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Assembly  
of Ontario



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législative  
de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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Lundi  
17 avril 2023

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 April 2023

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 avril 2023

*The House met at 1015.*

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

*Prayers.*

### TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following documents were tabled:

—the letter of resignation from Todd Decker, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, effective June 30, 2023; and

—a report titled *Missing in Inaction: Misty's Story*, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE–LAKESHORE

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Good morning, everyone. The hard-working people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore are always optimistic. Now, with the warmer weather, the tulips are popping up—allergy season is in full bloom—and the upbeat spirit I have encountered over the past several months has absolutely been phenomenal.

In March, it was national Pharmacy Appreciation Month, and I had the opportunity to visit numerous pharmacists in our community to express my appreciation.

At the end of March, I also met with the Earth Rangers, who were visiting Norseman middle school, a group of young individuals dedicated to preserving area species and habitats.

That same day, I was able to drop by our 15th annual Seniors' Health and Wellness Fair at the amazing Franklin Horner Community Centre. This year's theme was "Boosting Brain Health and Memory."

During this past week, my colleague the Minister of Education stopped by St. Josaphat Cathedral Catholic School to meet with staff and students and welcome over 250 Ukrainian students who have enrolled since June 2022, and I am pleased to welcome them to Etobicoke.

I also had the opportunity this week to visit a Women's Habitat outreach centre with my friend the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity. The Habitat does such wonderful work to serve and protect vulnerable women in our community.

On April 13, I was honoured to attend the Haven on the Queensway ribbon cutting, to cut the ribbon for the new walk-in freezer to better serve those in need. I just want to

thank everybody in our community for the work they do every day. Thank you.

1020

### FEDERAL LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Normally I'm not compelled to discuss federal politics in this place. We've got enough to do in Ontario. But I rise this morning, Speaker, to register my serious concerns with Mr. Pierre Poilievre, the federal Leader of the Opposition.

In recent months, he has been putting a maple glaze on Trumpism. He has used his platform to attack journalists attempting to hold him accountable. As Bruce Arthur from the Toronto Star has said, Mr. Poilievre is not just working the refs; he's trying to replace them.

Speaker, there is always a tension between members of the media and elected officials. We interact with each other while doing very different jobs. Journalists work hard to report stories they believe are in the public interest, and we work hard as elected officials with the media to advocate for our constituents and broadcast messages we believe are important.

We may not like how our words are reported sometimes, Speaker, and journalists may not appreciate how their questions are deflected or spun, but still, we both try to do our jobs and the tension between us is critical for Canadian democracy.

But the moment you employ disinformation to question somebody else's integrity, that is the moment you cross a big red line. It is the moment I believe you insult the democratic traditions built by our grandmothers and grandfathers in this place.

Speaker, through you, I call to Mr. Poilievre, I call to all members of this House and all elected officials everywhere, to do better, to respect each other as we do the work that we need to do for Canadians and to never cross that red line.

### LOGAN STAATS

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Good morning. I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize and celebrate Logan Staats, an outstanding singer-songwriter and musician. Born in Ohsweken, on the territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River, Logan started to write songs and perform music in his teens in and around the Brantford–Brant community.

In 2018, the Mohawk Nation artist was chosen from 10,000 hopeful contestants vying for a spot on the musical competition show *The Launch*. Before 1.4 million viewers,

Staats won, and that ushered the breakthrough that would lead him to Nashville and Los Angeles with his single—and it's amazing, Speaker—"The Lucky Ones." His song would hit number one in Canada on iTunes.

Staats was also part of a documentary series and uses his talent to bring awareness on Indigenous issues across Canada. In the years from 2018 to today, Staats has come home, making the intentional decision to re-root at Six Nations of the Grand River.

Last month, Speaker, Logan Staats won the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada's prestigious TD Indigenous Songwriter Award, all this using borrowed equipment at Staats's apartment and a recording studio on the Six Nations territory.

I quote: "My nation and my community are in every chord I play, and every note I sing. They've saved me." With those words, Logan, we celebrate your accomplishments, and we thank you. Congratulations.

*Interruption.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. You can't do this. You can't interrupt the proceedings of the House.

We will resume members' statements.

#### IQBAL HASAN

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Last week, our community mourned the loss of a wonderful, award-winning poet, author and journalist, Iqbal Hasan. A creative writer, a storyteller, Iqbal Hasan loved writing poetry. His literary works explored the complexities of the human experience and often dealt with themes of love, loss, displacement and identity. Through his words, he talked about his roots within his motherland as well as the struggles of day-to-day life as an immigrant.

In one of his interviews, he described the loneliness after leaving one's birthplace saying, [*Remarks in Bengali*]. Speaker, he really had a way with his words.

Iqbal Hasan's contribution to Bengali literature, both in Canada, Bangladesh and around the globe, has been significant, with over 50 published works to his name. It is a testament to his talent that he was recognized with the prestigious Syed Waliullah award by the Bangla Academy in 2014.

I had the opportunity to get to know him over the past years. In fact, he sat right here in the members' gallery just a few years ago when we passed then-MPP Percy Hatfield's bill to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario. He was filled with joy seeing such admiration for poetry by our province.

The passing of poet Iqbal Hasan has left a void in the literary world. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and loved ones. He will remain an integral part of the Bengali literary community and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations of writers.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Speaker, as you know, Ontario is one of the largest automotive producers in North America, home to world-leading vehicle assembly plants, parts manufacturers and research centres that have been meeting the needs of international customers for more than 100 years. Ontario is the only place in North America where

five major automakers build their vehicles, including Honda, Toyota, Ford, General Motors and Stellantis and, soon to be added, Volkswagen's first overseas battery manufacturing plant.

Canada's auto sector supports nearly 500,000 workers, contributes \$16 billion annually to Canada's GDP, and is one of the country's largest exporters. Ontario's auto supply chain is comprised of over 700 parts firms, over 500 tool, die and mould makers, and over 300 connecting and autonomous companies. This is why, with a bright future ahead for our provincial automotive sector, thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford, I am pleased to make a members' statement celebrating Ontario's automotive heritage.

One of my constituents, William Armstrong, is the Ontario director of the National Association of Automobile Clubs of Canada. He's championing an effort to declare the month of July as automotive heritage month in Ontario, and July 14 as collector car appreciation day.

Whether we're looking back to Ontario's rich automotive industry or ahead to new investments today, including the recent announcement that GM will build the next generation of EV motors in St. Catharines, let's celebrate our important automotive sector and recognize July as automotive heritage month.

#### EVENTS IN HAMILTON CENTRE

**Ms. Sarah Jama:** It's been about four weeks since I had the honour of being elected in Hamilton Centre as the MPP, but we're not taking anything for granted. We're getting our constituency office set up as of May 1, and we had our first office drop-in at a local business named Rooney's just last week.

We've also been working really hard on constituency work, and I've been learning about constituency work all last week.

We also had the opportunity, a couple of weeks ago, to attend a Nisa Homes fundraiser, knowing that there are about five days left of the holy religious time of Ramadan, supporting local Muslims who are protecting women who are facing domestic violence. We had the opportunity to connect there and to talk to them about their concerns around funding.

We're taking the time to get to know people in the riding, and I'm super, super excited to announce that we will be set up in May.

#### ARTHUR VIPERS HOCKEY TEAM

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's my pleasure to rise here today to recognize the Arthur Vipers hockey team on their WOAA U18LL Elite Division championship victory. It was a hard-fought, best-of-three series against the Mount Forest Rams.

The first game saw Arthur taking it with a 4-3 win in overtime, with goals from Parker Coffey, Adam Krul, and Conner Schmidt who scored the game winner. Mount Forest bounced back in the second game, winning 2-0 and forcing a game 3. Arthur came out strong and fast in the final game, making for a hard-fought but resounding 5-0 victory to close out the series. Goals were scored by Simon



Livingston, Parker Coffey and Aidan Hope. Conner Schimdt, Nate Howse, Wyatt Schill and Owen McDougall all provided assists. Wyatt Smith and Braeden van Dongen stood their grounds as goalies, keeping the puck out of the net. This capped off a fantastic season for the Vipers, winning 27 games with one loss and bringing them to a record 50 wins, one loss, 248 goals and only 76 goals against in their last two seasons.

I want to personally congratulate the entire team on winning the Elite Division championship in the past two years. As their coaches said, all three lines focused on doing the small things, fast and with intention. Congratulations, Arthur Vipers.

1030

#### CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** This morning I want to speak about the tremendous success of the Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation. Established back in 1982, the foundation has transferred almost \$90 million to the Cambridge Memorial Hospital for capital equipment and education. This hard work and success of the foundation has allowed the hospital to provide the best quality of care to the people of my riding.

Recently, supporters of the hospital foundation gathered for a “Springtime in Paris” gala, where they raised an incredible \$380,000. These funds will be put toward a Spotlight MRI, a \$5-million campaign to purchase this new machine. To date, a total of \$1.6 million has been raised. The generosity of the foundation donors allowed the Cambridge Memorial Hospital to purchase its first MRI back in 2012. It was a game-changer. Not only could MRIs be accessed at home, but wait times were also reduced. Over the last five years, the hospital has averaged 9,000 scans a year, which is amazing.

As our community continues to grow, a new MRI is required to meet the demand. The Spotlight MRI campaign will feature many more public funding events coming up in the future months. I encourage people of my riding to support the good work of the hospital foundation.

To the staff and volunteers at the hospital foundation, both past and present, I thank you for your hard work and dedication.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Last week, Ford Motor Co. announced details of its \$1.8-billion investment to transform the Oakville assembly complex, where I worked for 31 years, into a North American hub for manufacturing electric vehicles, beginning in the second quarter next year. By retooling the existing assembly building, three body shops and the paint facility, Ford will be ready to produce electric vehicles beginning in 2025, two years faster than a completely new facility.

The new Oakville electric-vehicle complex will also include a new 407,000-square-foot battery plant to manufacture battery packs that will be installed in electric vehicles right here in Ontario. This will support thousands

of well-paying jobs in a more sustainable plant. That’s great news for my friends at Unifor Local 707. I’m looking forward to seeing them next month to celebrate their 70th anniversary.

As the Minister of Economic Development said, four years ago economists expected investments of \$300 billion across the global electric-vehicle industry, but nothing in Ontario. Today, we are attracting over \$17 billion. I want to thank the minister and the Premier for everything they’re doing to ensure that the cars and the batteries of the future are built right here in Ontario, using Ontario minerals, by Ontario workers, at the Ford plant in Oakville and across the province of Ontario.

#### WEARING OF JERSEY

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** As you know, the OHL playoffs have begun. There was a gentlemen’s bet between myself and the member from Sudbury. The Peterborough Petes defeated the Sudbury Wolves in four games. So, to honour the bet, I am asking for unanimous consent for the member from Sudbury to wear the Peterborough Petes jersey during question period.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Peterborough-Kawartha is seeking to humiliate the member for Sudbury by forcing him to wear a hockey sweater for a team he doesn’t support. Agreed? Agreed.

That concludes our members’ statements for this morning.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the Speaker’s gallery today Aaron Roth, who is a committee clerk from the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Aaron is on attachment this week with our assembly. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislature today.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I want to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, members of the township of Augusta council who are here for Good Roads. I’d like to introduce Mayor Jeff Shaver, Deputy Mayor Adrian Wynands and Councillors Tanya Henry, Michele Bowman and Hendrik Pape. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It’s great to once again welcome Michau Van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Good to see you, Michau.

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** I would like to introduce you to some of the best mayors in the province; of course, they are from the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell riding. You’ve got Mr. Normand Riopel, who is the warden of the united counties and mayor of Champlain; Geneviève Lajoie from Casselman; Mr. Mario Zanth from Clarence-Rockland; Pierre Leroux from the township of Russell; Yves Laviolette from the Alfred and Plantagenet township; and of course, Mr. Robert Kirby from East Hawkesbury.

I would also like to welcome to the chamber today the Rwandan Community Abroad organization here in Toronto.

In this House with us today is the High Commissioner of Rwanda to Canada, HE Prosper Higiroy, along with important members Rose Kangabe—I'm sorry if I don't pronounce that right—and, of course, Wilfred Rusibira and Rwandan Community Abroad Toronto president, Theophile Rwigimba—

*Interjections.*

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

Introduction of visitors?

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** I'm so very happy to introduce visitors in the gallery today: Nagamany Logendralingam, who is the editor-in-chief for Uthayan Tamil media; Srikajan Santhiralingam, editor-in-chief of Virakesari in Sri Lanka; Mrs. Sooriyaprabha Srikajan; Nallathamby Balamurugan; and Bavan Logasundaram. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** I love touring the north, and one of the best parts of doing that is you get to meet great new friends, like Councillor Melanie Breton, visiting us from Kapuskasing. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Computek College, who's joining us for question period. Welcome.

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Je voudrais aussi remercier Melanie Breton, conseillère de Kapuskasing. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I'd like to introduce today's page captain, Lazo Kasekas, and his parents, Konstantinos Kasekas and Kate Kasekas, to the Legislature this morning.

I'd also like to welcome George back to the assembly.

I look forward to catching up with the family after question period. Welcome to the Legislature.

1040

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce a wonderful contributor to Canadian Tamil media, Logan Logendralingam, chief editor and president of Uthayan Canada.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'd like to welcome Rebecca Schillemat. She won lunch with her MPP and a tour of Queen's Park as part of a fundraiser.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I would like to introduce Wyatt Sharpe as our newest member of the press gallery.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'd also like to warmly welcome Mr. Logendralingam, the president of Uthayan—the best Tamil newspaper. Welcome to Queen's Park.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning, Speaker. This question is for the Premier. The Members' Integrity Act obliges MPPs to "arrange their private affairs in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of each member."

Earlier this year, it was reported that developers and lobbyists were sent requests for donations to a stag and doe from people connected to the Premier and who previously

worked for him. People who received these donation requests told Global News they felt "browbeaten" into buying those tickets.

Does the Premier believe such behaviour promotes public confidence in his integrity?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think the Premier has answered that question on a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker. But I'll tell you what the Premier does believe in and what, in fact, all Progressive Conservatives on both sides of the House believe in, and that is making sure that this current generation of Ontarians, who are working hard to build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario, have all of the same advantages that the previous generations of Ontarians had, including most members who sit in this House, Mr. Speaker. That is, if they contribute, if they help us build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario, they will also have the dream of home ownership. It is the same dream that generations of individuals from across the world came to this country hoping for, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we're building every single day in this House.

The Leader of the Opposition can stand in the way of that. We saw them do it over 15 years with their Liberal partners, and we will continue to remove every single one of the obstacles that they put in place that made Ontario one of the most difficult places to own a home, Mr. Speaker. We won't stand for that, and we'll make sure—

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the Premier is very clearly offside with what real Ontarians are feeling and experiencing right now. Just a couple of days ago, I was at an event in York Centre, and somebody told me, "You know, it feels like a return to that old-school who-you-know politics."

The rules are very clear. A member—or a Premier—may not accept a gift connected to their duties. Does the Premier agree with this basic ethical principle?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, again, this government is singularly focused on improving the lives of the people of the province of Ontario. As I just said, for generations, one of the bargains that was made here in the province of Ontario was that if you came to Ontario to help us build a bigger, better, stronger province in the best country in the world, there would be a home option available to you. That was what we built this province on.

For 15 years, the Liberals and the NDP put obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in the way of building new homes for the people of the province of Ontario. And what are we doing? This Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, this government is removing every one of those obstacles, because we know how important it is, not only for the young generation of this province, to be able to have the same dreams that all of us had, that our parents and our grandparents had, and that is the dream of home ownership, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition can say anything she wants. She can continue to try and frustrate those dreams. She can continue to try and put obstacles in the way. We

will continue to remove every single one of those obstacles.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It seemed like a pretty straightforward question. I'm a little shocked that they couldn't answer that one.

Speaker, public confidence in the integrity of MPPs and cabinet ministers and Premiers is not just about avoiding actual conflict of interest but also avoiding the appearance of conflict of interest, just like in every other sector. These are very simple rules, but clearly, some in this House are having a hard time understanding them.

So to make this even clearer, I'm going to table legislation later today to bring Ontario in line with the federal Conflict of Interest Act. Does the Premier support a prohibition on gifts that a reasonable person might believe were given in order to influence an MPP or even a Premier?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, Mr. Speaker, here's the NDP that could have stopped the destruction that was the former Liberal government when they held the balance of power. Did they vote in a non-confidence motion to remove them when we were dealing with cash for access? No, they propped them up and kept them in power, and continued to put obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in the way of people owning their first home.

In over 150 years, the NDP and parties like them have governed this province once—once, Mr. Speaker. In the last election, more than 833,000 people turned their back on the NDP, removed 10 of their members and put them on this side of the House and on that side of the House as Progressive Conservatives. When will the NDP learn, Mr. Speaker, that it doesn't matter how often you change the messenger, it's the message that the people of Ontario aren't interested in? They're interested in a strong Progressive Conservative Ontario and all of the benefits that come with it.

#### ONTARIO PLACE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This isn't just about maintaining trust in government; it's about accountability. And when it comes to the planned redevelopment of Ontario Place, the lack of accountability and transparency is glaring. The government's plan to hand over extremely valuable public lands on Toronto's waterfront to a private European developer to build a luxury spa and a giant parking lot are not going over very well. And now the Premier is making back-of-the-napkin musings about moving the Ontario Science Centre to the location.

Speaker, is this an attempt to distract from the real and growing opposition to the plan to turn Ontario Place into an elite spa?

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you to the leader of the official opposition. We have been fully transparent with the public in terms of what our intentions are for the site

since 2019. We are leasing the lands. We have a tenant in place. We have a development application with the city of Toronto. We are proceeding with environmental assessment work that is underway. We have made tremendous progress on the site.

But what's most important is the sentiment of the public. People drive by the site and think, "What a waste that we let the site deteriorate to the point of it no longer being safe for people and pedestrians to be able to go there." We are bringing the site back to life. We will make sure it is there for everyone in Ontario to enjoy.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, it sure seems like they're making it up as they go along, right? There is so much potential to make Ontario Place a truly vibrant public space again.

