of property without an environmental assessment. Many of the people in Wilmot who are set to lose—is it 7,000 acres in Wilmot? It's a huge amount of farmland. They point to this schedule that means that land can be taken and rezoned without an environmental assessment. That's in this bill.

What I want to focus on in this bill is schedule 3. In schedule 3, the government's at it again. It's a mystery as to why this government keeps insisting on expanding boundaries and jurisdictions that over and over and over again have said that they don't want that. So schedule 3 outlines a number of changes to official plans across municipalities such as Barrie, Belleville, Halton, York. Waterloo, particularly, is one that's aggrieved by this. Why are these here? These were moved before, had to be withdrawn, and now they're back again. So why does this government continue to do this when there is clearly municipalities that said loud and clear that they do not want their boundaries expanded?

We had a—what do we call it? We had a ministerial briefing. I couldn't remember what it's called for a second. In the ministerial briefing, we asked for evidence as to why these 13 changes are in this bill. Who asked for them? Where did they come from? They were not able to provide any answers as to where the requests came from or whether there was any evidence that these changes met with the provincial policy statement or met with existing planning and zoning regulations in the province. There was no answer to that. So again, who is running the show here? Like, how are we doing planning in the province? Is it all being driven by the Premier's office? There is no clear answer as to what municipality and why they had requested this.

We know that this government is really concerned with upper-tier municipalities and wants to download the responsibility to lower-tier municipalities. I'm going to talk about Caledon in a bit and show what complete planning chaos that has resulted in when lower-tier municipalities, who don't have the complex of expertise in planning, can actually be persuaded by developers and by perhaps other actors in the scene to move forward on things that aren't good planning and good policy.

We moved a number of amendments as we always do. And of course, every single amendment that we moved was voted down by the government.

I just want to say, one amendment that we moved was with respect to a change that was being made in Burlington. The amendment we moved would have removed the minister's re-designation of certain environmentally sensitive lands in Burlington from north Aldershot policy area to urban area. The lands in question are part of the Eagle Heights properties owned by Penta Properties, now known as Alinea Group Holdings. These properties include greenbelt lands and are very environmentally sensitive. This is why Halton region established special policies for

north Aldershot, including these lands, and reaffirmed these policies when it adopted its regional official plan.

Interestingly enough, the Integrity Commissioner report described how Penta had hired a Ford friend and lobbyist and Ford wedding guest to lobby the government to have these properties removed from the greenbelt—more evidence that we're still at the same game here. It's insider influence. It's special treatment.

We tried to move an amendment to take that out. The government, of course, at committee used their majority to side with this insider preferential treatment.

We did the same thing—we moved an amendment—to remove the ministerial amendments to Waterloo's adopted regional plan that forces the region to vastly expand various urban boundaries.

We know that the affordability task force made it clear that the housing crisis was not caused by a lack of land. Let's be clear: This was your government's own hand-picked affordability task force. I should also note that BC is killing it when it comes to housing starts. They said quite clearly that they were inspired by and used the recommendations from the province of Ontario's affordability task force. So we are laggards here—laggards. I think we're building one tenth I think, if that, of housing that's happening in BC. Had this government listened to their own affordability task force and not spend so much time trying to tip the scales, we would have been so further ahead.

So that is another amendment that we tried to move to make sure that the region of Waterloo's good planning would continue.

1620

I also would like to note, because we're talking about tolls on highways, we moved an amendment that would allow the government to exempt truckers from tolls on Highway 407. So we know that moving traffic to the underused 407 from the overused 401 would reduce traffic and would reduce burdens on commuters. And if the question is really about saving commuters time so they get home to their families sooner and safer—which is important—why is this government continuing to vote down this idea about removing tolls for truckers on the 407 so we can expediate traffic in the province?

I want to just also say it's really important to talk about this Wild West of planning chaos that this government has unfolded. If we look at Caledon—I'm going to quickly read from an article the highlights of what has happened in the town of Caledon: So Mayor Groves “faced angry residents and made a series of misleading statements, claiming bylaws under her name that suddenly appeared out of nowhere on a council agenda ... to push through huge developments along the controversial GTA West Highway”—which is the 413—“will ensure proper planning and the types of homes people need.

“Lawyers and consultants hired ... to make recommendations on the massive 35,000-unit development” also wrote the mayor's bylaws—were in a position of conflict of interest.

“Residents demanded to know if the lawyer ... hired under Groves” was working for the same developer who stood “to make billions of dollars from the scheme.” They found out that they are.

So the same interest developers that are working to make sure that the 413 goes through and that the housing developments go through by changing the planning rules work for the developer. It’s a huge conflict of interest. This is happening under this government’s watch and, I would say, with this government’s encouragement.

“The regional reports ... from Caledon ... show \$12.9 billion would be needed just for water infrastructure to support only a third of the ... units” that were being built, and “no explanation ... about how tens of billions of dollars will be covered to create all the infrastructure needed....

“Facing mounting backlash, including calls for a criminal investigation, Groves suddenly” backtracked, just like this government is backtracking.

I think it’s interesting that some of the constituents that were there had—the same sort of things that we’re saying—to say about this government, about what they’re forcing them to do. I would say one constituent said quite clearly: “‘Stop hiding behind the excuse of a housing crisis,’ one delegate replied.”