Speaker, the Ontario Science Centre is a treasured public institution. It's one that sees thousands of visitors every year in a part of the city that really benefits from its presence. It employs hundreds of people—good union jobs—and is an anchor to Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park, some of Toronto's priority neighbourhoods. To the Premier, has this government consulted with local communities about the plan to relocate the science centre, its attractions and its jobs?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I will agree with the member opposite on one thing: The science centre is a public treasure, which is why our government for the last number of years has been looking at whether or not the option of relocation to preserve the science centre should take place. The structure itself has deteriorated as well, as has Ontario Place.

#### 1050

Our government is making the financial investments necessary to preserve these two treasures, to bring them back to life, to make them a place that everyone can go and enjoy with their families. I 100% think the public is behind us on this one.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the circumstances around this government's paving-over and carve-up of the greenbelt and this continued lack of transparency by the Premier means that every land use decision by this government is tainted by suspicion. That's the fact. When the Premier muses about massive changes to provincial institutions with no evidence at all, not even pretending to have community involvement, it raises questions.

So I have to ask, Speaker—to the Premier, again—any developers with ties to the Conservatives pushing to move the Ontario Science Centre?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I was not clear in my previous answer. The science centre has been in existence since 1979. Very little over the past number of years has been given to the science centre in order to rehabilitate it and keep it alive. It is falling apart. During COVID, in fact, we had to close a bridge to make sure that those attending the science centre could be safe and the workers could be safe.

You said it yourself: It is a treasure. We are doing everything we can to preserve it, such as looking for a new opportunity, a new home, so that many children in the future could enjoy this wonderful treasure that we have.

#### MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. This month, the government doubled down on expensive sprawl. They've forced municipalities to open thousands of more hectares of farmland to development. They've eliminated density requirements in new subdivisions. And they've eliminated targets to build more housing in areas already zoned for development.

My question is this: Why is this minister doubling down on sprawl when there are better ways to build more housing?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** This allows us to talk about how we have a plan and how our plan is working for Ontarians. The latest data shows that Ontario has seen an 11% increase in 2023 on new housing starts, up nearly 1,200 from last year. Rental starts so far are double what they were at the same time last year. Ontario is the number one jurisdiction for business, jobs and newcomers. There are more active cranes right now in the city of Toronto than there are in New York; Chicago; LA; Washington, DC; Seattle; and San Francisco combined.

We're going to continue to move forward with our aggressive plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. Let's face it, Speaker, it already sounds like the opposition is looking for a reason to, for the fifth time, vote against more housing in our province.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** The Conservatives' track record on making housing affordable is abysmal. Housing has never been more expensive to rent or buy—and that's your legacy.

Across Ontario, homeowners are seeing their property taxes go up and their services get cut. These tax hikes are going to continue if this government continues to build sprawl, because sprawl is much more expensive for municipalities to service than building more homes in existing neighbourhoods.

My question is to the Premier: Why double down on sprawl when there are cheaper and more affordable ways to build the housing that we need?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Again, Speaker, we're always going to stand up to reduce the baseline costs of housing to make it cheaper and faster for affordable homes to be built. The opposition will always stand up for higher taxes and higher housing costs, every single time.

But again, now we're hearing from the opposition; here it is, after our announcement for Bill 97. Now, we're starting to hear some of the real NDP coming forward. They're standing up against farmers having the opportunity to sever a lot for their son or daughter. That's where the NDP is moving. They're going to stand against hard-working

farmers and giving those sons and daughters the opportunity to create lots, or the opportunity to create housing for workers, something that our government believes is something that we need to move forward on. This is where the NDP are standing. They're standing against farmers. They're standing in favour of NIMBYism. That's—

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

#### LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

**Mr. Billy Pang:** My question is for the Minister of Education. Ontario's education system must prioritize teaching students the skills they need to succeed. The most fundamental of skills that students must learn are reading and writing. Without a comprehensive understanding of these two subjects, we know that students cannot progress with their learning in a meaningful way. This situation has been made all the more serious as an outcome of disruption to in-person learning.

This is why it is imperative to help our students gain or regain proficiency in these subjects, so they are able to excel in their classrooms and in their lives. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting reading and writing skills development for our students?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to thank the member for Markham–Unionville and all members of the House for their support on the work we're doing to boost literacy in this province, by lifting standards, by demanding better and by investing in a plan that goes back to the basics so that our young people can master the skills that matter most—reading, writing and math.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was proud to join the parliamentary assistant to announce \$180 million of investment to lift standards and outcomes for young people in the province, to hire a thousand front-line reading specialist educators and math educators, to double the amount of math coaches.

Specific to reading: Supporting the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read report, we are introducing the largest reading screening in the country. Every child from senior kindergarten to grade 2 will be screened this coming September. A new, overhauled language curriculum that follows the science of reading—again, recommended by the Ontario Human Rights Commission—and more staff in place to help those kids who need support to get up to the provincial standard: This is supported by the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation, by Dyslexia Canada, by Community Literacy of Ontario and many others who are urging us to move forward with—

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

The supplementary question.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you to the minister for that exciting response. It is encouraging to hear of the actions that our government is taking with respect to reading and writing skills development.

However, there are other fundamental skills our students need to learn, as many of the jobs of the future require an understanding in math and other STEM subjects. Students' math scores across North America and in Ontario have

seen an alarming decline over the past several years. With the return to in-person learning this school year, our government must have a comprehensive plan to help our students develop their math skills.

Speaker, can the minister please describe how our government is supporting math learning recovery, as well as plans to continue improved mathematics understanding for Ontarian students?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** It starts with a modern curriculum that mandates financial literacy and coding. That's aligning with the labour market. It also starts with a plan, a \$71-million investment, to lift standards in mathematics, to provide accountability with more front-line resources.

We're going to double the amount of math coaches in our schools. We're going to ensure every school board in Ontario has one senior lead whose singular mission is improvement in their board. We have a math improvement action team in the ministry for the first time. We're going to deploy it to school boards who have historically been underperforming. That lower 20% of schools that still need to do better—we now have the means, the investment and the resources to raise those standards.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to mandating new curriculum that is relevant to young people, like life and job skills, we're investing, with over 381 new math educators in the classroom. This is all designed to lift standards for better schools, better outcomes and better jobs for the young people of this province.

#### MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, this government overruled years of work and consultation by local representatives in Waterloo region by unilaterally rewriting the local official plan, moving urban boundaries and violating the countryside line to open previously protected lands to development. The Premier went so far as to call this a “no-brainer,” insulting both the people who worked on the original plan and the people of Waterloo, who know it is neither necessary nor wanted. And there was zero consultation.

My question to the Premier: Why does he think he's so smart? Why does he think he's smarter than the people of Waterloo region and the people who serve in that community that he's dictating this plan to?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government has a plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. We're pleased to work with councils on their official plans, as those in this chamber who served at the municipal level, and just like our guests that are here for Good Roads, know that official plans are the most important playbooks for development in their community. We want to ensure that all of the official plans that are before us reflect our government's policies.

But don't take my word for it. Let's hear from Waterloo regional chair Karen Redman:

“The regional official plan is not a one-and-done.... We always acknowledged that when you're looking at the kind

of rapid growth that we're experiencing, we would have to revisit the regional official plan over time....

“We know that we're going to grow, so what we need to do is ensure that it's well thought out planning, that there's a variety of housing, that we have townhomes, that we have stacked townhomes, that we have rental accommodation for people who are going to come to the community.”

We agree with Chair Redman, and that's exactly how we moved forward, Speaker.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The minister will know that Waterloo region relies mostly on an aquifer for drinking water, yet no analysis has been done to determine the threshold for servicing water or waste systems. This government has gutted the Grand River Conservation Authority, allowing development on wetlands. This government has approved a property in this plan called Big Springs for development that the region has opposed for decades due to hydrological sensitivity.

This approval runs counter to groundwater sources protection. It's almost like you've forgotten all about Walkerton. Source water protection is key to our health, and key to our economy and viability.

Can this minister, then, if he's so proud of this plan, produce the hydrological studies that will reassure our citizens? Or are you just so willing to gamble the health and well-being and economy of the people of Waterloo region?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I want to table words from Kitchener mayor Berry Vrbanovic today:

“I think the main parts of the regional official plan have been adopted and that includes things like protecting the Countryside Line, things like protecting things like the major transit areas in the city of Kitchener.”

“It also recognizes that there were some areas that we felt, for example in southwest Kitchener, that those lands should be, in fact, included....

“I think the decision of the minister recognizes there were lots of strong arguments about why those lands needed to be included.”

We're going to continue to stand with Mayor Vrbanovic and Chair Redman as we move forward to build 1.5 million homes by 2031.

#### ENERGY RATES

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Since our government was first elected in 2018, we have been laser-focused on making life more affordable for all Ontarians. Under the previous Liberal government, energy costs skyrocketed, forcing individuals and families to make difficult financial decisions. That is why it is essential that our government address energy costs by placing a strong emphasis on choice for consumers and providing all Ontarians with options to reduce their energy expenses. Our government must continue to respect the people of Ontario by implementing affordable energy policies.

I understand that last week, our government announced a new program that will give families and small businesses more ways to save on their energy bills. Speaker, can the minister please explain how this new electricity price plan will help Ontarians going forward?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I appreciate it.

Speaker, he is quite correct: We've been hard at work putting families back in charge of their energy bills since we formed the government back in 2018. We started by introducing customer choice on electricity plans, allowing Ontarians to choose a price plan that makes sense for them—either a time-of-use or tiered rate. We also introduced the Green Button program, which is being rolled out right across Ontario as we speak, and will be in full implementation in November.

Now we've taken the next step. Last week, down at Toronto Hydro, I had the opportunity to inform the public about our ultra-low overnight electricity rate, which, starting on May 1, customers in the member's own riding in Renfrew and in Toronto and London and Centre Wellington and Wasaga—I'm sure it was a great weekend at the beach up there, Mr. Speaker. They can opt in on this new plan, the ultra-low overnight rate, that's going to be available province-wide in the coming months.

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

**Mr. John Yakubuski:** Thank you to the minister for that response. It is encouraging news to hear that our government has introduced yet another way for consumers to keep costs down, save money, and take control of their energy bills.

I know that my constituents, along with people all across Ontario, are looking for financial relief on their electricity bills and will want to know if this new price program will work best for them. As with any new initiative, it is necessary that our government provides information to the people of Ontario about how to opt in to this program, and how this will help them to save money on their electricity bills.

Speaker, can the minister please explain the benefits that this program will bring to the consumers and to Ontario's energy system?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks again to the great member. This new rate plan is going to help families. It's going to help small businesses that use more electricity during the overnight period with an ultra-low, off-peak rate of 2.4 cents a kilowatt hour. Shift workers or those who heat their homes using electricity or people charging an electric vehicle—and we know there are going to be more of them as we continue to build up to 400,000 here by the end of the decade, in Ontario—they'll be able to save up to \$90 a year on their bills using this rate.

Unlike the former Liberal government, which sold clean, night-time power to neighbouring jurisdictions, many times at a loss, our government is coming up with innovative ways to use that power and shift demand in the province in the overnight period, which will make our grid more efficient, saving our electricity grid up to \$5.7

million which, at the end of the day, isn't just going to save those folks who adopt the ultra-low overnight rate, it's going to save every electricity customer in the province money on their bill.

## INDIGENOUS HOUSING

### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

In the north, we have a crisis of people without homes in Kenora and across northwestern Ontario. Without 24-7 support, there will be more needless deaths of First Nations people living outside.

What is this government doing to give municipalities and advocates the resources they need to help people without homes?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to thank the honourable member for his question. In fact, in this last budget, under the leadership of our Premier, we recognized the urgent need for adequate housing to meet the basic needs of many First Nations who are moving from their communities into towns and cities like Kenora, Dryden and Sioux Lookout.

That's why we invested significant resources to ensure that the Homelessness Prevention Program, moving forward, provides those additional houses. It's sensitive to the nuances of housing requirements for Indigenous peoples displaced from their home communities and are at risk of homelessness, and require wraparound services from community support organizations. It's a fully integrated model, Mr. Speaker, and we're endeavouring to address those matters—

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** When we move off the north or First Nation communities and reserves, that's a marker of how colonialism works: to get people off our traditional territories.

Homelessness is a marker of a bigger issue, and I'm talking about addictions. I know there is a need for healing and there is a need for treatment in the north that is not being met. Again, we have to send out people to urban centres to get treatment.

Speaker, today First Nations people are dying. What is this government doing to address the addictions crisis?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you to the member opposite for that question. It's a very important question, and our government is taking the issue very, very seriously in terms of the investments that are being made in northern communities, remote communities and, of course, Indigenous communities. There is no exception. We are following through and making investments.

In October 2021, we announced \$36 million for community-led Indigenous mental health and addictions service

organizations, including supports for students, victim services and an Indigenous-driven anti-opioid strategy.

1110

Our Addictions Recovery Fund was designed to boost capacity in communities of the greatest need: 400 beds, 7,000 spaces, 56% of them in northern and Indigenous communities, in addition to \$7 million for land-based care—because we know that culturally safe services need to be delivered to the people where they are.

#### LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** The housing crisis is making life unaffordable in Ontario and driving young workers out of the province. This government claims to understand the issue, but their actions say otherwise. They commissioned an expert task force to address the problem, yet they've ignored the experts and one of their most important recommendations: to build density in our towns and cities, not to expand their boundaries outward. The province last week ordered cities to do just that and destroy neighbouring farmland.

This attack on farmers will reduce the supply of local food, raising food prices, and create more sprawl, which undermines our carbon reduction goals. Farmers are against this decision, cities and regions are against it and the government's own experts are against it.

My question to the Premier: Who is telling the Premier that he should pave over our farmland, and are they the same people who will benefit from this decision?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, it's pretty rich coming from the Liberals, who basically did nothing on housing for 15 years, to now try to be the champion for farmers. For almost every budget that I sat in opposition on, the word "agriculture" never appeared in a Liberal budget—never.

So now we have a policy that actually recognizes that a farm can now have the opportunity to sever a lot for a son or a daughter—a farm that, if they decided that they wanted to provide quality housing for workers on the site, they could sever a lot.

Now we know again where the Liberals are at, just like where they were at for 15 years when they were in government: They stand against agriculture, they stand against farmers and they stand against housing in rural areas. That's the Liberal Party.

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Speaker, this government says they represent farmers, and the minister across the road seems to feel that as well. In fact, the Premier said he loves our farmers and told them in 2018 that "help is on the way," but farmers are not feeling the love as the Premier paves over more and more of their farmland. We know this because the great riding of Haldimand–Norfolk, in the heart of farm country, elected an independent over a pro-developer candidate supported by this government.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk introduced a bill to protect our farmland from development. It was supported by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and all MPPs

except those on the government side. This government is being very clear: They want to pave over farmland.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: Can the Premier please explain how paving over their farmland helps farmers?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Government side, come to order.

To reply, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** The member opposite is clearly out of touch, because for the last number of weeks we've been making historic announcements. We're investing over \$2 billion in Ontario's agri-food industry, from the laneway through to processing.

Farmers are buoyed; they're energized. They know they have a government in Premier Ford and all of us in caucus who actually understand the business of producing food. For instance, we have introduced a soil health study that RBC noted as a hidden gem in the budget. It's \$9.5 million that is going to look at the health of soil.

I was just at the Earlton Farm Show this past weekend, and people are applauding the fact that we actually get it and are demonstrating that we are moving on priorities that truly matter to farmers, who are working so hard to produce good-quality food in Ontario.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** My question is for the Attorney General. I've heard from many of my constituents, both tenants and landlords, concerning the delays they are experiencing when they engage with the Landlord and Tenant Board. There are many reports of the long delays when it comes to hearings to resolve tenancy disputes, causing uncertainty and confusion to both tenants and landlords. The consensus is that the time frames are way too long, the caseloads are too heavy, and service standards need to be strengthened. As the government, we must put forward resolutions that make wait times shorter and results much faster for those involved.

Speaker, can the Attorney General please explain how our government is taking action to address and resolve disputes at the Landlord and Tenant Board?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I appreciate the question from the member from Ajax. It's no secret that our government has been making historical progress when it comes to solving the housing crisis right here in Ontario. Our efforts, though, are more than just building homes. That's why I was really proud to stand with my colleague Minister Clark, in London earlier this month, to announce that we're doubling the number of adjudicators. That's going to help, Mr. Speaker.

We know that delays around the Landlord and Tenant Board have been frustrating for people across this province, both for landlords and for tenants, but it has been our government that has been the one getting it done when it comes to improving services here in Ontario. That includes the Landlord and Tenant Board. By doubling the number of adjudicators, more Ontarians will have their cases heard in an efficient manner.

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

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you to the Attorney General for that response. My constituents will be encouraged to hear that the Landlord and Tenant Board's capacity has—is holding more hearings and seeing more improvements. Increasing the number of adjudicators is a positive step toward speeding up decisions.

The Landlord and Tenant Board is part of our province's tribunal system, which plays an important role in providing accessible dispute resolution to thousands of Ontarians. It is essential that our government continues to make investments that will modernize services so that the people of our province can have confidence in our tribunal.

Speaker, can the Attorney General please explain further how our government is making investments to improve access?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Mr. Speaker, she's correct. We have been making necessary investments at the Landlord and Tenant Board over time. As I mentioned previously, we're doubling the number of full-time adjudicators by adding 40 full-time members, plus additional support staff, for a total of \$6.5 million. That's part of our historic housing strategy.

With this announcement, the board will have 80 full-time adjudicators. To help Ontarians appear before them, we're also making the processes easier. That's why, in this budget, an investment of over \$24 million over three years was made. Of course, the NDP voted against it. As well, we made an investment of \$6 million for additional recruitment at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and the NDP voted against that.

These investments follow a \$28.5-million funding arrangement, under the justice accelerated strategy, to improve processes in the digital case management process. Mr. Speaker, the NDP voted against that. Unfortunately, they keep saying no. But fortunately, we keep passing it and we keep moving forward, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to continuously improving the process, making the wait times shorter and making the process more efficient.

#### TARIFS DU GAZ NATUREL NATURAL GAS RATES

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Le coût du gaz naturel dans le nord de l'Ontario est insupportable. Les résidents n'ont aucun surplus dans leur budget. Les entreprises et les organismes à but non lucratif sont tous au bord de la fermeture.

Dans le Nord, on surpasse le taux de mètre cube « standard » dans une période de neuf mois. Notre utilisation est beaucoup plus élevée due à nos hivers plus longs et notre climat plus froid. Alors le calcul pour nous ne reflète pas nos besoins. C'est complètement injuste. La Maison Verte, un organisme, a payé 80 000 \$ de gaz naturel dans deux mois, même après avoir investi 300 000 \$ dans des nouvelles bouilloires intelligentes.