And so, I think that’s the point here. This government talks about the housing crisis, which there is, but we have to ask the question: Why is this government continuing to meddle, but not making any progress when it comes to building housing in this province? I mean, who is this government working for when they build on farmland and then they don’t protect precious soil? Who is this government working for when they don’t focus on food security but instead focus on development for their friends?

Finally, I would say, we do need housing and we need it now. So why is this government prioritizing building on land which is the costliest and slowest to develop? We need housing now and we need to see a government—instead of putting these sneaky little pieces of legislation that will ensure you continue to get what you want for the insiders and the preferential treatment behaviour that you’re under investigation for, we would like to see a government that prioritizes people that actually need homes to live in.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: I was moved by my colleague’s speech and I have to reveal something, and if I face repercussions from caucus because of this, then so be it, but I want to reveal one of the groups that this bill is getting it done for. And the fact is that one of those groups this bill is getting it done for are the hard-working, good, honest, decent people of Hamilton. It’s true.

I wonder if the member could share with those same residents of Hamilton—I know she intends to vote against the carbon tax referendum. Is that because the member supports the carbon tax, why she doesn’t want to give them a voice on the carbon tax referendum?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I don’t think you revealed much there. I was just wondering what you were going to come up with. It looked like it was going to be really, really titillating. but, in fact, it was a bit of a letdown, but that’s okay.

This government wants to have a referendum on the carbon tax. My question is, where was the referendum on your carbon tax? You have an emissions performance standard tax in this province. You collect tens of billions of dollars from the people currently. So I would say, if you want to stand up for your residents in Brampton North, just like I am standing up for residents in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, give them the money back that you are collecting from your carbon tax.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It might come as a surprise to the member who just asked the question and to all that we’re actually in a Conservative majority government, meaning they can and pretty much do whatever they want. So if they want to do something about the carbon tax, they can do it and they don’t need a referendum.

But we also know this is a government that loves spending money, and a referendum would allow them to spend even more money, probably in that way. Do you believe that this is just part of their desire and almost addiction to spending taxpayer money? Because they have spent more than any government in the history of Ontario.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, that is absolutely the truth. This government is spending big. You have the highest debt and deficit of any—what is it they used to say—subnational government. You’ve got that now. That’s on you.

You really railed against the Liberals, and rightfully so, for having a debt-to-GDP of 40%. Yours is 39.9%—so some little bit of creative way to make sure it stayed under 40%. You’re spending big on a highway with an unlimited costs—\$10 billion, \$15 billion; we don’t know what the cost will be—while this government is still pulling up the rear when it comes to spending in health care and education. This government is last—you’re first when it comes to debt and deficit per capita; you are last when it comes to spending in health care and education in this country.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: One of the things about being from Hastings–Lennox and Addington is certainly that I drive a lot. It is a very large riding, and most of the constituents I talk to are very concerned with the cost of driving. It is ridiculous just how much driving costs, specifically because of the carbon tax. That’s why this government is lowering taxes so that my residents and residents all across this province can succeed.

But can the member opposite explain to me why she believes it’s caring to tax hard-working families who are in dire financial struggles, like the federal government wants us to do?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate it. I spent a lot of time in the Kingston area. It's beautiful. I love that area. I went to school there. I had a baby there so near and dear to my heart. I had a baby instead of going to law school, but there you go. Here we are now.

What I want to say to you really is—you talk about the carbon tax, and it is true that people in this province are struggling to pay all kinds of bills, all kinds of bills, but I think you need to be upfront with the people of the province. You have this huge amount of money that you're collecting right now for your carbon tax, so why don't you come up with a creative solution to give that back to people, with a way that you can return that money to people who are most impacted by climate change and who are most impacted by the carbon tax? Take money that you've collected and redistribute it in an equitable and environmentally positive way.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: We just had a question about gouging drivers and what they pay, and it may come as a surprise that Ontario drivers are paying the most they've ever had to when it comes to auto insurance. It's shocking because this government has members representing constituencies that pay the highest amount of auto insurance on earth.

1630

So I've been thinking about it, and considering that the Premier has about 100 staff working in his office making more money than MPPs, do you think one of those staff is actually an auto insurance executive themselves? I can't understand any other reason, other than the fact that these insurance execs are writing their policies on auto insurance.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Would I be shocked to hear that former lobbyists work in the Premier's office? I'm just shocked—shocked.

But what I would like to say is that, again, this government can really deliver for people in meaningful ways, like reducing insurance costs, attacking that discrimination by postal code which people see in this province. That's a huge expense for people, and it's a huge expense not for people that drive, but for people that need to drive to make a living, particularly in the Brampton area. So get on that.

We've been talking about this for eight years now on this side of the House, and no action on that side of the House. It's time for you to take action. Instead of writing letters to Trudeau, which is completely a waste of time, in my opinion, get some real action and get some real relief for drivers in Ontario.

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I was listening very intently to my colleague, and she was just talking about action. It occurs to me, when I go back to their platform in the last election, they were calling for a ramp-up of electric vehicle sales. They had a 100% target by 2035, so it's curious to me, when we're taking action to bring invest-

ment to Ontario and we're unlocking everything from mining to manufacturing, why the NDP are voting against every single thing that we're trying to do. Or was it their platform that we should ramp-up electric vehicle sales made in other countries?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know the supply chain of electric vehicles, right? It's a supply chain. It starts with demand and supply. This government came to power and essentially squashed any demand side for electric vehicles. You tore out electric vehicle charging stations. You took away any kind of subsidy to help people afford an electric vehicle so that they could save money on this gas.

Now, the supply side—I mean, good on you to finally get moving, like, you finally saw the light that the entire world has seen, but by the way, if all of this relies on the Ring of Fire, this is going to be a long time to get that piece of the supply chain nailed down.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Sorry, just further to my question from before: It's got to be difficult, again, for government members, considering that the Premier has tripled his office staff and filled it with people making much more money than the government members themselves. I've been thinking about it because it's been a revolving door for lobbyists coming and reaching the leadership of this party. Do you think it's now just a strategy whereby, why not just hire the lobbyists so you can see them every day and not to have to take the phone calls? Do you think something like that could be occurring?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Shocked, shocked to see gambling taking place in this establishment—just shocked. It's a Casablanca reference. So no, it doesn't shock me. This is how they do business. I actually think that the government doesn't see anything wrong with that. Like, "rules, shmules"—I really can see that this is a government that doesn't seem to think that the rule of law and integrity and conflict-of-interest guidelines apply to them.

And they're spending big bucks in the Premier's office. We see time and time again that they have absolutely no qualms and no—like, missing a chip when it comes to doing the right thing, when it comes to conflict of interest.

You know, we have judges that are Ford friends and relatives being appointed. How does this speak to a good government that will engender trust and faith in government when people just know what you're up to? They don't trust what you're up to. They see what you're up to, and it's unfortunate not just for your government friends—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, your time is up.

It's now time for further debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise and today debate Bill 162, the "get it done wrong act." The reason why it's getting it done wrong is that it's imposing expensive, unaffordable sprawl onto communities across this province, specifically, schedule 3 imposes expensive sprawl on regions. The last thing we need when we're in the middle of an unprecedented housing crisis in the

province of Ontario is a new law that supports building the wrong types of housing in the wrong places at the wrong, expensive prices, instead of actually building homes that people can afford in the communities they know and love.

This bill flip-flops, on a flip-flop, on a flip-flop, around changing official plans. It is especially destructive for Waterloo and Halton regions.

I want to focus on Waterloo region, in particular, and give a quick shout-out to my colleague from Kitchener Centre, who put forward a number of amendments that unfortunately were voted down in committee around protecting the good, smart planning for building homes that people could afford in Waterloo region.

This bill threatens 6,400 acres of land in Waterloo region alone—threatens a plan that the region spent five years and millions of dollars working on with a variety of stakeholders, and especially local farmers. Talk to somebody like Mark Reusser, the head of Waterloo region OFA, who says that the changes to these urban boundaries in Waterloo region are simply not sustainable and actually threaten agriculture in the region. This was a world-class plan, recognized as a way for Waterloo region to meet their housing supply targets while protecting some of the best farmland—and definitely the best farmers—in the world, while protecting their water recharge areas and protecting the places that people love to spend time in, in Waterloo region. And all of this at a time when we are losing 319 acres of farmland in this province each and every day, at an unsustainable rate that threatens our \$50-billion food and farming economy that employs over 800,000 people in this province.

Speaker, I want to especially focus in on the way this bill threatens the water recharge areas for Waterloo region. This bill will pave over one of the key areas for water recharge. When you do that, when you develop over water recharge areas, it threatens the amount of water filtering into the local aquifer, reducing it by 50% to 80%. For a community that primarily relies on groundwater for its drinking water—which, by the way then actually threatens housing in the region, because the last time I heard, when you build homes, you actually need drinking water for those homes. So why would the government overturn smart regional planning when the region actually already had a plan in place to protect that water recharge area, to protect their farmland and to meet their housing targets? The government has yet to explain a rationale of why they're doing this even though the region clearly had a good plan.

This flawed process, to me, Speaker, smells a lot like the greenbelt scandal: a government more focused on, how do we help wealthy, well-connected, insider land speculators cash in—in the case of the greenbelt, \$8.3 billion, which is now under RCMP investigation—instead of actually building homes that ordinary people can afford by legalizing housing?

Make it easy to build four units and four-storey as of right, province-wide. Make it easy to build six- to 11-storey buildings along major transit and transportation

corridors, where we already have infrastructure in place. Because by imposing sprawl through schedule 3 of this bill, it actually costs municipalities 2.5 times more to service low-density sprawl than it does to actually build homes where the infrastructure already exists.

Waterloo region planner Kevin Eby clearly has stated that not only has Waterloo region approved enough land for development, but there's already enough land approved for development in southern Ontario to build two million homes. I believe the government's target is 1.5 million, though some are saying we probably need more like 1.8 million, and we already have land approved for two million. So why is this government imposing more expensive sprawl on municipalities through the get it done wrong act? **1640**

Speaking of sprawl, Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about schedule 1 of this bill, which further weakens the environmental assessment process and actually makes it easier for the government to expropriate land from people.

And while we're talking about Waterloo, let's talk about the farmers in Wilmot in Waterloo region: 770 acres of some of the best farmland I've seen, being assembled now and possibly expropriated from farmers for a use that we don't know—again, at a time we're losing 319 acres of farmland each and every day.