Alors, ma question pour le premier ministre : qu'est-ce que votre gouvernement va faire pour venir en aide aux gens du Nord et pour les organismes comme la Maison Verte pour assurer que la facturation reflète bien leurs besoins?

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

**L'hon. Todd Smith:** Merci pour la question. C'est difficile de comprendre la question par le député d'à côté parce que—it just doesn't make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite is saying he wants more affordable energy for people in the north. That's exactly what we've been providing since we took government, back in 2018. But the member opposite and his party were all about supporting the Liberals' Green Energy Act when they were in power, Mr. Speaker. During the Green Energy Act, we saw hydro bills rising by 10%, 12% each year. In 2018, that came to an end. We ended the madness, Mr. Speaker.

**1120**

But you know what the NDP wanted to do while the Liberals were doing that? They wanted them to go faster. They wanted them to put more over-market renewable contracts on the grid. Since we've come into power, we've flattened those increases in the electricity sector, and I'll have more to say about natural gas in my supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I'm just going to go back to the Premier because the words that I would have to say to that are terribly unparliamentary.

Seniors on fixed incomes are struggling the most when it comes to the cost of utilities and natural gas. A senior from Hamilton Mountain shared with me that her utility bills are so high, she had to wear coats and use two to three blankets overnight just to be able to keep warm in her own home.

*Interjection.*

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Speaker, this is absolutely disgraceful. Maybe the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook doesn't have these problems—or Niagara West; I'm not quite sure. But the government needs to be ashamed. I'm not sure any of these members across the aisle were using coats and blankets in their homes to stay warm.

Can the Premier explain why seniors like my constituent are supposed to survive this affordability crisis when they are being priced out of basic necessities?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader will come to order.

To reply, the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it's impossible to take this member seriously when she talks about affordability because it was this party, in 2018, that ended the Liberals' cap-and-trade and fought the carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court. That was the Premier that led that charge.

The NDP want a bigger carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and our Minister of Energy at the time warned the people of Ontario that the carbon tax wasn't just going to just drive up the cost of utilities higher; it was going to drive up the cost of everything, including groceries in our grocery stores. And you know what? That is exactly what has happened. Life in Ontario is more unaffordable today because of the federal carbon tax which that member and her party supports. Stand with us and fight—



*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. Order. The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The member for Waterloo, come to order. The member for Nepean, come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order.

Start the clock. The member for Peterborough–Kawartha, next question.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Dave Smith:** This morning, I have a question for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The important work that our miners do is vital to building a strong Ontario, not just the mining industry, but other industries as well. As just one example, mineral resources are needed for our manufacturing sector in making electric vehicles, and over the next decade, critical minerals will be needed in many more areas for our expanding economic markets.

Speaker, workplace safety in this sector is also a condition for success in developing the critical minerals industry for the future of our province. Miners have been the backbone of Ontario's economy for generations, and we owe it to them and to their families to do more to keep them safe.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to protect the miners of Ontario?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Thank you to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha for that important question.

On Monday of last week, I had the pleasure to join my good friend the Minister of Mines in Sudbury with the president of the United Steelworkers Local 6500 to announce new measures our government is taking to keep Ontario's more than 29,000 miners safe. Lowering exposure limits to diesel exhaust is something that miners and their unions have been calling for for years, and we're listening. Working closely with the United Steelworkers, we have acted quickly on their concerns—concerns the previous Liberal government left unanswered. Our government, under the leadership of our Premier, is proposing new regulations that bring Ontario's exposure limits from the highest in Canada down to the most protective in all of North America.

Speaker, we know there's more work to be done, and working together with our labour partners and employers, we will keep the men and women in Ontario's mines safe.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'd like to thank the minister for that response, but I'm going to pivot a little bit.

My supplemental question is to the Minister of Mines. As the minister is well aware, through his long and extensive career in the mining industry, there are many occupational risks that workers face every time they start a shift underground. This announcement by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development is another

milestone for workplace safety for miners that our province can be proud of. However, there's always more work to be done when it comes to ensuring workplace safety in this sector.

Speaker, can the Minister of Mines please describe the importance of this announcement in the context of our government's goal to strengthen Ontario's critical mineral supply chain?

**Hon. George Pirie:** Thank you to the member for the question and the minister for a great announcement last week.

Speaker, I come from a very proud mining family that's been in the industry for over 100 years. I lived and worked in the mining communities. Safety continues to be our top priority, but we can always do better. That is why this announcement is so important, because we are improving workplace safety for miners.

As our government works to build more mines to supply the EV revolution, we need the world's best and brightest to join our industry. This announcement sends a strong message that you can find safe, rewarding careers in Ontario's mining industry. I am proud to be a part of a government that puts people first and sets them up for exciting jobs that will make them part of a growing supply chain for electric vehicles in this province.

#### HEALTH CARE WORKERS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Speaker, it has been three long years since this government introduced Bill 124. Does the Premier think freezing the wages of health care workers during a pandemic helped with the recruitment, helps with the retention? In hindsight, does the Premier think it was a good idea?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The President of the Treasury Board to respond.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** This government has launched the largest health care recruitment strategy in the history of this province, and that member and the members opposite on the opposition side have voted against that. In fact, this year alone, over 12,000 nurses were registered; that is the largest number of registered nurses in the history of this province.

We put over \$342 million in last year's fall economic statement to support the upskilling of certain nurses and health care professionals across this province. And every single time that we have put forward measures, investments, billions of dollars into health care and recruitment, the members opposite have voted against it every single time.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Although the Premier does not think that our health care heroes deserve a raise, it turns out that both employers and employees agree on retroactive pay for work done during the pandemic, with nurses and paramedics being awarded back pay as we speak.

The time has come for this Premier to start working for workers, to treat our health care workers as heroes. Will the Premier withdraw his appeal of Bill 124?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply for the government, the Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I'll tell you what we did for the health care workers: We gave the nurses a \$5,000 bonus, which was equivalent to a 7.6% increase—the highest in the entire country. And guess what? The NDP and the Liberals voted against it. Mr. Speaker, we gave the PSWs the largest increase they've ever seen at \$3 per hour. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? The NDP and Liberals voted against it. We made sure we paid for the tuition for the nurses, all expenses, if they worked in a rural community; the NDP voted against it. We have the highest minimum wage in the entire country. Mr. Speaker, the NDP and Liberals voted against it.

We're making sure we put money back into people's pockets. Some 60,000 new nurses have been registered since we took office. As the President of the Treasury Board said, 12,000 new nurses came on the job. That is a record. We have 30,000 in the queue at the colleges and universities. That's what we're doing for our front-line workers.

1130

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development. Our province, like the rest of the world, is experiencing the impacts of global economic uncertainty, high interest rates and inflation. This current economic climate is creating additional barriers and burdens that are disproportionately affecting communities in remote, rural and northern regions more profoundly. These barriers are hindering opportunities for job creation, education and business development in the north.

Because the previous Liberal government ignored the needs of northern Ontario, it is vitally important that our government takes action to keep the north competitive and improve the quality of life for all northerners. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting opportunities and prosperity in the north?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** There are a number of ways. Under the leadership of this Premier, we've made it very clear that we're building Ontario, and that means building northern Ontario.

Maybe I'll start with an ode to the Good Roads conference this week and mention that we started out with a couple of key announcements from the Manitoba border. Niiwin Wendaanimok highway twinning: Not only has it been extended, but we work co-operatively with an Indigenous-owned-and-operated business that plays a substantial—in fact, a majority—role in the construction of that twinned highway.

As well, we were in Dryden to announce the Grand Trunk Avenue—which is also the Trans-Canada Highway; it leads right into Dryden—under major reconstruction, and planning and design resources for Fort Frances' 3rd Street West, which is also Trans-Canada. These highways are important connections for our vast region, but they get goods and people across northern Ontario, and we're committed to making sure that northern Ontario roads are safe and efficient.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you to the minister for that response. It is encouraging news that our government is making meaningful investments to support economic development and growth in the north.

We know that the strength of Ontario's economy is built on the knowledge, skills and expertise of our workers. Education is the key in preparing workers to take on the jobs of the future, especially in view of increasing labour shortages and the urgent need to fill job vacancies across many sectors.

Our government must continue to do all that we can to work with our northern partners to foster innovation, in order to build strong and prosperous businesses and communities. Speaker, can the minister please expand on how our government is investing in the north and creating opportunities for future generations?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Just a great opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in the week prior to last and last week, to travel from Sudbury to Pikangikum and spend some time in Kenora and Dryden—making the kinds of investments that transform the lives of people in our northern communities.

Whether we're upgrading the facilities at the Dryden Public Library, investing in a recreational facilitator program in Vermilion Bay, or investing in a youth wellness hub in Pikangikum First Nation and seeing, for the first time in more than 30 years of being a part of that community, a sawmill, these are exciting opportunities that range from skills development to quality of life in our small northern towns and cities. We're looking forward to a dynamic, vibrant northern Ontario which can join southern Ontario in one of the most exciting economic periods in its history. Northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, is ready.

#### CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question this morning is to the Premier of Ontario. As reported in the Hamilton Spectator, 2,100 kids are waiting for surgery at McMaster Children's Hospital. It's the worst wait in the province for pediatric surgery. No child should have to live in pain—pain that is entirely preventable. Imagine being a parent, watching your child live with pain and knowing that if they miss important surgeries, it can have life-altering consequences.

McMaster is doing everything they can, and the federal government has stepped in to help as well. When will your government step up and do your part to help these children?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member opposite is absolutely right. McMaster is doing incredible work. In fact, it is because of the work and innovation that's happening there that we were able to, in the fall, add an additional six-bed ICU capacity, because we know that parents' children should not have to wait for these needed surgeries. It speaks to the investments that we continue to make in working with those partners.

Recently, last month, I was at the Ron Joyce centre and seeing the incredible work that they are able to do when

they get a government and a partner. It just speaks to how we can improve the system if we work together. That's exactly what we're doing with McMaster.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Premier, things aren't getting better under your government; they're getting worse. This is an emergency all across Ontario. There are 12,000 Ontario children waiting for surgery right now. Bruce Squires, the president of McMaster Children's Hospital, shared his deep concern that 1,400 children have already missed the optimal window for surgery, and they now risk life-altering consequences—lifelong consequences—because they're missing surgeries. Our children urgently need your help, Premier. Your government has the power. You can fix this today. Premier, will you help these children?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Perhaps the member opposite didn't hear me clearly: We have been making investments. We have been working in particular with our children's hospital partnerships. In fact, we've made permanent investments, increasing the number of critical beds in Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; McMaster Children's Hospital, of course, in Hamilton; London Health Sciences; the Hospital for Sick Children; and of course, Kingston Health Sciences. We've made those investments permanent, because as we saw the need—we increase and we ensure that those capacities are improving.

It continues to amaze me that the member opposite is not actually encouraging and working and talking to the hospitals' CEOs to see the kind of innovation that is happening in their community hospitals, because it truly is world-renowned and working.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. The people in my great riding of Durham and across the GTHA have public transit as their primary form of transportation. But many riders within Durham and across the GTHA, using a host of different agencies, can get confused by the various fare systems and payment methods under different municipal transit services. My constituents have been asking for simpler ways to pay the fare, especially first-time transit users who may not always carry cash.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, can the minister please share with this House how our government is making it easier and more convenient to take transit in my riding and across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is right. It should be easier to tap and get down to watch the Leafs win the cup this year when you're taking public transit, Speaker. That's what we're doing. Through last summer and this winter, we introduced credit card tap on the Presto across GO and the 905. Speaker, I'm glad to say that across participating agencies, riders have now tapped with their credit cards one million times.

It doesn't stop there, though. Metrolinx is now also working to implement debit card tap very soon in the 905 and across the GO network. What's more, Metrolinx, on behalf of our government, has done great work with the

TTC to update Presto devices so both credit card and debit tap payment features can be brought to the hard-working people of the Six later this year.

Speaker, it's not enough just to build record transit, which we're doing under the leadership of this Premier. We're bringing game-changing initiatives, making it easier for connecting to the grid and getting down to watch our boys in blue.

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

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you to the associate minister for his response. It is great to see our government provide transit riders with more choices that make it easier for them to travel.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians have seen a rise in their cost of living, and this is due to global inflation and economic instability, of course. For many of them, transit fares add to the financial burden they are already bearing.

Our government must continue to remove barriers to ridership and make life more affordable for the hard-working individuals and families in my riding of Durham and across Ontario.

Therefore, can the associate minister explain how our government is offering Ontarians cost-effective ways to travel, particularly on public transit?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Speaker, the member is absolutely right; as we get back to normal times and navigate economic uncertainty, we have to make sure that we are putting money back into people's pockets, and that includes our transit riders.

In contrast to the previous Liberal government, with its transit hikes over six straight years when they were in power, Metrolinx, under our government, has not increased transit fares for the past four years.

What's more, our GO affordability pilot provided a 50% reimbursement for applicable GO riders in Peel region.

We're also delivering for the hard-working youth and students of this province, because no matter where you're enrolled, if you're between the ages of 13 and 19, we nearly doubled the youth and post-secondary discount—up to 40% off the standard fare on GO and UP Express.

Let's not forget that we eliminated double fares for riders connecting to GO Transit and major 905 transit agencies, saving up to \$1,800 a year, making it more affordable to get down to watch our Jays in action this summer or wherever you need to go.

## SHELTER SERVICES

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

In the middle of the night, outside a local shelter, Olivia's makeshift tent went up in flames. The shelter beds inside weren't available because provincial funding had run out. Olivia suffered severe burns to nearly half of her body. She's now fighting for her life. I want to send strength to Olivia's parents, Sean and Stephanie, as well as her friends and the service providers who knew her so well.

The city of London has double the number of unhoused people compared to two years ago—double—with 1,868 lives hanging in the balance, and the province is ignoring it.

Will this government do the right thing: invest in affordable and supportive housing and wraparound supports,

expand rent supplement programs, and fund municipalities properly to ensure that shelters don't have to close when the need is so high?

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I'm not sure where that question is coming from. We made a historic investment, under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Bethlenfalvy: \$202 million, additional, for the Homelessness Prevention Program. Members were in their ridings last week for a break week, and some of the announcements that have come out of our municipal partners have been amazing. With this extra \$202 million, our Homelessness Prevention Program now provides funding of almost \$700 million to provide service managers—like the one that the member opposite just talked about—additional funds to keep shelters open, to build capacity.

Definitely, we'll be reaching out on what the city of London will be doing with the extra dollars that the government just gave them and that the member opposite voted against.

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

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les infrastructures.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 13, 2023, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

## INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

### BETTER SCHOOLS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES ACT, 2023

### LOI DE 2023 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES ÉCOLES ET DU RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Lecce moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to amend various Acts relating to education and child care / Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'éducation et la garde d'enfants.

**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):** I'll invite the minister to briefly explain his bill if he wishes to do so.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** The government is introducing the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act. Our new legislative changes would, if passed, improve transparency for parents and ensure Ontario's publicly funded education system is unified in its focus on a back-to-basics approach for math, STEM and literacy, which will enhance the outcomes of all students. Our proposed changes would build on the work currently under way to ensure that our students have the supports they need to achieve their goals and succeed in all endeavours.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### GARRETT'S LEGACY ACT (REQUIREMENTS FOR MOVABLE SOCCER GOALS), 2023

### LOI DE 2023 SUR LE LEGS DE GARRETT (EXIGENCES RELATIVES AUX BUTS DE SOCCER MOBILES)

Mr. Bresee moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to provide for safety measures respecting movable soccer goals / Projet de loi 99, Loi prévoyant des mesures de sécurité pour les buts de soccer mobiles.

**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):** I'll invite the member to briefly explain his bill if he wishes to do so.

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** This bill enacts Garrett's Legacy Act (Requirements for Movable Soccer Goals), 2023. It responds to the tragic loss of a young man in my riding by the name of Garrett Mills. Unfortunately, there have been many other such fatalities.

The act establishes requirements for organizations and entities respecting the secure application of movable soccer goals that they make available for use by members of the public. The act provides for inspections and requires

the minister to establish a mechanism to report complaints of alleged non-compliance with the act.

STRENGTHENING MEMBERS'  
INTEGRITY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RENFORCER  
L'INTÉGRITÉ DES DÉPUTÉS

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 with respect to fees, gifts and personal benefits /  
Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur  
l'intégrité des députés en ce qui concerne les honoraires,  
les dons et les avantages personnels.

**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 Leader of the Opposition like to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Currently, subsection 6(1) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, provides that a member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of the member's duties of office.

This bill repeals and re-enacts subsection 6(1) to provide that a member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that might reasonably be seen to have been given in connection, directly or indirectly, with the performance of the member's duties of office.

PETITIONS

LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr. John Vanthof:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" from the good people of the Kenogami area:

"Whereas the purpose of this petition is to ensure the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing promptly and consistently enforces the rules in their bulletin (Information bulletin regarding off-grid development in unincorporated areas—dated November 30, 2022) when it comes to current and future off-grid developments in northern Ontario;

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

"That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing put a cease and desist on current development of off-grid developments in unincorporated townships until environmental compliance and prerequisite consultation with First Nations is completed."

I agree with it and will add my signature to the other thousands of names.

TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—this is a petition really well supported by the residents of Barrie—Innisfil.

"Whereas to address the federal government plans for an" accelerated "tax of over 14% on the carbon tax on April 1, 2023;

"Whereas it will raise the cost of everything;

"Whereas we call on the provincial government to continue to call on the federal government to stop the tax hike on the carbon tax as Ontarians and Canadians can't afford it;

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

"To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of" our "Building a Stronger Ontario Act" and to fight the carbon tax.

LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to read the petition entitled "Protect the Greenbelt and Repeal Bills 23 and 39.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bills 23 and 39 are the Ford government's latest attempt to remove protected land from the greenbelt, allowing wealthy developers to profit over bulldozing over 7,000 acres of farmland;

"Whereas green spaces and farmland are what we rely on to grow our food, support natural habitats, prevent flooding, and mitigate from future climate disasters with Ontario losing 319.6 acres of farmland daily to development;

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"Whereas the government's Housing Affordability Task Force found there are plenty of places to build homes without destroying the greenbelt, showcasing that Bill 23 was never about housing but about making the rich richer;

"Whereas the power of conservation authorities will be taken away, weakening environmental protections, and preventing future development;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately repeal Bills 23 and 39, stop all plans to further remove protected land from the greenbelt and protect existing farmland in the province...."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Senna.

LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas to address the new funding that has been provided to support Ontario's long-term-care homes, the government is investing \$5.5 million in 2023-24 to build new behavioural specialized units in long-term-care homes, including approximately 70 new specialized beds, to expand care for individuals with complex needs; and

"Whereas Ontario is providing \$1.2 million to the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association to help with recruitment efforts by promoting the personal support worker profession in the long-term-care sector; and

"Whereas Ontario continues to make progress on its plan to build modern, safe and comfortable long-term-care homes for senior residents:

“—through planned investments that total a historic \$6.4 billion since 2019;

“—Ontario is on track to build more than 31,000 new and over 28,000 upgraded beds across the province by 2028; and

“Whereas the government is helping to increase long-term-care capacity in communities across the province by providing development loans and loan guarantees to select non-municipal not-for-profit homes;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of the Ontario budget bill, Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act.”

I can't think of a better place to sign my name. Thank you very much.

### LABOUR LEGISLATION

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I am pleased to be able to read this petition entitled “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout, except for very limited use to undertake essential maintenance work to protect the safety and integrity of the workplace;

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

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

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

Of course I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Sophie.

### OPP DETACHMENT

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Frances Solomon from Killarney as well as the municipality of Killarney for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Keep the Noëlville OPP Detachment Open.

“Whereas insufficient communication and consultations have taken place with communities and relevant stakeholders concerning the OPP Noëlville detachment's continuing operations, and;

“Whereas the residents and visitors in the municipalities of French River, Markstay-Warren, St. Charles, Killarney and Britt-Byng Inlet as well as the First Nations of Dokis and Henvey Inlet deserve equitable access to a reliable, timely and efficient police response;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ontario Provincial Police to continue having Ontario Provincial Police officers reporting to an operational detachment location in Noëlville.”

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

### ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This petition is entitled “Develop an Ontario Dementia Strategy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it currently takes on average 18 months for people in Ontario to get an official dementia diagnosis, with some patients often waiting years to complete diagnostic testing;

“Whereas more than half of patients suspected of having dementia in Ontario never get a full diagnosis; research confirms that early diagnosis saves lives and reduces care-partner” issues;

“Whereas a PET scan test approved in Ontario in 2017 which can be key to detecting Alzheimer's early, is still not covered under OHIP in” 2023;

“Whereas the Ontario government must work together with the federal government to prepare for the approval and rollout of future disease-modifying therapies and research;

“Whereas the Alzheimer Society projects that one million Canadians will be caregivers for people with dementia, with families providing approximately 1.4 billion hours of care per year by 2050;

“Whereas research findings show that Ontario will spend \$27.8 billion between 2023 and 2043 on alternate-level-of-care (ALC) and long-term-care (LTC) costs associated with people living with dementia; and

“Whereas the government must follow through with its commitment to ensure Ontario's health care system has the capacity to meet the current and future needs of people living with dementia and their care partners;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to develop, commit and fund a comprehensive Ontario dementia strategy.”

I fully support this petition and will pass it along to page Randall.

## LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I am pleased to read this petition entitled “Stop the Bradford Bypass.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed Bradford Bypass is a \$2.2-billion, taxpayer-funded, 16.2-km, four-to-six-lane highway through the greenbelt between Highways 400 and the 404;

“Whereas according to a Toronto Star/National Observer investigation, the main beneficiaries of this project are land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario, and together own nearly 3,000 acres of land along the proposed highway corridor;

“Whereas the highway would threaten the Holland Marsh and the Lake Simcoe watershed, cutting through 27 waterways, damaging prime farmland, wetlands, woodlands, and significant wildlife habitat;

“Whereas the most recent EA for the project is nearly 25 years old, and this PC government has exempted it from the Environmental Assessment Act;

“Whereas due to this exemption, the government is now free to ignore impacts on agriculture, fish and fish habitat, property, human health, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and other impacts that would have otherwise required an updated assessment under the act;

“Whereas the highway will also destroy one of Canada’s most significant archaeological/historical sites, the Lower Landing;

“Whereas this highway was conceived in the last century, before the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the growth plan were enacted, and prior to global agreements to fight climate change;

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

“To cancel the politically driven, wasteful, and destructive plan for the Bradford Bypass, and redirect all funding for the Bradford Bypass into investments that better serve the regional transportation and mobility needs, including evidence-based plans for transit and regional road improvements, and other investments in the public interest.”

That’s a good one. I wholeheartedly support it. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Christopher.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I’m very glad today to be able to stand in the Legislature and present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas to address the current staffing shortages in the health care sector, the Ontario government has proposed an investment of \$200 million in 2023-24 to address immediate staffing shortages; and

“Whereas to grow the workforce for years to come, this includes:

“—offering up to 6,000 health care students training opportunities to work in hospitals providing care and gaining practical experience as they continue their education through the Enhanced Extern Program. This

program has offered these opportunities to over 5,000 health care students; and

“—supporting up to 3,150 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program; and

“Whereas more than 2,000 internationally educated nurses have enrolled in this program and over 1,300 of them are already fully registered and practising in Ontario; and

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“Whereas Ontario is continuing to hire more health care workers to ensure everyone can see a trained professional when they need to; and

“Whereas key new investments in 2023-24 to build the health care workforce include:

“—\$22 million to hire up to 200 hospital preceptors to provide mentorship;

“—\$15 million to keep 100 mid-to-late career nurses in the workforce; and

“—\$4.3 million to help at least 50 internationally trained physicians get licensed in Ontario;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of the Ontario budget bill, Bill 85, Building a Stronger Ontario.”

Speaker, I do indeed also support this petition today. I’m going to be affixing my signature to it and passing it to page Liam, who will be providing it to the table for our record.

## DON D’ORGANES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier Sylvie Brûlé de Blezard Valley dans mon comté.

« Sauver des organes pour sauver des vies... »

« Alors qu’il y a » plus de 1 367 « personnes en attente d’une greffe d’organe en Ontario;

« Alors que tous les trois jours, une personne en Ontario meurt parce qu’elle ne peut pas obtenir une greffe à temps;

« Alors que le don d’organes et de tissus peut sauver jusqu’à huit vies et améliorer la vie de jusqu’à 75 personnes;

« Alors que » 93 % « des Ontarien(ne)s appuient le don d’organes, mais seulement 36 % » d’entre nous « sont enregistrés;

« Alors que la Nouvelle-Écosse a connu une augmentation du nombre d’organes et de tissus destinés à la transplantation après la mise en oeuvre d’une loi sur le consentement présumé », et ce, « en janvier 2020; »

Ils et elles demandent à l’Assemblée législative « de changer la loi pour permettre un système de don basé sur le consentement présumé tel qu’énoncé dans le projet de loi...commémorant » M. « Peter Kormos (Sauver des organes pour sauver des vies) de la députée Gélinas », moi-même.

Merci, et je remercie Frederick pour l’amener à la table des greffiers.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I have a petition here from some community members who actually got together to get a lot of signatures. I have pages of signatures here, as well, on an issue that they're very concerned about.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Bank of Canada has rapidly increased the interest rate from 0.25% in March 2022 to 4.5% in January 2023;

"Whereas Ontarians are facing skyrocketing cost of living, yet another household expense has doubled for families across Ontario with the increase in mortgage payments while their household income remains the same;

"Whereas families across Ontario have exhausted their savings and took on intolerable debts to keep up with monthly mortgage payments;

"Whereas the rising interest rates have diminished people's buying power and threatened the livelihood of many families and homeowners who are on the verge of losing everything they worked for their entire lives;

"Whereas high interest rates and rising mortgage payments has forced many tenants to pay a higher rent or face the risk of losing their homes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the concerns of Ontarians impacted by rapidly increasing mortgage rates and cost of living into consideration and ensure that Ontarians are not forced to lose their homes."

Speaker, I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Sophie to take it to the Clerks.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING HOMEBUYERS,  
PROTECTING TENANTS ACT, 2023  
LOI DE 2023  
VISANT À AIDER LES ACHETEURS  
ET À PROTÉGER LES LOCATAIRES

Mr. Clark moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development/ Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** The minister.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Today it's both a pleasure and a privilege to rise for second reading of our government's proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. At the very start, I'll indicate that I'll be sharing the government's leadoff time today with the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, the newly minted Associate Minister of Housing, and my new parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs and housing, who's being engaged with the Speaker right now in a wonderful conversation—it's always great to have two Speakers in the House to try to keep me in line. Those other speakers

will be touching on some of the finer points of some of the items in our proposed legislation and our corresponding housing supply action plan. Both support our government's goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

The proposed changes that the government has put forward for debate here today are a reaction to market conditions that have been in place for far too long. In fact, a recent Statistics Canada study reveals that, over a 10-year period, beginning in 2011, Ontario has had the fourth-largest decline in home ownership rates amongst provinces and territories in Canada. This is something that is unprecedented. This isn't the first time that we've heard this sort of thing, but it's something that the government continually pledges—that we value home ownership, and we want to continue to have a climate where we can build quality, affordable housing that meets people's needs and their budgets.

Our government is fighting back. Decades of inaction, burdensome red tape and NIMBYism have created Ontario's housing supply crisis, and we're seeing its effects, but we are, as I said, fighting back because too many Ontarians have been priced out of the market through no fault of their own; *parce que trop d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens qui n'ont rien à se reprocher ont été exclus du marché du logement à cause des prix*. And those who rent their homes want some relief, as well.

That's why what we've proposed today for debate will support our government's fourth housing supply action plan—the plan, as I've said many times, to build 1.5 million homes, which is our goal, because we need to make life easier and more affordable for people across this province.

If passed, the proposed changes and our plan would further support renters. They would strengthen homebuyer protections. They'd reduce the cost of building a new home—something that I know our government feels very strongly about—and they'd streamline the rules around land use planning and encourage the development of more housing.

As I said, this is our fourth housing supply action plan. It builds upon the bold actions that the government has already put in place.

Our government released its first housing supply action plan, More Homes, More Choice, in 2019. That plan cut red tape and made it easier to build the right type of housing in the right places. Its aim was to make housing more affordable and to enable taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money.

In the spring of 2022, we released our second housing supply action plan, More Homes for Everyone. Our work leading up to that action plan included extensive consultations across the province, including Ontario's first Ontario-municipal housing summit. We received further feedback from the rural housing round table, something we had at the 2022 ROMA conference—the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference—and at meetings that we had with every municipal association in our province. In addition, the Housing Affordability Task Force that we appointed consulted with municipalities, they consulted



with experts, they consulted with the industry. As a result of the work with those stakeholders, More Homes for Everyone introduced targeted policies in the immediate term to make housing fairer for hard-working Ontarians and to make it faster to build homes that Ontarians need and, we believe, they deserve. That plan sped up approvals even further, and it took steps to gradually refund fees if municipal decisions weren't made under legislative time frames. Again, we recognized that more needed to be done, and again the government acted.

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Later in the year, we came out with our third housing supply action plan, More Homes Built Faster. It built on the concrete actions that we took from our previous action plans, and it took even more direct action to ensure that Ontarians across the province could access a home that truly met their needs.

This, of course, is all while the government passed legislation to give the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa more powers to work effectively with the province to cut red tape, to reduce timelines for developments, and to address local barriers that prevent more homes being built.

These are all the steps that we're taking to ensure that we can continue to move in the right direction as we build more homes across our province.

That's why we created the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team—a very important decision by the government to appoint this team to work on our housing supply action plans and to make sure that things get done. It has municipal leaders, and it has industry experts. The mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, is acting as chair; Cheryl Fort, the mayor of the town of Hornepayne, is vice-chair. The team that they're chairing is made up of experts across the housing and non-profit sectors. There is a wide range of experience and perspective that really reflects the diversity of housing needs across Ontario. I think that was very important for us to hit the right note. The team will evaluate progress, and they'll provide advice to our government on implementing the housing supply action plans so that we can continue to tackle Ontario's housing supply crisis.

The range of measures that the government has taken to increase housing supply—and I'm going to be the first to admit it: They're bold and they're transformative, and even though we know that their impact will take time to be fully felt throughout the housing sector, we continue to see the growing and positive impact across Ontario that those measures have had today.

In the last two years, housing starts in Ontario have reached levels that we have not seen in our province in over 30 years—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Thank you. That's very important. That member knows, in Barrie-Innisfil, the impact that our housing supply action plan is making.

Last year, rental housing, something that many members have spoken about—rental housing starts in the province reached an all-time high, something we should all be very proud of—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Steve Clark:** And in Mississauga too, my friend.

These trends have continued in 2023. I talked about it this morning in question period. I'll repeat some of the statistics that I quoted in my answer this morning. Compared to last year, Ontario has already seen an increase of nearly 1,200 housing starts, which is an 11% rise—very positive numbers, so far, in 2023. Purpose-built rental starts are currently more than double compared to the same period last year—again, very positive steps. Whether you look at the housing starts or the rental—again, very good numbers, so far, this year.

Let's take a look the city of Toronto, where Ontario's housing supply has been felt pretty acutely. There have been more than 4,600 housing starts in the first two months of this year alone. What's that number? It's 50% higher than compared to the same numbers just a year ago—very good numbers. Even better is that more than 1,500 of these units were rental starts, which is five times the amount from last year—again, wonderful numbers.

These positive trends are a really good sign for the government that our policies that we've championed—that is why we're continuing to move forward with new proposals to increase housing supply. It's very, very good news.

Let's talk about the bill that I've entitled Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. The government's proposed changes are really the basis of a number of strong measures that I speak about when I use the term “helping homebuyers and protecting tenants.” The proposed changes would obviously make life easier for renters in the province.

It would clarify and enhance a tenant's right to install air conditioning in their own unit. These changes would really stress the importance of ensuring that an air conditioner is installed safely and securely. And if the landlord supplies the electricity, they would be allowed to charge tenants a fee for any additional electricity costs.

The proposed changes would, if passed, also further strengthen tenant protections against evictions due to renovations, as well as those for the landlord's own use.

The other measure that I think is very important, even though the opposition voted against similar measures when we put it in Bill 124—we're proposing to double the maximum fines for offences under the Residential Tenancies Act to \$100,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for corporations. Folks, these would be the highest maximum fines in Canada for these types of events. We're serious about putting these measures forward. We were serious in our previous bill, in the middle of the pandemic.

We have looked at other ways to increase housing supply. We've made a number of changes in More Homes Built Faster. The plan that we've identified changes the opportunity for home builders to replace older, mid-size rental apartments with more modern rental buildings, something that we've heard, as part of our consultations, that people wanted us to consider—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Steve Clark:** And I hear some comments across that I'm sure we'll hear more about moving forward.

We're also proposing to create a new regulation-making authority to enable a balanced regulatory framework governing municipal rental replacement bylaws. It really will do a couple of things: It will create consistency across and between municipalities—something we felt needed to take place in this space when they establish these types of bylaws—and it really could help streamline the construction and revitalization of rental housing, while at the same point protecting tenants, which is something that we heard as part of our More Homes Built Faster consultation.

An example: Where municipalities are requiring land-owners to build replacement units, we're considering regulations that could require that these units retain the same core features. I'll get to that in a moment. We're also looking at measures to give existing tenants the right to move back into the unit at a similar rent. This would help keep rental housing affordable in those communities, while at the same point encouraging revitalization of older, deteriorating buildings and, at the end of the day, increasing rental housing supply. In other words, we'd be taking steps to help Ontarians who rent units that are no longer in satisfactory condition so that they can access more modern and appropriate housing, but at the same time, if they leave a two-bedroom apartment, they can return to a two-bedroom apartment, at the same level of rent as before.

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We're also—and the Attorney General talked about this this morning—making a huge investment in the Landlord and Tenant Board. As I said when we made the announcement a week and a half ago in London, this is the largest investment in the Landlord and Tenant Board since its inception—a very, very good decision. It's \$6.5 million to appoint 40 new adjudicators and hire five more additional staff in hopes of tackling the backlog. It's very, very important right now. Minister Downey was asked a question at that announcement. You're essentially doubling the amount of adjudicators—you're at 39 right now; you're going to add another 40. You're going to add another five administrative staff—something that we were responsive to. That \$6.5-million investment is a game-changer in the management of that tribunal. I think everyone in this House can agree, no matter what political stripe, that we need to have an adjudicative tribunal—the Landlord and Tenant Board—that works in a fair system both for landlords and tenants. I want to thank Minister Downey for accompanying this bill with this very, very strong policy that has been celebrated from both landlords and tenants across the province.

Our plan will also better protect homebuyers and their financial investments. I was pleased to join Minister Rasheed in Toronto three weeks ago, along with Associate Minister Tangri, to announce that our government is expanding deposit insurance for credit union members saving for the purchase of their first home. The first-home savings account which was introduced by the federal

government—credit union members can now use them to save for the purchase of their first home. In the event that the credit union fails, the credit union member's money in a first-home savings account would be protected.

We're also exploring, through Minister Rasheed's ministry, a cooling-off period on purchases of newly built freehold homes.

We're also exploring the requirement that purchasers of all new homes receive legal advice on their purchase agreements—something I think that, again, is responsive to many of the things that we've heard as part of our consultation.

These changes that are in this bill would continue to support a number of very important measures—things like intensification—while making sure that there is sufficient land to accommodate new homes and jobs that our province needs.

So to increase housing supply and speed up planning approvals, this bill and our consultations—we're proposing to update the provincial policy statement and integrate it with A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This would create a single province-wide, housing-focused land use planning document for Ontario. This proposed merged document would simplify existing policies. It would also refocus them on achieving housing outcomes while giving large and fast-growing municipalities the tools that they need to deliver more housing. As I've said many, many times, all of Ontario, not just the greater Golden Horseshoe, is a place to grow. And that's what our policies in this bill are reflecting.

More Homes for Everyone required municipalities to gradually refund zoning bylaw and site plan application fees if they fail to make a decision in a specified time period. We've listened to municipal feedback: We're proposing to postpone the start date from January 1 to July 1 of this year to give them time to adjust. I want to thank municipalities for their engagement on this.

Municipalities also told us, as part of More Homes for Everyone, that some of the smaller projects need to be able to address concerns stemming from a site plan review. So we're proposing, based on feedback, to allow municipalities to use site plan control for residential projects with 10 or fewer units in very certain circumstances—very specific recommendations that, again, responded to the feedback we received from our municipal partners.