But we know why—or we suspect why—this government is weakening the environmental assessment process, especially for highways, and making it easier to expropriate land. It's because they want to build a highway that's going to pave over 2,000 acres of prime farmland, 400 acres of the greenbelt, and 200 wetlands, threatening 29 species at risk, so drivers can save 30 seconds to a minute. That highway is called Highway 413, and I want to suggest to the members opposite that they actually spend some time in Peel region, go through Caledon, make your way over to Vaughan, and look at one of the fastest-growing crops there: signs saying, "Stop Highway 413. Protect Our Farmland."

This bill talks about tolls, but the one highway that is tolled that isn't talked about in this bill is the 407. We can reduce gridlock now—not 10, 15 years in the future; right now—by paying the tolls for truckers on Highway 407 at a fraction of the cost of building Highway 413, and without the destruction of the local farmland and environment that people love along the route of the highway.

In my final minute, Speaker, I just want to take a moment to talk about schedule 5. Schedule 5 is performative politics at its worst—it's the schedule about the referendum on carbon pricing—because we know that a current government can't tie the hands of a future government. Ironically enough, it was actually this government that brought in a carbon tax in Ontario when they ripped up the cap-and-trade.

What this government doesn't talk about when it comes to climate action is that data released last week shows that the province with the fastest-growing, biggest increase in climate pollution is the province of Ontario—of the entire country, the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, the

data shows that this government has made zero progress on reducing climate pollution since they took office. Our emissions now are up as high as they were in 2017, despite the cost of the climate crisis.

So, Speaker, this is a government without a plan, and it's actually going to take money out of people's pockets by what they are planning to do. Thank you.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was very interested: Our caucus had brought forward an opposition day motion focusing on making sure that truck traffic got to use Highway 407 so that we relieve congestion. You actually were there. You voted in favour of the NDP motion. Could you share with the House how the Conservatives looked at that motion and how, when we present them with immediate solutions to problems that need to be addressed, they look the other way?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member from Nickel Belt's question. Actually, I think I first proposed this two years ago: to pay the tolls of truckers on the 407. At that time, part of the rationale was somebody had just landed an airplane on the 407, it was so underutilized.

It seems to make sense to me: Why would you build a highway that's exactly the same area—just a little bit north of the 407—and spend 10-plus billion dollars on it, when you could pay the tolls of truckers for the next 30 years for less than a quarter of that price and actually relieve gridlock right now? That's the most fiscally responsible, environmentally responsible way to benefit our economy and end gridlock.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to just ask you—because I can't find a climate plan from this government. Is there one? I think this government has absolutely no policies, no programs that are credible or serious or meet the moment when it comes to the urgency of the climate crisis in this province. I mean, we had the insurance bureau talking about the losses that people will be facing in their property. We have forest fire seasons that start earlier and earlier. We have a government that, instead of taking action, has, like you said, this performative bill that makes it look like they're doing anything.

Can you point to any climate plan at all that this government has?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member from Hamilton's question. Don't take my word for it; I'm obviously a partisan political actor. Take the Auditor General's word for it. The Auditor General said they don't have a credible plan, and now we have data that was released last week that validates exactly what the Auditor General said. Ontario's climate emissions are growing faster than any province in the country. The government has made absolutely zero progress in reducing climate pollution in this province.

You talked about costs. Let's not even talk about future costs for a second; let's talk about costs from just last year.

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the climate crisis costs Canadians \$3.1 billion in insurable losses. They estimate that uninsurable losses were three times that: almost \$10 billion in one year. That cost every household \$720 in this country.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have all been here during question period where every question from Conservative members is about the carbon tax. But they only tell one part of the carbon tax story. They don't tell the part where they are the party that brought the carbon tax to Ontario. We did not have a carbon tax in Ontario before this. The Conservative government brought it to our province. Would you agree with those statements?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I thank the member for Nickel Belt for the question. Yes, the reason we have a carbon tax in the province of Ontario is the Conservative government, when they first were elected in 2018, got rid of the cap-and-trade program, and that triggered the federal government's backstop on carbon pricing.

The other thing the government doesn't talk about when it comes to carbon pricing is that, actually, eight out of 10 Ontarians receive more money back in the rebate than they actually pay into the carbon price. And the Ontarians who benefit the most from that rebate are low- and middle-income Ontarians. So it is true: There are some people who do pay more because they pay more in tax than their rebate. Those are the wealthiest people in the province.

So, they don't have a plan, and the plan they have actually takes money out of our pockets.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Point of order? I recognize the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Madam Speaker, it's not a point of order. I just move that the question now be put.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

1650

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY
AND STUDENT SUPPORTS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RENFORCER
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LES MESURES DE SOUTIEN
AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2024, on the motion for third reading of Bill 166, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

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

I recognize the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to stand today to speak once again about Bill 166, the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act.

This bill contains historical changes that will help our students. Our students are the future of Ontario, the future of Canada, and this bill would support students while creating accountability. We, as a government, will only be viewed as successful if the next generation remembers us fondly with bills which made their life better. Madam Speaker, tomorrow's professionals are students of today.

As the father of two young men, Dr. David, and soon-to-be-dentist Christopher, who are about to complete their terms and come into the workforce, but also as a professor who has been teaching college students since 2007 to date, over 17 years, I have met hundreds and thousands of students. I taught hundreds, proudly to say that one of my former students sits here as a member of this chamber as one of our colleagues today.

I can't claim that I understand many of the challenges students go through in the post-secondary sector. It is our duty to try to pave the way for them to be successful as students and, more importantly, as future citizens, as professionals and those who will be able to compete in Ontario, in Canada and anywhere around the world.

Bill 166, the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, will support students while creating accountability for actions, which is the third reading debate, so many of those details are already covered. As this is my last chance to speak for this bill, I want to address the bill from the perspective of its reasoning and importance and how it will impact our students.

I know that many of our universities and colleges are already providing mental health supports for their students. As the minister mentioned, five colleges—George Brown, Centennial, Humber, Seneca and Sheridan—already have programs, two of which I was faculty member of. They have already partnered to pool their expertise and resources as they support students. I know first-hand, having been faculty of at least two of them for many years, that this bill is raising the bar. It would mandate and hold university and college administrations accountable to support students.

This is a good start. We want to standardize it, make it mainstream, not only at some of the institutions. Every post-secondary institution should have comprehensive supports for students' mental health. Mr. Speaker, we believe and are acting on the belief that mental health is health.

Our government allocated \$32 million for 2023-24 in mental health to support post-secondary students through grants like the Mental Health Services Grant and the Mental Health Workers Grant. Mr. Speaker, our government was the first government to appoint an associate minister especially for mental health, because we believe that mental health is health.

We are, as a government, trying to remove the stigma around mental health. Our students are already under the severe stress of exams, competitions, uncertainty, fear of the future and fear of failure. Some students develop mental illnesses, and unfortunately, in some cases, they even commit suicide. Losing one life is too much. Those losses could be prevented, because if they could be easily recognized and get the right attention and medication early enough, they could have been good, proactive citizens living with us today.

I believe this bill is an important step to mandate and hold educational institutions accountable. We want to keep an eye on and care for our most vulnerable and valuable, our students, our kids.

The other part of that bill is talking about freedom of speech in universities and colleges. It is important to create environments where our students can freely express their opinions and exchange those opinions with other students. But at the same time, we need to be very fair regarding hate speech, bullying and any other form of discrimination against students. This is not freedom of speech; this is discrimination, and it could affect the mental health of students. We need to create an environment that is inclusive, safe for our students.

With that said, I very strongly recommend full support from both sides—our colleagues in the opposition—to support that bill, which will benefit our students, which will benefit our universities and colleges in their way to help their students, monitor their students, and take the responsibility in protecting our students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions, please.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: During pre-budget consultations, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs had the opportunity to hear from a number of different post-secondary institutions who were deeply concerned about this government's cuts. I believe that when we look at Bill 166, it really is masking some of the cuts this government has made. In fact, this government would talk about the billion dollars it has put within the system, but that is nowhere near enough to make up for the cuts that they have made.

Would the member agree that this bill is an example of yet another distraction from this government's disastrous anti-education agenda?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to my colleague for the question. I totally disagree about that question that he is asking, because despite the fact that \$32 million is a good number to start with, we are starting somewhere. This is just a start.

We said we are trying to move the bar, to raise the bar to make sure that our students are having some mental health attention from the institution that they are relying on, that they are going to every day. This is the only way we can monitor their mental health. If there is more money needed in the future, we'll see. If it's through the grants program, all the institutions should be able to build the programs to monitor the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the response.

Questions, please. The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to my colleague for supporting this bill and the great work that it is intended to do. I know when we first met in 2018, you were also a faculty member, at the same time as I was at Georgian College at that time, and you have post-secondary-age sons as well. So I wanted to hear from you, as a faculty member and as a parent of students: What do you hear from those students about the needs for mental health supports on campus?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister, for the question. It is actually very, very important to be able to monitor, to have people who have the expertise to recognize those issues, because while students go to university or college, they come late evening. They might see their parents. Sometimes they might not see their parents, or they are living in a campus which is far from home, so nobody will be able to monitor those changes except the people who are spending the whole day with them: their faculty people, their college, university guys. They are the guys who see them every day and they can immediately recognize changes in behaviour or a pattern of absence or not focusing. This—

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for your response.

The member from Humber River–Black Creek, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You know, in 2018, when the member was elected, one of the first things that this Conservative government did was rip up a grant program that existed to help students from low-income families go to university in an affordable way. We continue to see families—bright, ambitious students—facing massive financial barriers to go to university or colleges. Again, students in Ontario pay the highest tuitions in all of Canada.

Does the member believe that financial barriers to education should exist for our students?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to my colleague. Despite the fact that this question is not related to the inclusion environment in the campus or preventing discrimination or supporting freedom of speech—you are talking about the OSAP changes, which is—actually, we

did put OSAP where it was. Before the election, the previous Liberal government tried to prepare for the election by bribing voters, saying, “We’ll give you free programs.” When we took over, we just put back OSAP as a loan system, which students can—every student can make use of OSAP and pay back the money in 20 years, which is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I wanted just to ask one more question, kind of building off what the opposition member had mentioned. He said that he thought that we were the highest tuition in Canada. We’re actually fourth now because of the tuition cuts this government has made. But I wanted to ask the member about the tuition freeze and what the impact is going to be on students to be able to access post-secondary education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): That concludes our time for responses.

Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a real privilege to talk about An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

I would like to speak to a specific university in northern Ontario that is really dear to everybody in northern Ontario, including myself, and this is the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University, l’École de médecine du Nord de l’Ontario. More specifically, I would like to send a huge thank you to its president, vice-chancellor, dean and CEO, and this is Dr. Sarita Verma. We owe her so, so much. She has announced that she is leaving her position but has agreed to stay with us until a new president, vice-chancellor, chancellor, dean and CEO is found.

I want people to understand what the Northern Ontario School of Medicine—what was the strategy behind this. It was created in 2002 as a special purpose university to reverse the chronic physician shortages in the north. They started with a social accountability mandate to improve the health of the people of northern Ontario, with a focus on Indigenous people, francophones, as well as people who live in remote and rural northern Ontario. They were created as a not-for-profit corporation, first affiliated with Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and Laurentian University in Sudbury, but April 1, 2022, they became an independent medical university. They are the only stand-alone medical university in all of Canada.

For the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the entire region of northern Ontario is their campus. Unlike traditional medical schools, Northern Ontario School of Medicine learners are placed in over 90 different communities throughout the year, working hard to serve isolated and remote communities where they gain experience and confidence to work independently and without timely access to medical specialists that we don’t have in northern Ontario.

The school of medicine has two major campuses—they call these their main campuses—one in Sudbury, one in Thunder Bay. They use those as headquarters, I would say,

for the administration and they house their full-time faculty, but the faculty deliver the medical education in-person and virtually wherever their students are. They are placed on a territory that makes 800 square kilometres, Speaker, all in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario is their campus. It's a very unique model, and it works.

Did you know, Speaker, that 88% of the physicians who complete both undergraduate and postgraduate residency at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine remain in northern Ontario? Some 28% remain in remote and rural communities. If you look right now, for half of the people in northern Ontario who currently have access to a primary care physician, it's a physician who graduated from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

The success of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine rests, I would say, on a system that's called a distributed community engaged learning model—DCEL—which basically features partnerships and collaborations with over 135 organizations in 90 different northern communities. They have over 1,800 clinical faculty and you can find them throughout, from the smallest rural northern community to the biggest centres of North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie. They are everywhere. They prepare their graduates to work in rural and northern underserved communities. And they're very successful.

They have a 100% match for their residency program. They have a 100% success rate for the Part I exam of the MCCQE. They have the highest proportion of graduating medical students who choose family medicine. In the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, it's 55% of graduates, compared to 28% in the rest of Canada. They have the highest proportion that go into rural family practice and also have the highest proportion of Indigenous students. The Northern Ontario School of Medicine has graduated 9,002 graduates. Of those, 72 were Indigenous—so we now have 72 Indigenous physicians—and 180 of them were francophone. They also had 827 residents who completed their training through the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and 190 registered dietitians.

As you can tell, I am really proud of what they have done. I want people to understand that a huge part of their success is their socially accountable admissions process. Northern Ontario School of Medicine students are intentionally selected to be from northern Ontario because they are more likely to come back and practise in northern Ontario. So 90% of their students come from northern Ontario, 9% come from rural and remote other parts of Canada, 25% self-identify as francophone and 16% self-identify as Indigenous.

They're also an economic engine. Because of all those students coming to northern Ontario, there are huge financial benefits to the communities where the students come.

They have been chosen to see an expansion. When they first started—and I'm going by memory. I think we started with 56. They are now at 64. That is, they take on 64 new

medical students every year and there is a plan to bring that up to 108 by 2028.

There are also challenges to doing this. They have come to Queen's Park. They have shared those challenges. Northern Ontario needs at least 384 full-time-equivalent physicians. We need 180 specialists. We need over 110 more physicians to go into rural areas.

1710

As you all know, 25% of the population in northern Ontario does not have access to primary care, does not have a family physician. This number is growing rapidly, as 50% of the rural physicians, doctors, who exist have announced retirement within the next five years. So, the shortage of physicians to help train will be something that needs to be looked at as we bring in more and more physicians.

There are quite a few other barriers to the expansion of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. There are many areas where the population is so underserved that it is a very unattractive environment to train learners. The compensation and physician payment model for clinical work is called the Rural and Northern Physician Group Agreement, RNPGA. It hasn't changed since the year 2000, so it is no longer attracting physicians to the north. Of the 38 RNPGAs we have, 14 of them require three to seven more physicians and 24 of them require one to two more physicians.

So in order for the expansion to be successful, they really have to look at what medical education needs. They have asked for one-time funding. They have asked for an extension of the family medicine teaching unit. Family medicine teaching units are funded and exist in southern Ontario, but are not funded in northern Ontario, but we would need them in order to make sure that we can graduate all of the physicians that go to school through the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

The situation at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University is life-changing for the people of the north. They are graduating physicians who come and work in the north, who are comfortable working in the north. They know the situation, and they need to be supported. Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to brag a little bit about a university that is very near and close to my heart and the hearts of many people in northern Ontario.