This bill also—it was part of the announcement: We're reducing the cost of building housing. We're planning to freeze 74 provincial fees at current levels. This includes several fees related to Tribunals Ontario, the Ontario Land Tribunal, the building code. One of the things we heard when we had the consultation with municipalities and we talked about fees and charges—municipalities said, "What about the provincial fees?" So this decision by the government to freeze 74 provincial fees is a direct result of municipal feedback that we heard as part of consultation. We're consulting on implementation of the fee freezes via Ontario's Regulatory Registry, so there's more to come on that.

In conclusion, our proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, as I said at the outset of the speech, really builds on our previous actions that I detailed in the House. These are actions that support homeowners, renters and landlords, not-for-profit and private sector builders, and our municipal partners, so that, together, we can realize our goal of helping to build those 1.5 million homes by 2031.

This is a very bold and transformative plan, but under the leadership of Premier Ford, we said to the people last summer that we would put a plan in place to do this so that we can realize that goal of building 1.5 million new homes by 2031; pour que nous puissions réaliser ensemble notre but de contribuer à la construction de 1,5 million d'habitations d'ici 2031.

Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the chance to kick off debate. I'm now going to turn it over to my fantastic Associate Minister of Housing, the Honourable Nina Tangri.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The Associate Minister of Housing.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, Minister.

It really is an honour to be speaking today about the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act in my new capacity as the Associate Minister of Housing.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you.

I look forward to supporting our government's initiatives to help deliver on our commitment of 1.5 million homes in Ontario by 2031.

In my own riding of Mississauga–Streetsville, housing is a challenge for many of my constituents.

The Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act is proposed legislation that is crucial to our government's work to get more housing built in the province—housing that Ontarians across the province so desperately need.

Our housing supply action plans have made great progress in addressing our province's housing crisis. We are now building on the bold actions we have already put forward.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, more needs to be done. That is because Ontario's housing crisis is affecting not just homebuyers. Renters, too, are struggling. This is significant, given that Statistics Canada data reveal the growth in the number of renter households has outpaced the growth of homeowner households from 2011 to 2021 in each of Canada's 41 large urban centres. Ontario municipalities, like Barrie, Kitchener-Waterloo and Oshawa, saw some of the largest renter increases across the country.

That's why I'm pleased to have this opportunity to highlight how the proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act would better protect tenants in Ontario and make their lives easier.

Speaker, I would like to start by explaining a feature of our proposed legislation that will be welcomed by many renters. This concerns clarifying and enhancing the rules regarding air conditioning in rental units.

As we have seen for decades in summers past, the sun and humidity can take its toll on people if they don't have access to cool space. We propose to amend the Residential Tenancies Act so that when a landlord does not provide air conditioning, tenants would be permitted to install a window-mounted or portable air conditioning unit. This would be subject to, of course, some rules. First, a tenant must give written notice to the landlord of their intention to install an air conditioning unit prior to installation. Second, the air conditioning unit must be installed safely and securely, and the installation must not cause damage to the rental unit or the rental complex. Renters would also have to ensure that the installation and maintenance of the air conditioning unit complies with any applicable laws, including municipal bylaws and any prescribed rules. Finally, tenants who do not pay for electricity—that is, it is included in their rent—could be charged a seasonal fee. This would be based on the actual electricity cost to the landlord, or a reasonable estimate based on the information provided by the tenant.

Of course, we're not stopping there. Speaker, you can pick up a newspaper just about anywhere in Ontario and read about renters, some of them long-term renters, who are facing an uncertain future about where they and their family are going to live because their rental unit is being renovated. We know this is an issue in the rental system and we're trying to help. That is why our proposed legislation and future regulations would, if passed, increase tenant protections, specifically against evictions due to renovations as well as those for a landlord's own use. What our government is proposing to do is to give tenants greater access to remedies and also increase the reporting requirements that landlord must follow.

#### 1350

Our proposed changes state that a landlord, where they are ending a tenancy to do renovations, would be required to provide a report stating that the rental unit needs to be vacant for the renovations. A regulation would outline what details must be included in the report. Regulations would also set out the type of person who can provide this report, such as a professional engineer or an architect, for example. Once these regulations are made, if this document is not provided for the tenant along with an eviction notice, then the eviction notice would not be considered valid.

Our changes would also require landlords to provide tenants who indicated that they wanted to return to the unit with written notification of the estimated date of when the unit will be ready for occupancy after the renovations are completed. Written notification would also be required for any change in when renovations are expected to wrap up—that includes a new estimated completion date.

When the unit is ready for occupancy, the landlord would have to give the tenant a 60-day grace period to occupy that unit again. This will enable the tenant to provide the required 60-day notice to end their tenancy in their temporary accommodation if they are renting elsewhere while the renovations are completed. Landlords

must continue to allow tenants to move back in at a similar rent once renovations are complete.

Currently, if a landlord fails to give the right of first refusal to an evicted tenant after renovations are completed, a tenant is able to file a complaint with the Landlord and Tenant Board within two years. So we're proposing changes to the Residential Tenancies Act that would give a tenant two years after moving out, or six months after renovations are complete—whichever is longer—to file a complaint. Adding the proposed six-month post-renovation time frame recognizes that some renovations may take more than two years to complete.

Similarly, our proposed legislation and related regulations would tighten the rules regarding evictions when a landlord wishes to use a rental unit for their own use or for the use of one of their family members. In cases like these, in order to address less-than-genuine evictions, our proposed changes would set a time frame, to be prescribed in regulation, within which a landlord or their family member must move into the unit. If this move is not made by that deadline, the landlord would be presumed to have acted in bad faith if and when the tenant applies to the Landlord and Tenant Board for a remedy. The length of this time frame would be set at a future date once our government has consulted on a fair time period.

What's more, our government is proposing to increase the maximum fine for these offences. If passed, our legislation would amend the Residential Tenancies Act to double the maximum fines under this act. The maximum fines would rise to \$100,000 from \$50,000 for individuals, and to \$500,000 from \$250,000 for corporations. Even currently, Ontario's maximum fines for residential tenancy offences are the highest in all of Canada. Increasing these fines further will deter ill-intentioned landlords from committing offences such as unlawful evictions.

It is critical that tenants are protected from this type of behaviour.

However, we know that there are still many other kinds of landlord-tenant disputes that get resolved through the Landlord and Tenant Board. Our housing supply action plan wants to ensure tenants and landlords have timely access to justice. That is why the province is also investing \$6.5 million to appoint an additional 40 adjudicators and hire five new staff at the Landlord and Tenant Board. This investment is critical to our dispute resolution system, and it should help eliminate the backlog of cases at the LTB and reduce wait times.

Our proposed legislation would also amend the Residential Tenancies Act to mandate the use of the Landlord and Tenant Board's form for rent repayment agreements. This would be used when a tenant owes back rent and the landlord and the tenant agree to a repayment plan without immediately resorting to eviction. If the parties come to a repayment agreement, this legal document would set out the terms of repayment. Currently, there is no requirement for a repayment agreement to be in a certain form or format. This form provided by the Landlord and Tenant Board sets out, in plain language, that the landlord can apply to evict a tenant if the agreement is breached.

Speaker, I now want to move on to talk about what our proposed legislation would provide in terms of encouraging the building of rental housing. Our government is also working to protect and increase our province's rental housing stock.

Building on More Homes Built Faster, we propose to make further legislative changes to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act—and other acts, as necessary—to establish regulation-making authority to help create a balanced regulatory framework governing municipality rental replacement bylaws. Where municipalities require landowners to build replacement units, future regulations could require that new units contain the same core features as the original unit—this means features such as the same number of bedrooms, while permitting some flexibility when it comes to the size of the unit. Future regulations could also require municipalities to impose a requirement on landowners to provide existing tenants the right to move back into the unit at similar rent levels.

As well, we will be consulting on future regulations that would help form this balanced package of rules I have just talked about.

Speaker, as you can see, our government's proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act contains stronger protections and new rights for tenants. I truly believe that these proposed changes will make life easier for renters and landlords in Ontario.

I again want to express how much I look forward to supporting our government in my new role as we work towards our goal of helping build 1.5 million homes—homes for renters, homes for first-time homebuyers, homes for empty nesters who want to downsize.

We, as a government, are committed to making Ontario the best place to live, to work and to raise a family.

I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this bill.

I would like to now turn the floor over to the parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs and housing.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The member from Perth-Wellington.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's my honour, obviously, to share my time, as we've already heard from the great Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the associate minister in this place. It's an honour to speak on our government's proposed legislation that would support a much-needed fourth housing supply action plan. Our proposals are crucial to our government's work to get housing built that Ontarians desperately need.

Speaker, my riding of Perth-Wellington is home to over 4,000 farm operations and many predominantly rural municipalities. These communities, like others across Ontario, are feeling pressure and demand for housing that is greater than the supply currently is. Whether it's for farm workers, rental housing for young people and new immigrants, or the missing middle, there is a need for housing in every single community in my riding. That's why I'm pleased to be part of a government that is acting so strongly to support more homes across all areas of

Ontario and delivering on our commitment to see 1.5 million new homes built by 2031.

I'm also pleased to speak on behalf of a generation of Ontarians—my generation—which has faced historic difficulties when it comes to finding a home they can actually afford. I'm proud to be part of a government that understands the difficulties that my generation and future generations will face if we do not address this housing crisis.

We're taking historic action to tackle the housing supply crisis and build the homes Ontarians need. Our housing supply action plans have made great progress, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing alluded to earlier, but more work needs to be done. This proposed legislation and corresponding changes to the provincial policy statement would see that more is done, not only in our urban centres, but also in our rural areas.

Ce projet de loi ferait avancer les choses tant dans nos centres urbains que dans nos régions rurales.

Speaker, our province is layered with planning rules and land use plans. All of Ontario is subject to a set of planning rules called the provincial policy statement, also often referred to as PPS. Where the PPS is the sole set of land use planning rules, it's fairly clear what rules a developer or a builder must follow to get a proposed residential project approved. However, in the greater Golden Horseshoe, there is an additional set of planning rules called A Place to Grow. If we want to get the homes built that we desperately need now, let alone in the future for the sizable population growth we're going to see, it is critical that builders and developers have a clear and streamlined set of rules to follow in this and all areas of our province.

Ontario is projected to grow by 5.6 million people by 2046, and the greater Toronto area alone is expected to be home to 2.9 million of those people. Not only that, but the greater Golden Horseshoe generates more than 25% of Canada's gross domestic product. So I think all members of this House will agree that, as I said, it's critical we get land use planning right in this region and across all regions of Ontario.

#### 1400

There are several challenges brought on by the magnitude of growth that is forecasted.

There will be increased demand for major infrastructure investments—this includes renewing aging infrastructure and addressing infrastructure deficits associated with growth.

There will be increased traffic congestion, with resulting delays in the movement of people and goods. Already we are seeing those delays in the greater Golden Horseshoe, and they are costing billions of dollars in lost GDP every year.

The impacts of globalization are transforming the regional economy at a rapid pace. This makes long-term planning or employment more uncertain.

Speaker, people over the age of 60 are expected to represent more than a quarter of the population by 2041,

especially in communities such as mine in Perth–Wellington. That means we will need more age-friendly development that can address unique needs and circumstances. This includes a more appropriate range and mix of housing options, easier access to health care and other amenities, walkable built environments, and an age-friendly approach to community design to meet the needs of all people.

But all these planning rules on top of planning rules result in massive delays in getting land use approvals and enormous costs to the builders or developers and municipalities to get these approvals through. We need to streamline Ontario's planning rules and encourage more housing.

That's why, on April 6, our government launched its 60-day consultation on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, seeking input on the proposed combining of the PPS and A Place to Grow into a new province-wide land use planning policy instrument. We propose to integrate these two planning instruments into one streamlined housing-focused policy, which will be called the provincial planning statement. This would increase housing supply and speed up planning approvals by simplifying existing policy and refocusing on achieving housing outcomes. Our proposed provincial planning statement would do this by giving direction for all of Ontario, as well as direction tailored to the unique needs of large, fast-growing municipalities. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing already noted, all of Ontario—not just the GTA—should be a place to grow. In our new proposed planning statement, this direction is organized across five key pillars. Those pillars are: generating an appropriate housing supply; making land available for development; providing infrastructure to support development; balancing housing with resources; and, obviously, implementation.

For the first of those pillars, generating an appropriate housing supply, our proposed new land use document would give specific direction to Ontario's largest and fastest-growing municipalities in planning for major transit station areas and other strategic growth areas and in greenfield lands to ensure an appropriate supply of housing. However, simpler and more flexible policies would be given to all other municipalities to reflect local conditions while encouraging growth. For those large and fast-growing municipalities—we've identified 29 in Ontario.

Our proposed new planning policies would also enable more rural housing by allowing greater flexibility in smaller communities such as mine in Perth–Wellington. This could, for example, create more housing for on-farm workers or for farm operators' children, if they choose to do so. It could also be done through engagement with the private sector in small and rural municipalities to provide infrastructure needed for new housing.

Our proposed policies would also require more housing near transit. This means Ontario's 29 large and fastest-growing municipalities would need to plan for growth around transit in urban centres and other strategic growth areas such as downtowns, and for undeveloped land, as well. For transit-related growth in what are called the major transit station areas, we provide minimum density

targets that municipalities have to meet in their land use planning. Those same municipalities would have the right to see maximums for density and height. As well, municipalities would be encouraged to meet provincial density targets for undeveloped land.

Our next pillar in our proposed provincial policy planning statement is more land for development. This is part of our plan to build all sorts of homes for Ontarians, in urban and suburban areas as well as rural parts of our province, while still maintaining our strong environmental protections across Ontario.

Speaker, it's essential that municipalities plan for future growth with regard to population and employment. Our proposal would therefore require municipalities to ensure that enough land with water and waste water pipe access is ready to meet their communities' anticipated housing needs over the next three years. We would also require municipalities to adhere to a 25-year planning horizon.

Our government has said this time and time again, but it bears repeating: We will continue to encourage municipalities to build where it makes sense. That means major office and institutional developments should be near transit, and areas of retail and commercial activity that provide jobs should also permit and encourage housing, schools and other community uses to create a complete community. Municipalities would need to consider increasing density on employment lands as well as locations near transit corridors.

Of course, municipalities would need to balance housing needs against other necessities. That means large parcels of land must be preserved for agriculture and heavy industry that will require separation from residential areas and other sensitive uses. This would help mitigate the potential effects of their operation, such as noise and odours.

We also recognize that residential development cannot happen in a vacuum.

Being one of the former parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Education, I was very pleased to see that we're encouraging school boards and municipalities to work together to encourage them to innovate and integrate schools into housing developments.

Infrastructure corridors must also be considered and protected. Communities need electricity; they need transit; they need transportation. And our government recognizes the growth demands being placed on large and fast-growing municipalities such as those in the greater Golden Horseshoe. So our proposed land use policies in our provincial planning statement would have special direction for them while giving them flexibility. However, all planning authorities would still be required to integrate storm, sewage and water into development planning so that they can minimize risks and accommodate growth.

Our province is blessed with many resources, and we need to protect them. That's why our proposal would require municipalities to map and designate prime agricultural areas to support our province's productive and valuable agri-food network.

I want to state that Ontario would maintain all greenbelt protections, including policies on environmental and agricultural lands.

Just as valuable, Ontario's water resources need protection. Municipalities would be encouraged to adopt a watershed planning approach rather than requiring watershed plans.

Aggregates, too, are a resource that must be protected. To make it easier to build housing, we must allow access to aggregates—and that is sand and gravel used in making cement. If we're to work to lower housing costs, we must allow access to these deposits in more cost-efficient locations, as well as streamline the approvals process needed to extract these necessary resources.

Speaker, our proposed policies would also encourage municipalities to focus on improving air quality and addressing the impacts of a changing climate.

Of course, we're also proposing some further legislative measures to support our actions to streamline land use planning rules to build more housing.

Our proposed changes would allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to require landowners to enter into agreements for projects assigned to the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator. This would help ensure commitments made by property owners are fulfilled; for example, in a case where a ministerial zoning order may be contemplated.

Speaker, as you can see, our proposed policies for land use planning in Ontario are extensive. They are just what our province needs to address our housing supply crisis and meet future demand.

As I mentioned earlier, our 60-day public consultation on these proposed policies and our proposed provincial planning statement began on April 6. I encourage those who wish to comment to go to the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

As you've heard from my colleagues who spoke before me, our government is committed to our goal of helping build 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

Our Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants plan and its supporting proposed legislation is the package that Ontarians need now and for the projected demand in the future.

Now I'd like to turn it over to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

1410

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you to my colleague the parliamentary assistant for his wonderful remarks.

I just want to say good afternoon to everyone.

Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today, as the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, in support of the housing supply action plan 4.0.

As we all know, there is a housing crisis in Ontario.

I want to say thank you to Steve Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as to the associate minister—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** I'm sorry to interrupt the minister, but we cannot refer to members by their name. Please refer to them by the ministry or portfolio.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** I apologize. I was too excited about this bill.

I just wanted to say that I want Ontarians to know the great work the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is doing. I think he deserves a huge round of applause from all of us. I must say thank you—from the future generation.

Also, I want to acknowledge and thank two of my colleagues from the opposition, the member from University–Rosedale as well as the member from Humber River–Black Creek, for their input during some of the meetings with my ministry team.

Speaker, as you know, our government has made it clear that we will do everything possible to build new houses so all Ontarians can fulfill their dreams of finding a place to call home. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, caucus colleagues at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Associate Minister of Housing, we have been leading our government in this bold action to get 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years. Each year, we continue to bring in new legislation to ensure we get more shovels in the ground faster and make it easier for Ontarians to find the right home that suits their needs and budgets.

Consumer protection is at the core of my ministerial mandate, and I'm pleased to share how we are further strengthening protections for Ontarians looking for a new home. This bill, if passed, brings meaningful change to the lives of many Ontarians who dream of owning a new home—a dream that, unfortunately for many, is seemingly more and more out of reach. This is why more action is needed now.

Just a few weeks ago, I was pleased to announce an upcoming consultation to inform the development of new measures that we are considering to better protect buyers of new homes in this province.

I want to say thank you again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the associate minister, and the PA for working with us in making sure that we can provide the best consumer protection to Ontarians.