Coming back to the bill: Basically, Bill 166 does three things. The first one is, "Every college and university is required to have a student mental health policy that describes the programs, policies, services and supports available at the college or university in respect of student mental health." This is a very noble end. Do we want mental health to be accessible to every student? Yes, absolutely. The pandemic, which I hope is behind us, was hard on everybody. It was especially hard on young people: young people going to school, young people now attending our colleges and universities. Many of them have put the stigma of mental health behind them. They're not afraid to say that they're having a mental health problem and reach out for help.

Unfortunately, all that the bill does is to say, “You have to have a student mental health policy that describes the programs, the policies, the services and the support available.” We need more than to have a policy. We need to have money to support the programs so that you can have services, you can have mental health programs available to every college and university student. So the end goal is really good, but to get there, we need to talk about money.

When we talk about money, we can’t help but look at the blue panel—is this what it was called? I sometimes get it confused—that was done. Basically the Ministry of Colleges and Universities asked for an expert panel to look at what needed to be done and have funded half of what the expert panel recommended be funded. So I’m really happy that every college and university will have a policy that says we need to make mental health available to their students, but if they don’t have the resources to have social workers, psychologists, nurses and everybody else to provide that care, we are no further ahead than where we are now.

I would say that many of the groups that came to present told us that they already had a mental health strategy in place and what they needed was resources to not only continue what they have but build upon what they have because, for many of them, there’s a wait-list to access services. There are limited hours, limited times of the week and limited months of the year where they are able to actually provide those mental health services, and this is not acceptable.

Mental health should be available. For many young people, going to college or going to university is a stressful time. They don’t give you a college degree or a university degree easily. You have to work really hard to get there. It’s often difficult on your mental health. Having the mental health supports that you need to increase your chances of success is something that we absolutely support, and I would have loved to see the dollars being allocated as well, but unfortunately this was not the case.

Then, when we look at the second ask of the bill, as I said, the blue-ribbon panel had recommended an urgent \$2.5-billion investment over three years at a minimum just to keep colleges and universities running as they were, and that was before the international student cap was announced. They said, “Just to keep what we have—not to build, not to meet the needs, not to decrease the wait-list, not to make the services available more hours a day, more days a week, more months out of the year. None of this. Just to maintain what we had, we needed \$2.5 billion over three years.” They got half of that.

Then we all know that when the international student cap was announced, it was another \$1.5-billion decrease in money that is not coming from international students because the number of international students getting visas to come into Ontario has decreased by that amount.

The second part of the bill says that every college and university is required to have policies and rules to address and combat racism and hate, including but not limited to anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism

and Islamophobia. Again, many of the groups that came shared with us that they already have those committees in place. They also talked about—that the government could use the powers of the Anti-Racism Act, which is an act passed in 2017 to re-establish the Anti-Racism Directorate subcommittees. I know that in my part of the province there was an anti-Indigenous racism committee that was doing very good work. Unfortunately, this no longer exists, but the bill is still there. All we need is the political will, I will tell you, to bring those back.

But is this something that the NDP supports? Yes, absolutely. There is no room for hate. There is no place for racism. It has to stop. It hurts a lot of people. Nothing good comes of it. We know how to do this, Speaker. It needs to get done.

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Then, the third part of the bill is, “The minister is authorized to issue directives in relation to the information to be provided about the costs associated with attendance at the college or university.” Any of you who have children in college and university, you will all know that you pay the tuition, and then you realize, “Oh, look at this. I need to go”—I can tell you that when my daughter went in to become an electrician, she and I went to the store that was recommended with a list of tools that neither one of us knew how to pronounce, never mind what they looked like, so we gave that list to the good person at the front, who gave us a list of tools that my daughter needed to buy in order to be able to continue.

But none of that was included with the price you pay to register. It would have been good to know and to plan. We’re a family where we were able to afford it, but it was about 600 bucks’ worth of tools that we had to buy in order for my daughter to continue. She is an industrial electrician, and I’ll tell you that she still uses those tools, but at the time it was like a bit of a shock to have to go to a store and buy all of this so that she could become an electrician, which is what she wanted to do.

I’m sharing this to say that this is another thing that we support. Should parents, students, whether you’re in college or university, know all of the auxiliary fees that you have to pay up front? Yes. Again, when people came and did deputations, it was, “When will you be made aware of how much they are?” And they vary quite a bit from one college to the next, from one university to the next.

It would be good when people make their selections to not only know how much tuition is going to cost, but also all of the other fees that you will have to pay, because that could influence. But if that information only becomes available once you have been accepted in the college or in the university—it could be more useful if it was more upfront, so I would say the people who came and did deputations were in favour; they were just asking for a wee bit of tweaking so that this information is available way upfront, on a website, so that anybody who is thinking of doing an application for any courses or class in any college or university knows all of this before you apply.

I think my time is up. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): It is. Thank you.

Questions, please.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments and for her boasting about her relationship in her community with the post-secondary education institution. I know in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, Georgian College has a big presence there, and I was a part-time professor there and enjoyed it. Those institutions are a critical part of our communities, but they also have their own bureaucracy and are in charge of their campuses.