A piece of this plan involves exploring a potential cooling-off period for the purchases of new freehold homes to help strengthen consumer protection and build consumer confidence. A cooling-off period is a consumer protection measure designed to better protect homebuyers who are interested in purchasing a new home from a builder. This gives homebuyers more time to review or even rescind their purchase agreement within a specific time frame. In addition, builders would be required to disclose the cooling-off period to purchasers.

We would also explore how we can continue to improve consumers' understanding of their contracts and rights through mandatory legal reviews of all agreements of purchase and sale for both new and pre-construction homes alike. This would empower all buyers of new homes to shop with confidence and give them peace of

mind that they understand any risks associated with their purchase agreement.

In the future, my ministry will hold a consultation with the public, builders, consumer advocacy groups, and the legal sector on the Ontario Regulatory Registry—and I would appreciate if members opposite could also encourage their constituents to be part of this consultation so we can have a meaningful conversation and see how, together, we can protect Ontarians—that would focus on:

- a potential cooling-off period that applies to purchases of new freehold homes;

- how long such a cooling-off period should be;

- the mandatory disclosure of the cooling-off period by builders and developers to inform purchasers;

- a possible cancellation charge for purchasers who cancel their agreement; and

- the requirement for purchasers of all new homes in Ontario to receive a mandatory legal review on their agreements of purchase and sale.

This would be part of the consultation that we at the ministry would be looking at, and we would appreciate feedback from everyone. This consultation is part of our government's broader strategy to build the homes that Ontarians need, and to better protect the individuals and families who are looking to buy them.

Speaker, as you can see, we are working to expand our robust protections and further help hard-working consumers to make smart, safe choices when they buy a new home in Ontario.

Speaker, I can assure you that we care deeply about supporting and safeguarding Ontario's homebuyers as they make one of the most important decisions in their lifetime—finding a place to call home. I'm sure we all have done that or will do it in future, and we want to make sure that we have the right consumer protections in place to make sure that when Ontarians, families and first-time homebuyers are out there getting ready to make that purchase, they can do it with confidence that this government will have their back.

As someone who has called Ontario home for decades, with my wife and five beautiful children, I understand all too well the importance of building a stable home to live, work, play, do business and raise a family—a home that will foster the growth and development of our future generation.

I know my colleague the parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs and housing talked about homes for the future generation, and I want to commend him for his advocacy in making sure that the future generation—that includes my kids, our children, our grandchildren—have a place in Ontario that they can call home.

Simply put, we must enact legislation and regulations that have teeth to protect new home buyers, who must be able to trust that they are being protected.

All across this great province, hard-working Ontarians are eager to purchase a home.

As I mentioned earlier, through the housing supply action plan 4.0, our government is taking bold actions to

make sure that we're able to tackle the housing supply crisis that we're facing right now.

I've heard from many Ontarians, and, just last week, when we had our constit week, we had the opportunity to be in our ridings, and we heard from our constituents, and I heard from grandparents and parents that we need to do something to make sure that their children, their grandchildren, can afford a home, can actually buy a home in this province. We owe this to our next generation, and we have to do this. We recognize that we have a responsibility to the people of Ontario who elected us. They expect and deserve nothing less than our support.

My ministry and I will leave no stone unturned in delivering on our promise to protect consumers and Ontarians. I feel very strongly about building a bright and promising future for today's homebuyers and for our future generations. We want to make sure that our future generations are proud of the work that we are doing for them.

1420

Speaker, our government has a very clear vision and a strong plan for the future of Ontario's homebuilding marketplace. We look forward to the feedback and input we will receive from our upcoming consultations on the proposed protections—protections such as a cooling-off period that would protect homebuyers interested in purchasing a new freehold home from a builder, or the requirement for purchasers of all new homes in Ontario to receive mandatory legal review on all agreements of their purchase or sale so that Ontarians can be confident in the contracts they are signing.

As we deliver on our ambitious mandate to restore consumer confidence in the new home marketplace, I encourage our opposition members—and I did mention this earlier, as well—to please support us in these measures, to support the next generation. It is our responsibility. It is our duty to make sure that our next generation is proud of all the work that we are doing so that they can have a better future.

I've shared this story many times in this House, and I feel like this is a perfect opportunity for me to remind everyone. I always talk about my grandfather who came to this country. He was a World War II veteran, and he came to this country in the late 1960s to have a better future not just for himself, but also for his children. As an immigrant, I know one of the things that he was very proud of—and he always encouraged his children, and then he also encouraged us—was giving back to this country. One of his dreams that I always say—his Canadian dream—was that his children could afford a home in this province. That is a story of, I would say, all immigrants when they come to this country for a better future—it's not only just to have a good future for their children, their grandchildren, but also the stability that they can afford a home here. My parents had the same dream for me and for my siblings, too.

I think, as the parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs and housing talked about, that his generation, the next generation—we want to make sure that we are able to

provide that security, that power to buy a home to our next generation.

Honestly, we could have not done it without the leadership of Premier Ford and the great leadership of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, because he is—honestly, he and Premier Ford are making sure that our next generation can call a place home, where they can raise their families, just like how we are raising our families, have that backyard where they can play with their kids.

So thank you to you and your incredible team for making sure to bring that dream a reality.

Together, I know we can and will make our vision, and a bright and prosperous future for all Ontarians, a reality.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The member from Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Waterloo residents are so concerned about the cost of sprawl with this bill and the undermining of our aquifer, which Waterloo region relies on. Without water—that compromises our economy, our viability as a region.

This is what Phil Pothen from Environmental Defence said: “This government has been choosing to squander what remains of Ontario's quality farmland and rare southern forests and wetlands to enrich well-connected land speculators.... Unless we use land, labour and equipment much more efficiently, and focus home building in existing neighborhoods, we will not have the capacity to deliver” the 1.5-million-dollar—not dollar—“the 1.5 million homes we need in the next decade.” They will be \$1.5 million on the greenbelt, I can assure you.

Why is this government so willing to gamble on our environment, on the long-term sustainability of this province? Why are you being so reckless in the planning process?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, unlike the member opposite and the New Democratic Party, our government believes that it doesn't matter where you live in Ontario; it should be a place to grow. We have two pieces of policy, our provincial policy statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and we're consulting on a single provincial policy statement. The new policy would provide municipalities with a variety of things—flexibility, the opportunity to create more homes in both urban and rural communities. It will support local economies and create jobs. It will continue to protect the environment, including existing greenbelt protections.

Again, Speaker, we believe that it doesn't matter whether you live in or outside the greater Golden Horseshoe; there should be a policy to create growth. That's a fundamental—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you. Questions?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I just want to thank everyone who spoke today.

Housing and our housing plan are so important.

Being from a riding in Etobicoke, you see cranes everywhere, building, building, building. They're doing high-rises everywhere, as an example. But the problem is, not



everyone can live in Etobicoke. Not everyone can live in Toronto. It's also very expensive to live in Toronto, and it's very expensive to live in Etobicoke.

Minister, I do appreciate the work you have done to date.

Can you tell the people of my riding what you are doing so some of these people can find homes in other places around the province, outside of Toronto?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the member, who, by the way, was my first parliamentary assistant in housing when our government became government in 2018—she knows from representing a very good growth community within Etobicoke the opportunity to make sure that you have a balance.

We've put some fairly aggressive, transformative goal policies forward. But we're going to need to do more. We're going to need to build upon the success of our housing supply action plans. I talked about the statistics that we have in the province. But we need to ensure that no matter whether you live—in northern Ontario, the east, the west or the south—you've got a place to grow and opportunities to build homes. And that's exactly what this plan, Bill 97, builds upon.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville and Mississauga East–Cooksville for your comments today. I'll address my question to either one of you, whoever wants to answer it.

This government has had all kinds of housing bills. You've overridden the democratic right of the people of Toronto, Niagara, York and Peel to majority-vote democracy in our municipalities. You're paving over the green-belt. You're giving a \$5-billion taxpayer-funded donation to developers. And yet, the price of housing keeps going up.

When you were elected in 2018, the cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Mississauga was \$1,800; today, it's \$2,299. That's a 24% increase over last year.

When will you start reducing the cost of housing in Mississauga? And what will the cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Mississauga be in 2026, at the end of eight years of Conservative rule?

1430

**Hon. Steve Clark:** This guy amazes me with some of his questions and some of his statements. Here is a party—the New Democratic Party—that always stands up for high taxes.

For the average home in the GTA, the fees and charges add \$119,500 to the cost of a home. There are studies that are being done that show rental costs are going up because of these fees. There are statistics that show that these costs add, on a 20-year mortgage for a young couple, over \$800 a month.

This is a guy, and his party, that stands up all the time for high costs, high taxes, high fees. Ontarians are done with that type of mentality.

We want to build upon the success of our plan to continue to reduce the baseline costs and to build more housing.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Housing.

In 2022, the landlord and tenant tribunal received more than 5,500 eviction applications in which the landlords sought units for themselves, family members or new buyers. That was an increase of 41% from 2019. At the same time, the number of Ontario tenants filing T5 applications—which allow renters to seek compensation from landlords who are not honest about the reason for requiring the unit—shot up by 58%.

My question to the Associate Minister of Housing is, what is in this bill that will help protect both landlords and tenants in front of the landlord and tenant tribunal?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I thank the member for the question. It's really important.

He is absolutely right; the changes under the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023, if passed, will introduce new actions to make life easier for renters by strengthening their rights and their protections. Some of these changes would double the maximum fines for offences under the Residential Tenancies Act—that would be now \$100,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for corporations. We doubled it in the past. We already have the strongest, and we're making them even stronger, just to make sure that renters do have those protections.

When evicting a tenant to use the unit themselves or for one of their family members, a landlord would have to move into the unit by a specific deadline.

Having these measures in place is protecting tenants, which is what this government wants to do.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I listened to the minister and the government members talking about this bill, and I wanted to share with them a report last week from rentals.ca that showed London was second only to Brampton in terms of the rate of year-over-year increases in rents. There was a whopping 27% jump in one-bedroom rents compared to the last year. London is also the fastest-growing city in Ontario. This has nothing to do with permit fees. This has to do with the number of people in our city who need housing. Any new housing that is being constructed doesn't have any rent control whatsoever.

So what exactly is this government doing to protect the tenants in London who are facing these huge rent increases and who are looking at getting into units with no rent control at all?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I'm going to answer that question by quoting Josh Morgan, the mayor of London. We were in London a couple of weeks ago. Actually, the mayor is going to be here today to meet with the Premier. I can't wait to see him. In regard to the announcement we made about tenants, here's his quote: "Today's announcement is welcome news for renters in London and across Ontario, and I'm so pleased Minister Clark, Associate Minister Tangri and Attorney General Downey were able to be here in person to make it. London shares the province's goal of

tackling the housing supply crisis by getting more shovels in the ground, including for rental housing. That's why London was one of the first cities to approve its housing pledge in response to last year's provincial housing supply action plan." I'm going to answer a question about London right from the mayor.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** It's good to be standing here today to speak about Bill 97, the government's Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. This bill was introduced last Thursday, the Thursday before, and it came as part of a flurry of announcements and proposals and decisions that the government introduced. Not only did we get this bill, which proposes eight regulatory changes to Ontario's renting and planning laws, but it happened at the same time as this government's decision to begin the process of merging the growth plan with the provincial policy statement to create a new provincial planning statement, and also to rewrite and redraw six new municipal official plans. So it was really a big week for the government's insistence that doubling down on sprawl is the way out of our housing crisis, and I'm here to tell you loud and clear that it is not.

How I'm going to take up my hour today is that I'm going to give you my initial thoughts about what this bill means, what these proposed regulatory changes mean. Then I'm going to go into the proposed changes into some more detail, especially around Bill 97, and a little bit around the growth plan and the provincial policy statement, because they really are twinned with this bill and they're very much related to the "helping homebuyers" statement in the title. And then I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the solutions that we are advocating for, which really focus on helping Ontarians get that home they can afford and a lot less on the Conservatives' plan, which is really to help their developer donor friends make a whole lot of money—from renters, in particular.

The Conservatives have introduced and passed many housing bills and the take-home message for me is that what this government is doing right now is not working because buying and renting a home in Ontario has never been more expensive. It's never been more expensive. And for a period of time, when your government got into power, it would have been very easy for you to turn to the Liberals and say, "Oh, look, that's on you." I get that. But now this government has been in power for five years and so those claims of blaming another party are ringing hollow, because this government has had five years to fix the housing affordability crisis and you haven't. It's never been more expensive to rent and it has never been more expensive to buy a home.

In this bill, the title is "protecting tenants," and when I read through the details of the proposed changes that are being made, my initial thought was that this is certainly better than the status quo—and the status quo is pretty hard, is pretty bad for renters right now. But I would summarize it as saying that these changes certainly don't go far enough. And when I really look into the details, the

proposals that this government is making to protect tenants from illegal eviction are so flimsy to the point that they would not be effective at all. It's not just me saying this; it's leading housing stakeholders—ACTO, FMTA, housing advocacy groups—because you really don't deal with the issue of enforcement, and I'm going to get to that when I go into the details.

The other thing I noticed here was around this government's decision to look at what the Human Rights Tribunal ruled, to allow tenants to have an air conditioning unit so that they're not miserably hot or at risk of heat stroke in our increasingly hot summers. And only this government could concoct a move where they could turn a Human Rights Tribunal ruling into a rent hike for renters. Only this government could think of a clever way of doing that, so well done for you.

My other key messages before I get into the details, the other key thoughts I had are that the decision to double down on sprawl and upend our planning, how we plan and how we build in this province, is just going to make it so much more expensive for municipalities to provide the services that these new developments are going to need, from daycares to roads to electricity to transit. All these services are going to cost more, because it costs so much more to service a low-density, single-family-home subdivision than it does to service and to provide the necessary infrastructure when you build in areas that are already zoned for development.

**1440**

What this means on a practical level is that the tax hikes that Ontarians are seeing in their property tax bills—they're getting these property tax bills now. They're going to see another tax hike and another tax hike and another tax hike, coupled with service cuts, because it is so expensive to build this infrastructure and maintain this infrastructure for this low-density suburban sprawl, this very backwards approach to planning that you're moving forward on in this misguided hope—it's becoming very clear now—in a way that it's not going to address the housing affordability crisis and not even the housing supply crisis.

The final note before I get into the details is that I was troubled to hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing refuse to admit that he will not commit any further encroachment to the greenbelt. He did that in question period, he did that in the press conference that took place immediately after the introduction of Bill 97, and that is a real shame, because Ontarians have been very, very clear—thousands and thousands of emails and calls and rallies have been organized on this—that they want this government to keep their promise and keep the greenbelt whole and to protect farmland. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing cannot even commit to not encroaching on the greenbelt further, and I think that's a shame.

We need real solutions to address our housing crisis, and that means not just talking about housing supply, which is absolutely essential, but also talking about housing affordability. I'm not seeing this government take housing affordability seriously or look at the relationship

between housing supply and housing affordability. Sometimes I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has difficulty saying the words “housing affordability.”

What I want to see this government move forward on is a commitment to build more homes by ending exclusionary zoning in a serious way—you’ve taken some half-hearted steps there, but need to go further—investing in the construction of affordable homes, clamping down on investor-led speculations so first-time homebuyers can buy the home, and making rent affordable again, making it so that people who rent can afford to live in this province, because right now they can’t, and they’re leaving. The trends for interprovincial migration right now are through the roof. It’s masked because immigration trends to Ontario are going up very fast, but young people, skilled people, people who work in these high-need sectors like construction and health care—they’re looking at our province, they’re looking at the cost of buying a home, they’re looking at how much it costs to rent, they’re realizing they’re not even able to save, and they’re saying, “I’m moving to Saskatchewan, I’m moving to Alberta. I’m getting out of here.” That’s a shame because they’re taking their talents with them.

That’s my overall assessment of the bill, and now I’m going to go into the details, and there are a lot of details. The first thing I’m going to talk about is municipal rent-protection laws. When I read this bill—it was very interesting—I noticed that schedule 2 and schedule 5 of Bill 97 allow the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to eliminate, weaken and alter municipal rental replacement bylaws. I must say, this is a slight improvement from Bill 23, which just gave the Conservatives the power to weaken or eliminate rental replacement bylaws, and now the Conservatives, the government of the day, is giving themselves the power to improve rental replacement bylaws as well. I would call that a step in the right direction.

I want to take a step back for those who are listening just to explain what rental replacement bylaws are. Essentially, these are the laws that govern what developers must do if they demolish a rental building and replace it with a condo. I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talk on and on about how developers are going to come in and they’re going to look at these mid-size rental buildings, they’re going to demolish them and then they’re going to replace them with big purpose-built rentals. That is not what is happening in Ontario today. What is happening is that developers are looking at these purpose-built rentals—some of them are mid-sized; some of them are really big—and they don’t want to turn it into purpose-built rentals. Some of them might be, but the vast majority of them are going to be condos. That’s what they are, so I’ll make sure to communicate with the minister about that fact.

There are a few municipalities that have these rental replacement bylaws—Mississauga, Hamilton and Toronto—and other cities were looking into it as well, such as Ottawa, although the minister has gutted Ottawa’s

rental replacement bylaw in the rewriting of Ottawa’s municipal plan, which is a shame. Toronto’s is one of the best. Toronto’s bylaw requires developers to return that tenant to an equivalent rent-controlled apartment at about the same rent, after construction of the new, bigger condo is complete, and also compensate the tenant for the period of time they are out of their unit while the construction is taking place. That can take two, sometimes three, years—sometimes more.

The amount of money a tenant receives varies depending on what the city negotiates with each developer, and it is our position that a tenant shouldn’t be losing any money. That top-up should match what the tenant paid in the building that’s being demolished and what they have to pay for an equivalent unit in the nearby area while they’re waiting for construction to be complete.

We didn’t pull this out of the sky. This is what’s happening in Burnaby, BC, right now, and Burnaby, BC, has one of the highest rates of construction in the country—just to make that point.

So this is a very important bylaw, and when people, renters, are discovering that the Ontario government is wanting to gut this rental replacement bylaw, they are terrified. They are scared. They are losing sleep because they are fearful that this government is going to gut these rental replacement bylaws and make it very difficult for them to get back into their unit that they’ve held on to for many years.

I participated in a recent protest organized by tenants in some of the buildings that are slated for demolition in the city of Toronto, about two weeks ago. Those buildings include 25 St. Mary, 145 St. George and 55 Brownlow. These are big rental buildings. Over a hundred people came out, and they spoke one after the other about how scared they were, how long they’ve lived in the area, how they don’t know if they’ll be able to find another affordable rental apartment if they have to move out.

One person we’ve been working with for a while: Her name is Pat. She’s in her eighties. She’s on a fixed income. She has worked her entire life. She is terrified that if she is forced to move, she will never find an affordable unit in the Annex community that she calls home. I don’t want her to have to move out and never get back into a unit, and I don’t want her to say goodbye to her friends and family who live in the area, as well.

And it’s not just them. We asked the city of Toronto to give us an understanding of how many units are at risk right now, and there are 3,441 properties in the city of Toronto right now that are at risk of being demolished, and if this government doesn’t come up with strong rental protection laws, at risk of never being replaced. That’s a lot of responsibility on your shoulders, because these renters want to keep their homes.

What I also find concerning is that the number of deals that developers are making with the city to demolish these units under the city’s current strong rental protection laws have been stalled, because many of these developers are sitting back and saying, “Whoa, whoa, whoa. We shouldn’t make a deal now, under the city of Toronto’s

really strong rental protection laws. We're going to wait and see what happens with this provincial law, because maybe we're going to get a good deal. So we're going to wait and see, because maybe we won't even have to move these tenants back, or we will, but the enforcement laws will be so weak that for all intents and purposes—ehh—they'll have permanently lost their homes."

That is exactly what's happening. Since the passage of Bill 23, just one demolishing approval has been approved by the city of Toronto—just one. So you can imagine these tenants are pretty worried.

And it's not just these 3,441 units that are at stake. If the Conservative government chooses to gut these municipal rental replacement bylaws, it will mean that this government is choosing to declare open season on these tenants who live in purpose-built-rental areas that are already zoned for height, because it means that it'll be cheaper for developers to come in, knock these purpose-built rentals down and build very expensive condos that renters will not be able to afford. Someone like Pat is not going to be able to afford a \$700,000 condo. They're just not, not on a fixed income. These people will be priced out of their neighbourhoods.

**1450**

That means so much is at stake. The future of private market affordable housing in the city is at stake. The affordability of our province is at stake. And there are so many private market affordable homes that are at risk because of this government's enthusiasm to just listen to developers and not listen to what it's like to be a renter in this city, in this province, and how they need to have affordable housing as well. I urge you to look hard at that and really come up with a provincial rental replacement law which is strong.

When I go and look at the regulation that the government has set up to get in feedback for what this provincial rental replacement bylaw will look like—which is where I think you're going—I see some concerns. The one concern I see is that the government wants to give developers some flexibility on what kind of home a renter can return to, likely one that still has the same number of bedrooms but is likely smaller in size than the original. I think that's concerning, that there is a move by this government to listen to developers but not to listen to renters.

It is a concern, because developers can get very creative when they're looking at meeting the requirement of a two-bedroom unit. There are units that are being built in my riding of University–Rosedale right now that are three bedrooms plus a den, but they're only 1,000 square feet. You need to be very careful about giving developers flexibility, because a renter might find out—if they get to move back into these units—that the unit is far smaller in size than the kind of unit they lived in in the purpose-built rental before it was demolished. I'm a little worried about that.

I want to be very clear, before I move into the next piece, about what we are advocating for. We look to what Burnaby, BC, is doing as a model. Like I said, housing construction in that area is extremely high. What we want

to see is a strong commitment that renters can return to their rent-controlled unit after construction is complete; that there is a rent top-up equal to the difference in rent they paid at the home that they had—a home that they'll have to find in the same area, during construction; and that there is a very firm commitment to guarantee that a tenant can come back into their rent-controlled unit. Renters didn't cause this housing crisis, so renters shouldn't be the victims of this housing crisis.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you.

The second thing I want to talk about, which is really key, is this government's changes to eviction laws in the Residential Tenancies Act. There are some good changes in this bill when we're talking about eviction protection. I want to summarize them before I get to the loophole that I see.

One, it is encouraging to see that Bill 97 doubles the maximum fine for violations under the Residential Tenancies Act—so it's for the entire Residential Tenancies Act; it's not just for evictions—to \$100,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for a corporation. But let's also be clear: That money doesn't go to the wronged tenant; it goes to the board or to the government. It's not like a tenant walks away with a \$500,000 windfall. Let's be clear about that.

The second thing that I see as a positive move is that this government is looking, with Bill 97, to require landlords to get a report justifying a home must be vacated for renovations before a tenant has to leave. There needs to be some criteria there to ensure it's not just some Joe Blow writing this report so a landlord can just say, "Look, here's a one-page summary: Renovations need to be done, bye-bye tenant." This government is acknowledging that a landlord needs to have some kind of evidence and needs to do some due diligence before they move to the LTB to evict a tenant. I see that as a step forward as well.

I also see as a step forward in the right direction this government's decision to be more flexible around the time frame that a tenant has to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for a remedy, if they are renovicted, to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board to say, "Hey, look, I think I've been illegally evicted and I want to seek redress." Currently it's two years, and this government is looking at adding up to six months after renovations are complete. The reason why that's important is because in many cases, renovations—especially big renovations when you're looking at demolitions—take longer than two years. We also have situations in our ridings where developers are just running the clock. They know that after two years the tenant can't apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for redress, so they just wait them out.

We actually have a situation like that in our riding, at 11 Walmer Road. Shortly after I was elected, we canvassed the building, and we very quickly learned that the new property manager, Cromwell property management, was looking at doing some renovations to the building and was actively encouraging—and I'm being polite there—to have tenants leave. So tenants agreed to leave, and there were a few tenants—we are currently working

with an individual called Caitlin and an individual called Delroy who is 83, who made it clear in writing that they want to move back in after renovations are complete. It has been over two and a half years. We have sent numerous emails, made numerous calls to Cromwell property management. Caitlin lives nearby; so does Delroy. They see U-Haul units come in as new tenants come into the building to move into these units, but Cromwell has never approached them and said, "Now it's time for you to move in to your unit." So they're waiting, and there's nothing they can do. There's nowhere they can go. The two-year time frame has passed. So they're worried. It is good to see that they now have six months after renovations are complete to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for a remedy. My hope is that they will be eligible to apply.

So that's the good.

Now I want to talk about the very bad which undercuts many of the modest improvements that you've made. The massive loophole that this government is not addressing with Bill 97 is the fact that there's no enforcement. I want to explain to you what happens if a tenant is illegally evicted, so that you can understand this enforcement issue as well, in the hope that you'll take illegal eviction seriously and work to address it. This is the loophole: For a landlord to be fined, a wronged tenant must become a volunteer private investigator and a good Samaritan for at least a year to make a case to the Landlord and Tenant Board, because it's an average of a year for a tenant to get a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board, compared to six months for a landlord. Landlords are getting fast-tracked right now. It takes a year. Successful tenants—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Let me finish. I'm sure you'll get questions at the end.

Successful tenants almost never get their home back.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Never.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes. We cannot think of a single example; neither can the FMTA.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It doesn't happen.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** It doesn't happen. They almost never get their home back. If you can give me an example, great, but we cannot think of a single example where a tenant gets their home back. A landlord can just move a tenant in. That's what happens. They just move a new tenant in. The Landlord and Tenant Board is not going to kick a new tenant out, so the old tenant is—and the maximum compensation a tenant can get is modest. The most that they can get is the additional rent they had to pay for a year and moving expenses. So maybe you'll get about \$10,000 to \$12,000 to volunteer your time on a case where your chances of winning are slim—being a private investigator, doing all that due diligence, standing outside, taking photos, doing whatever you need to do in the slim hope that you will get \$10,000 if you win. So the reason why it doesn't work is because tenants aren't getting in and landlords are not getting fined. That's the massive loophole that you have right now. It doesn't matter how much you raise the fine; landlords are not getting fined. That's the fact of it.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Their rent contract is—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** You can argue with me all you want. Go talk to the Landlord and Tenant Board yourself. Find out for yourself.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's 33,000.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, there's a backlog of 33,000 cases at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

One of the most high-profile examples of tenants trying to get back into their units is something that happened in my riding, actually, a few years ago, at 795 College Street. These people decided to take their illegal eviction seriously. They took it to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It took them two years, and the landlord got a \$75,000 fine. None of it went to the tenants. Then they took it to court, and the landlord got a \$48,000 fine. The tenants never got their rent-controlled apartments back, and they got \$12,000 in compensation for two years of work.

That's why this enforcement issue—it destroys all the work you want to do to address illegal evictions. That is a massive loophole. I'm very concerned about it.

**1500**

I asked FMTA how many fines were issued last year for the one million rental units in Ontario. Their response was flippant. They said it was maybe more than 20. Was it more than 20? I doubt it. Fines don't happen. I have asked the Attorney General now. I've just done an order paper question to ask them how many fines have been issued for landlords who illegally evict, and the average amount of fine, and how many times a tenant is returned to their unit, so we can get these statistics. But I know these numbers are going to be extremely low. So we'll see about that. That's a big hole.

Excuse me for spending so much time on that, but we just get so many calls from renters who are terrified that they're going to lose their home, and it really matters. You need to get this right. So please get it right.

The next piece that I want to talk about is this government's decision to listen to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario and the advocacy we have done and thousands of tenants have done—including this Speaker and the work that she has done—to ensure that tenants have a right to reasonably enjoy their unit and have a maximum temperature set for Ontario of 26 degrees. Other municipalities have this, and it's time for the province to have this as well. This government has taken a step in the right direction to enshrine the right for a tenant to install their own air conditioning unit, provided that it's done safely, they inform the landlord they intend to do so, and they pay for any excess electricity costs. The right to have an air conditioning unit in these extreme heat wave summers that we now have because of all governments' lack of action on climate change—and yours is up there—is the right thing to do. But I want to repeat a statement that I said earlier, which is that only the Conservatives could turn a human rights tribunal ruling into a rent hike for low- and moderate-income renters, and it seems like you've successfully done that here.

This government is starting to have a bit of a track record of doing a bit of a rush job when they write their

legislation, and I'm finding that they make amendments and changes in future legislation because they realize they've made a mistake or an error or they were a bit too quick to listen to one side but not the other. I also see this here. You might notice that the Residential Tenancies Act actually explicitly bans the use of seasonal fees, and there's nothing in this bill to address that pretty core feature of the Residential Tenancies Act. So that's a problem. The Residential Tenancies Act also enshrines the right to reasonably enjoy your unit, which—at this point, it is becoming essential to have an air conditioning unit, if you don't have air conditioning. So there are some contradictions with this legislation here, which really just shows that sometimes you're rushing a little bit when it comes to legislation. You're not doing the kind of due diligence and taking the care that you need to get it right. That means listening to stakeholders and doing those consultations before you write the legislation—as well as during. So I hope to see some amendments in the committee to really look into this issue of keeping tenants reasonably cool, protecting them from heatstroke, ensuring that they're not miserably hot in summer, especially given how much rent they're paying right now.

The next thing I want to address is some of the planning changes to Bill 97 that talk about supply and housing supply. This is really twinned with what the members opposite have been talking about when it comes to this government's decision to merge the provincial policy statement with the growth plan to create a new, I would say, radical vision for how we plan in this province—a very expensive and unsustainable radical vision for how we build. So I'm going to address them in turn.

One—and this is a real mystery for me; I don't even know what this fully means yet, but I'm sure we'll learn in time—is that with Bill 97, it requires landowners and municipalities to enter into agreements where a provincial land development facilitator has been appointed. I've heard this government talk a bit about what these facilitators could mean. I don't know what municipalities or areas these facilitators are going to be assigned to. We don't know how much power these facilitators are going to have. But what we are concerned about is that these facilitators, in partnership with the ministry, will likely have the power to change official plans as they go, to change municipal laws around planning as they go. These are very powerful changes to include in a bill, especially since we don't exactly know what they mean, what they are, or what kind of powers they're going to have. That seems like a real black box to me—that you're going to have this unelected, unaccountable individual, who reports directly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, being able to meddle in official plans that, as the member for Waterloo was explaining, sometimes take years to develop, involve the work of elected officials, and require hundreds of hours of public consultation. So I'm concerned about that power grab. It kind of falls into your track record when it comes to planning and how you like to control all of it. It is a concern, and I look forward to seeing more details of that piece.

The other piece that I see here with Bill 97 is that the municipal zoning orders are made even stronger. It gives

the minister the ability to exempt MZO-designated lands from other provincial policies and official plans, such as farmland and wetland preservation. As we all know, MZOs can't be appealed, and they do not require public consultation before approval. In short, the government loves these MZO tools. You want to keep making them stronger and stronger, so in case there's an obstacle coming up, you can override it. That's one piece.

And then the second thing is, I really think it's important to also look at what these MZOs are being used for.

When I look in my riding, there have been examples of MZOs which I am quite comfortable with. The city of Toronto has requested them. One was used to lower parking requirements for a supportive housing facility at 877 Yonge Street—good. The other one will likely be used, if it hasn't been used already, to expand the emergency room at Toronto Western Hospital—good. You're not going to be seeing any objections from me on those kinds of important, publicly beneficial zoning changes to expand hospital capacity and ensure that affordable housing gets built quickly, and the city of Toronto supported them—good.

What concerns me, and what I've seen this government doing, is using MZOs to help your developer donor friends build housing that is incredibly expensive in areas that are precious, that are on flood plains, that are in wetlands, that are on farmland, that are on greenbelt land. That's where I start to see the red flags, and I'm not the only one who has been raising those flags. Some reporters have done some deep dives into this, and they've seen that these MZOs have benefited developers who have donated over—this is a while back, so I'm sure the number is higher—\$262,915 to Progressive Conservatives and Ontario Proud. These are the very developers who are now tangibly and immediately benefiting from these donations, because they get to maybe call up the minister, get an MZO, and get their development fast-tracked. It seems like it's a bit of a pay-to-play, and I don't think that's how 14 million Ontarians want to see their government operate. I think they want a government that's more accountable and transparent and that puts people first. And there are a lot of people who are questioning who this government prioritizes and who this government doesn't. We see that with the use of MZOs.

These changes to the MZOs and these changes to the facilitators—it's all part of this grand plan that the government keeps going back to time and time again, to really upend and change our planning process so that we are building sprawl on land that many of your developer donors either bought on cheap or already owned. It's not the kind of planning that is sustainable, that is affordable, that is modern, and that's really going to build the kind of houses that people want to see and need. That's where I see this government going.

#### 1510

I want to spend a few minutes looking at the provincial planning statement changes so that the public understands what exactly this government is doing.

This government is ending firm density requirements for new developments. So there can be a single-family home on a half-acre lot and a single-family home on a half-

acre lot, and that's precious farmland. You would think, if we're looking at building, that we'd want to take advantage of every acre of land we've got, which means building up, increasing density; not building out. That's very concerning. It's a fundamental change.

We're also seeing that now municipalities are no longer required to meet minimum density targets of 50 residents per hectare, but they are just encouraged to set their own density targets, which is a fundamental change to the trajectory of planning and development in this province. You're fundamentally changing it so that it's now advisory only—that's pretty concerning. It used to be 80, this government reduced the per-hectare standard to 50, and now you're just saying, "It will be encouraged." That's not good.

This government is also making it easier for municipalities to expand their urban boundaries and permit development on nearby green space and farmland whenever they want. Previously, municipalities could only expand their boundaries as part of a review process and only if certain conditions were met—such as housing needs that couldn't be met by increasing density on areas zoned for development.

This government is just declaring open season on farmland even though the farming sector in Ontario is one of the most productive farming sectors in the world. We are one of the few provinces and regions in the world that is a net exporter of food, and it is one of the biggest economic drivers of our province—all these jobs. They need to grow food somewhere, so we should be doing everything we can to keep the farmland we've got. Instead, this government is saying, "Nope." We could be building homes that are more affordable and building them more cheaply in areas already zoned for development, but instead we are just going to declare open season on one of the most productive economic drivers in the province, and that is our farming sector. It's bananas; it really is.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** You're bananas.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** You should speak to the OFA; I hope you do.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I do.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Good. I'm pleased you do. We speak to them too. They're not happy about some of this stuff.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The 319 acres a day.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes.

**Interjection:** Once you pave it over, you can't go back.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** No, no, no.

What is also changing—and I'll just go into this before I go into the consequences of sprawl—is the new changes to the PPS. It will require municipalities to have enough designated land available for 25 years of growth or more, instead of up to 25 years, which was the previous standard. Essentially, this government is saying, "You need to plan for growth for a really long time out so we can open as much land as possible to our developer friends."

And there's no longer any requirement for a municipal comprehensive review. It's just no longer required anymore, which is, wow, radical. Municipal comprehen-

sive reviews involve municipalities reviewing and updating their official plans so that they're in line with the growth plan. It's all about planning right and using the land that we have and the resources that we have in a cost-effective and useful manner. That's what it's about. And you're saying, "No, let's just do urban sprawl. It's fine."

I want to talk a bit about the cost of sprawl. There are a few things. One, I'm going to talk about how it's expensive to service. When I was preparing for this speech, I looked at a recent study done by Hemson. They were paid by the city of Ottawa to look at the cost of building and maintaining services and infrastructure for low-density homes built on undeveloped land, and to compare that to the cost of maintaining and building services and infrastructure in infill development, such as apartment buildings or duplexes and triplexes—so building in areas already zoned for development. This is what they found. I hope you're listening, because I know that you like to talk about cost-effectiveness. It costs \$465 per person each year to serve new low-density homes built on undeveloped land. It's a net loss to municipalities. Compare that to servicing homes in areas already zoned for development. It's actually a net gain. When you factor in the property tax revenue and all that, municipalities actually gain \$606. They gain when you build in areas already zoned for development, and they lose money when you service areas that are about single-family homes and suburban sprawl. When we're talking about providing services in a cost-effective manner, sprawl is bad—just to make it really simple—and providing services to infill housing is better. This is particularly relevant right now because across the GTHA and across Ontario homeowners are opening up their property tax bills, either by email or in the mail, and they're seeing big tax hikes. We actually did a little bit of a survey to look at what kind of tax hikes are coming. And it's because of Bill 23 and your tax cut giveaway to developers that these hikes are coming. Durham region, 5% property tax hike; Clarington, 4%; Waterloo region, 8.55%—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** 8.55%.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, 8.55%.