We know recently, from unfortunate geopolitical events, that racism and hate has been a growing issue on campuses. We have 120 nationalities and over 300 distinct languages represented at our post-secondary education institutions. I'm wondering if the member opposite can talk about the importance of these institutions enforcing anti-hate rules and regulations, particularly in light of what we're seeing. U of T recently just cancelled their graduation because they have an encampment on their facility, and I'd like the member to speak about the importance of universities and post-secondary schools stepping up to enforce anti-hate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are three main ones: Collège Boréal, which is a French college; Cambrian College, which is an English college; and Laurentian University and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I would say what we see the most in my area is really targeted towards Indigenous people. There is still a lot of systemic discrimination facing First Nations, Métis—we don't have too many Inuit people, but we have a lot of First Nations and Métis who come to our community. They often come from First Nations, where they were surrounded by other First Nations people, and it is a hard transition to come to Sudbury, either to Collège Boréal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Questions, please?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to my colleague from Nickel Belt for her presentation. I was particularly interested in the comments about community mental health resources.

With Bill 166, the title seems to suggest that this will provide greater supports for students.

But I think of my riding, where we have great institutions like Western University, King's University College, Huron University College, Brescia University College—unfortunately, which will be eventually amalgamated. This represents a massive influx of individuals into the riding of London North Centre, and it puts a tremendous strain on the already meagre community mental health resources that are available.

Will Bill 166 adequately address the huge lack of community mental health resources for students?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wish I could say yes to this, but I can't. What the bill does is, it mandates that every college and university have a student mental health policy. But we

all know that a policy without adequate resources does not necessarily mean better access.

Do colleges and universities need resources? Do they want to support their students' mental health? Yes, absolutely; they all want to. They all want their students to succeed. That's why they exist. And they do a great job of it, but without the resources, it is really difficult. When the blue-ribbon panel tells us that you need a minimum of \$2.5 billion and they get only half of this; when we lose another \$1.5 billion because of the international students not allowed in—then where are those resources going—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to ask a little bit about consultation. During the time we spent with delegates, there was a concern that we didn't have a lot of data, consultation with different groups. Folks brought that feedback. Can you speak a little bit about your impressions related to that?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There were a number of groups that asked to speak to that bill. Whether it was a student organization, teachers' organization, unions, faculty, the leadership of the different colleges and universities, their associations, parents—there were a lot of people who came and did deputations. We took the time to ask them if they had been consulted before this bill came forward; unfortunately, very few of them had been consulted before. I would say that, in general, they supported the end goal of more mental health—yes, absolutely—a stop to hate and racism, knowing the fees—yes, absolutely. But then, it is the “How will this be done? How can we be involved? How can we be respected?” Because some of them had put in place—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm having trouble understanding what this bill really does.

I look at the last piece of legislation that the government tried to impose on colleges and universities—students took them to court, and they won.

We know that there are mental health services and anti-racism policies already in place.

I feel like the reason this government wants this bill to move forward is because they actually want to give directives where they shouldn't be—because we heard the Premier say he doesn't agree; then he flip-flopped and now he agrees.

Do you think there's a court challenge that could happen around this bill, like they had with the student unions bill—and they lost there too.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Unfortunately, yes, there is a chance that this bill ends up—although people support the end goal, they also support the fact that colleges and universities are independent institutions; they make their own rules. Most of them already have mental health policies in place. Most of them already have anti-hate, anti-racism policies in place. They're all for having those

policies in place, but they would not want the government to tell them how those policies need to be written, how those policies need to be implemented. They will take the government to court if the government starts to do that. But this bill gives them the power to do this. If they don't use that power, we're good. If they start to push, they'll end up in court.

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to congratulate the member, as a mother, when you're talking about your daughter and how exciting it is she's an electrician—and I'm sure it was probably very intimidating for both of you going into the shop to buy the tools. So I understand that you agree on that piece of the legislation, having that transparency over the cost of all associated materials with a course.

But I wanted to know: I know that you're on committee and you heard from the students who spoke there. Can you tell us what you heard from students about the issues they were dealing with on campus with anti-hate and maybe students you heard from in your own community?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I can speak to the people in the north. For a lot of people who were raised in small rural communities—I mean, if you were born in Gogama, there are 180 people there. If you were born in Biscotasing, there's 27 people there. If you were born in Westree or Shining Tree, there are 80 people in one community and 100 in the other. And then, all of a sudden, you come to Sudbury. Sudbury is 180,000 people. Your way of life, the

way you dress, the way you address yourself—your way of life is very different going from a northern rural community to a community of 180,000 people.

For some, they will face discrimination. For some, they will face barriers to transition. But I must say that both colleges and both universities, as well as l'Université de Sudbury, know about this. They try to support them, but unfortunately, yes, some students still face discrimination.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Final question? We have time for one further question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: To the member opposite: I appreciate your reference to the very small communities and the transition for the students as they go to the larger communities to pursue their education. My riding is very similar and has a lot of very small little communities and a different lifestyle than that they encounter as they move on to those post-secondary institutions.

But all those institutions—all of them—care significantly for the mental health of the student. Will the member opposite please state their support to make sure that every student will easily find the support that they require?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I give you 100% support. I want everybody who reaches out for mental health to gain access to the mental health support that they need. If you're a student, the easiest way to access this is at your college or at your university. I want them to be funded so that the students are supported.

Report continues in volume B.

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