Burlington, 7.5%; Niagara Falls, 7.4%; Niagara region, 7.58%; Newmarket, 7.67%—these are big tax hikes—and Toronto, 7%. There's a whole range. I read out the higher ones, but almost all of them are seeing a property tax hike. At the same time, they're also seeing service cuts. So you get a property tax hike, and you get service cuts, and you're seeing delays in necessary infrastructure maintenance. When you all get in your cars or walk down the sidewalk or take the TTC, you're going to see more potholes, because cities no longer have the money available to maintain our services to a standard that we expect.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, and public housing. What's so concerning is that those tax hikes and those service cuts are going to continue because this government is doubling down on incredibly expensive suburban sprawl, which is very costly to municipalities to service. It is getting to the point where it is becoming so expensive, with Bill 23 and

now this new provincial planning statement, that some housing developments are being cancelled and delayed.

This is happening in Waterloo. The member for Waterloo has raised this. There is a development at Beaver Creek Road and Conservation Drive. It's a large subdivision, and they are delaying approval because the municipality in the region cannot afford to service it.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, they can't afford to service it.

What you're doing is actually hurting your own goals of improving housing supply. You don't care about affordability. But on your own goals of supply, you're failing.

**1520**

I'm not going to spend tons of time on this because sometimes environmental messaging doesn't work so well with the Conservatives, but I'm going to bring up one thing: It is so environmentally destructive to create the kind of housing development system that we're going to create, because it locks people into soul-destroying commutes to get to where they want to go. When you're building single-family homes, the density is not there to provide a bus or a streetcar or a train to provide transit to these areas. What that means is that when Ontarians buy these homes, they're going to have to have one car or two cars to get wherever they want to go. It's so expensive, and it's going to blow our greenhouse gas targets out of the water, because transportation and building are the leading contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. This kind of approach to planning and building will lock us into unbelievably unsustainable development patterns. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that, because I think it's going to be not necessarily the message that's going to convince you—but the cost thing, at least think about that. I know your constituents—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** And tax—thank you, member for Waterloo. I know that your constituents care about that.

A few other changes: This government is looking at changing development fees. It seems like, once again, you have realized the error in your ways. You've just been rushing this legislation through so quickly. You're not doing the necessary due diligence. So you are choosing to respond to municipal concerns, and you are allowing municipalities to gradually refund zoning bylaw and site plan application fees if a municipality fails to make a decision within specified time periods. You were originally going to require municipalities to refund fees starting on January 1, 2023, but you're extending that to July 1, 2023. So you're giving municipalities the six months' reprieve. It's a small change, but the reason why I want to bring it up is because it really does speak to the need for this government to be more diligent, for this government to do proper stakeholder feedback, especially with AMO. It speaks to the need for this government to be more organized in how it introduces bills and just the lack of coordination. You represent 14 million people, so it's extremely important that you do the necessary research and the public consultation so that you get it right, so we

don't see this process where you're heading here one way, here another way, here another way. It has led some commentators in the news to muse that this government actually doesn't know what it's doing when it comes to housing—that's a TVO reporter who just said that. Let me tell you, that's not praise.

There are a few other changes here. One, there are some changes to farm properties. Additional residences will be permitted on farm properties, up to two additional on one parcel and up to three additional residential parcels. We're still reaching out to residents and groups to see what people's take is on this. We can see some pros; we can see some cons. So I'm curious about that. What does it mean? What do people think about it?

There are some proposed changes to employment lands as well. It looks like the government is looking at making it easier to convert employment lands, like retail or commercial, into housing.

And the definition of employment areas: It looks like you're looking at changing it, in both the Planning Act and the new provincial policy statement as well as with Bill 97. It does look like new employment focus will be on uses that cannot be put in mixed-use areas such as heavy industry, manufacturing or large-scale warehousing. So essentially, my take is that this government wants to make it easier to convert retail and commercial office space into housing. That's my take on that.

We're also securing stakeholder feedback on this. I can see some pros and cons to this. I'm very open-minded about it, because the need for housing is great. Housing supply is a real issue, and employment patterns have certainly changed. Vacancy rates in offices, including in downtown Toronto, are still very high. There is a lot of vacant space there. My caution is that it is important that we think about what employment land is needed, not just now but 20 years from now, 40 years from now, because the pandemic certainly is an unpleasant chapter, and as we move away from it, it will be in the history books. That's the goal, and it's very important that we don't make any rash decisions now to get rid of large chunks of employment land if, as our population grows, we need to return, we need some more employment land in the future. So I urge caution there and a need to ensure there's balance there.

In conclusion, I do want to say a few things. One is that it is good to see that the government is acknowledging that we have a housing affordability crisis and that it's not just a housing supply crisis. We certainly have a housing supply crisis; we do need to build 1.5 million homes in 10 years. There are people who are living in their parents' basement. There are families who are two, three families living in a rental apartment. And we know immigration has reached record levels. So there is absolutely a need to build more homes, but it is also essential that we are very mindful and ensure that government uses the right kind of incentives and regulations and rules to build the kind of homes that are for Ontarians and ensure that the homes that we build are in line with what people in Ontario—not just investors, but people in Ontario—need.



That means more two-, three-, four-bedroom homes and apartments in areas people want to live in, in areas already zoned for development. It means ensuring that there are good services—transit, schools, daycare, community centres, supermarkets, nearby jobs, places of faith—that are near where people live. And it is important that we really focus on the segments of our population in Ontario that are really struggling to find that home that they can afford: low- and moderate-income people; seniors who are looking at downsizing; students and families that can't make it work in a one-bedroom or a two-bedroom apartment anymore but can't find anything else. That's really the shortfall here. It's not investors that want to buy their fourth home. That's not what our housing sector should prioritize, and I fear that the government is really focusing on that.

The other thing I also want to emphasize is that it can never just be all about supply. This government has had five years to show that supply alone will address the housing affordability crisis, and it hasn't. Housing has never been more expensive. It has never been more expensive to buy a home. It has never been more expensive to rent. Our homelessness crisis has spread across Ontario. The number of people who are homeless in Toronto right now is through the roof; it's well above 10,000. It's just getting worse and worse and worse, even though, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, we have a record number of cranes. It's not just about supply. It has to be about affordability as well.

And when we're talking about affordability, it's going to require a bunch of things. It is going to require a definition of affordability that's not based on the market, which is what this government is choosing to use; 80% of average market rent is not affordable, and 80% of average sale price for a condo is not affordable. It's not affordable for even middle-income families, let alone moderate-income families and low-income families. It's just not. It doesn't work. It needs to be rent based on income, because that's the definition of affordable. It's based on the person—what they think is affordable, what they see as affordable.

It's going to require acknowledging that the amount of money in the budget for addressing homelessness and affordable-housing construction is just woeful. It's not enough, and it is a cut from the previous budget, the 2022-23 budget. I know you slapped a new name on it, and you've used these figures a lot—\$202 million over, you know, \$202 million and then \$202 million. But it's a cut; it's a cut, cut, cut. And the amount of money in the previous budget was woeful, so now you've just made it even harder. That is not where we need to go, especially at a time when the cost of everything is going up and people can't afford the rent. It's just going up. Food bank use in Ontario has increased by 300%, and shelters—at least in Toronto—are at 100% capacity or more. That's what we're facing right now. I'm not seeing this government take that seriously. I'm really not.

And what I'm also seeing—and this is a real tragedy—is that as interest rates go up and the effect of Bill 23 is

starting to take hold, we are starting to see affordable housing projects that were viable no longer being viable.

#### 1530

We're seeing this in Peel. Peel had a plan to build 2,400 affordable homes. It's at risk because of the \$200-million loss in development fees, which means they've lost the CMHC's matching money, which means the entire program is at risk.

It's the same with the city of Toronto. I'm going to quote Gregg Lintern: "In the absence of the city being fully reimbursed by the province for the lost revenues related to the above legislative changes"—he's talking about Bill 23—"plus provided with additional financial and policy tools, it will not be able to provide the services and infrastructure essential to support growth over the long term, deliver existing housing programs"—these are affordable housing programs—"to scale up supply, and achieve complete communities overall."

What Gregg is trying to say is that Toronto's affordable housing program is also in jeopardy because of this government. It's in jeopardy. It's terrible.

What this government is doing is clearly not working. We are proposing real solutions to Ontario's housing affordability crisis and housing supply crisis, and that means committing to building 1.5 million homes by ending exclusionary zoning, which means allowing triplexes and fourplexes as of right. It means increasing density along transit stations. And it means protecting farmland by holding a firm municipal boundary line so we can protect one of our most important economic drivers in the province.

It also means spurring a career in the trades and recruiting skilled labour to join the trades. And it means making sure that developers pay their fair share. It means bringing in inclusionary zoning so there are more affordable homes being built. Montreal has been doing it for 20 years. Rent is \$1,000 less a month in Montreal, and their economy is booming.

Developers need to pay their fair share, and I'm not seeing this government take that seriously. I'm really not, because the city of Toronto has had an exclusionary zoning law on their books for some time now, and this government refuses to let them implement it. That's a shame, because it's a massive lost opportunity.

So we need to build these new homes. We need to build these affordable homes. We need a public builder who can build homes at cost on provincial public land so that we can build the kind of affordable homes we need and the size of homes that Ontarians need.

We also need to get real about rent. It is unfathomable to me that we have a situation where there is no rent control on buildings built after 2018. We constantly get calls from people who are being economically evicted because a landlord knows they can get more rent. It is essential that in Ontario, we bring in real rent control and vacancy control so that people who rent have stable, affordable rent, so they can live good lives in this province. It's essential.

We also need—and this is absolutely essential—to clamp down on investor-led speculation. It is shocking to hear the minister talk about how he believes in home ownership, but you've created the market conditions that allow 25% of all new purchases to be purchased by investors. Those homes should be going to first-time homebuyers so that they can live in them, they can raise children in them, they can retire in them, they can go home at night and have dinner in a home they own where they're paying off their own mortgage and not someone else's mortgage.

That's what we stand for. Our housing sector is about providing homes for Ontarians first. Our position to build more affordable homes, to build 1.5 million private-sector homes, to clamp down on speculation and make life more affordable to renters will ensure that we get there.

I am looking forward to committee for Bill 97. My hope is that you take some of the recommendations and concerns that you're going to hear from stakeholders and us so that we can make life more affordable for renters and we can ensure that our housing sector puts Ontarians first.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to my colleague across the way for her remarks. I appreciate listening to them. As she alluded to—she was commenting on some of the protections we're providing tenants, and on renovictions, as they're commonly known—we've taken some action already, Speaker. We increased fines for bad landlords and have taken action to prevent evictions.

I want to provide a quote, just for the record, of just one sentence: "We will stop unfair 'renovictions' and bad faith 'landlord's own use' evictions." Speaker, that quote is from the members opposite's campaign platform from 2022. So my question is simple, to the member opposite: Will she support our government in strengthening the Residential Tenancies Act to prevent these renovictions and support tenants?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Perth–Wellington for your comments. Yes, we have been very clear that the Residential Tenancies Act needs to be strengthened to ensure that renters are not illegally evicted, either by a landlord claiming own use or by a landlord claiming that they're going to renovate the apartment, but then once the tenant has moved out, they don't do renovations or they do modest renovations, and then the tenant can never get back in.

What I am asking this government to do is to listen to stakeholders and what we are telling you, and to fix the massive loophole of enforcement. The government can raise the fines however much they want, but the reality is that landlords are not being fined in Ontario today, because it's the responsibility of a tenant to become a good Samaritan and a private investigator and to volunteer their time in order for that eviction protection law to be enforced. So please fix that loophole.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her excellent presentation and overview of Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act.

I'd like to take the member back to 2021, when she, along with the member from Parkdale–High Park, as well as the member from Ottawa Centre, introduced the Rent Stabilization Act, which Conservatives voted down. At that time, they said no to protecting renters. The Conservatives said no to making sure people have an affordable place to live, and Conservatives said no to long-term stability for renters, as well as for seniors. At that time, while the opposition was introducing legal protections for renters, the Conservative government actually removed rent control from all new buildings first occupied after November 2018.

My question for the member: We see all sorts of legislation with these titles which become ironic in practice. Would the member like to see the government pass the reintroduced Rent Stabilization Act?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, I would very much like to see this government pass the Rent Stabilization Act, and the reason is because renters aren't second-class citizens. They deserve to take their paycheque home, pay rent, save, raise a family and pay the bills, and it is very difficult for renters to do that today, because rent just keeps going up and up and up. There needs to be a balance. Renters need stabilization.

Manitoba has similar rent stabilization laws, Quebec has similar rent stabilization laws, and their economies are very healthy. So it is very important that this government look seriously at vacancy-control legislation, so people can afford to live in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to the member for University–Rosedale for her participation today in debate, I listened with interest to her contributions this afternoon, and one of the pieces that I thought was fairly interesting was her commentary around BC, and specifically—I know you mentioned Burnaby and what they're doing. "We support Burnaby's plan," I think was what you were saying. You said there's a lot of building happening there.

I think that's great. I think it's really important, as legislators, that we're looking at other jurisdictions who are bringing forward ideas. I think there's always more that can be done. I think there's a lot that's good in this bill, that's moving things forward to help tenants and to build more housing stock.

But I'm wondering if she could elaborate a bit further as to what she is seeing in Burnaby, where, as she mentioned, a lot of housing is being built and a lot of progress is being made. What is she seeing there that she believes could be learned here, as well, in future housing bills?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Niagara West for that comment. I looked into Burnaby, BC's rental replacement bylaws a few years ago, and there are some key features that I really like about it. One is that they

guarantee a tenant has the right to return once construction is complete, and that's if a building is demolished and then replaced. The reason why I see that as a very good balance is because it ensures that a developer can build higher, so there is a profit margin to be made there, but then tenants don't lose their homes. I mean, they're the victims of this housing crisis, so why should they be made to pay for the housing crisis as well? But then they also ensure that tenants get a rent top-up so that they can continue to live in the neighbourhood while construction is taking place. I think that that is a necessary addition that this government should look into moving forward with as well. Toronto frequently has it, and I believe the province can do that as well.

1540

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much for your comments today. It was very informative. I just want to get your comments on a situation in Hamilton that has just been reported on by the CBC: "Hamilton tenant says he's being 'eaten alive' after living with bed bug infestation for over a year." This tenant said "the bed bug problem in his ... apartment is affecting nearly every aspect of his life. He's spent hundreds of dollars on laundry—washing and drying ... repeatedly, trying to get rid of the bugs."

He's never experienced this; it started right after he moved into his apartment in February 2022, within three weeks. He's in touch with his landlord quite often. He emailed the landlord quite often, and they did spray, but it did not seem to be effective, so he asked them many times what they could do—could they provide him with another unit?

The day after the landlord was contacted by CBC for comment, this tenant received an N5 eviction notice. So does this bill provide these kinds of tenants any protection when their living conditions that should be—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you. Response?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much for that question, member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. On paper, the Residential Tenancies Act requires a landlord to properly maintain a home, but in practice, many tenants are living in abysmal, unsafe, unsanitary living conditions where there are rodents or bed bugs. And unfortunately, the Landlord and Tenant Board has not been a place where tenants can seek redress. It takes upwards of two years for a tenant to have their case heard at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Who's going to wait two years to get a bed bug issue addressed? And often, the Landlord and Tenant Board is not able to provide the necessary enforcement. They'll do a rent abatement, but they often don't properly enforce and require a landlord to fix a unit to a standard that's acceptable. It's a big problem.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the member from University–Rosedale: I have a farming community in the north part of my riding, Myrtle

Station, that some of you will know. I know the member from Oshawa is familiar with that area. I was up there this weekend talking to some of the farmers about what this particular legislation brings, particularly allowing them to sever a lot for their son or their daughter. There are many big farms up there that are looking forward to doing that. It also means that there will be more housing to accommodate the farm workers that they bring in in some of those areas as well.

Through you, Speaker, does the member from University–Rosedale oppose this aspect of the legislation? I'm not alone here on this side of the House with farming communities.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Whitby for that important question. Yes, Bill 97 does allow additional properties to be permitted on farms; up to two additional on one parcel and up to three additional residential parcels. We're looking into this right now. We're talking to stakeholders; we're talking to farming groups and farmers to get their take to see if it's something that we can support.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Well, thank you, Speaker, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on second reading of the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023. I joined this debate today having spent 13 years as a regional councillor and local councillor in the region of Durham. In that 13-year period, I was the chair of the planning and development committee for the town of Whitby for 11 years. I was also the president of the Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp. at the region of Durham, the chair of the region's affordable housing committee and contributed with seven other members of regional council in a construct of the region's affordable housing strategy. I bring that context into debate because what I'm about to say is framed by that.

The proposed legislation continues to take a responsible, targeted approach to delivering our government's plan, while laying a strong foundation to make life easier and more affordable for people across the province. I'd like to extend my thanks to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Associate Minister of Housing, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and, last but not least, his parliamentary assistant for all the work they've put into the development of our fourth housing supply action plan.

If passed, the proposed changes would further strengthen homebuyer protections, support tenants and streamline the rules around land use planning. These types of changes have been long anticipated and are now well informed by a layer of input from many sectors. Our government has made real progress in tackling Ontario's housing supply crisis, with current housing starts remaining above historic averages, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing pointed out this morning in a response to an answer in question period.

Like the rest of North America, Ontario is experiencing challenging headwinds that are slowing down new home

construction, including inflation, soaring interest rates and labour shortages. Now, despite these challenges, our government will continue to take action to ensure Ontario is ready to build more homes as market conditions improve. What's clear is that our government is committed to helping new home buyers. We're absolutely committed.

For instance, our plan includes initiatives to better protect homebuyers and their financial investments by expanding deposit insurance for first home savings accounts at credit unions and exploring a cooling-off or cancellation period on purchases of newly built freehold homes, as well as mandatory legal review of purchase agreements for all new home purchases.

To reduce the cost of building housing, we're planning to freeze 74 provincial fees at current levels. This includes fees that directly or indirectly increase the cost of housing. We're also proposing to speed up government approval processes by updating the provincial policy statement 2020 and integrating it with A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to create a single province-wide, housing-focused land use planning policy document. Within municipalities, this has been long awaited—long awaited. I'm part of an upper-tier government with the region of Durham, and it's underpinned by eight municipalities, including the town of Whitby, and this particular integration, in many instances, has been long awaited.

The proposed new provincial planning statement streamlines planning policy to increase housing supply and approvals by simplifying existing policies, making them more flexible and making them more supportive in building new housing. Now, on this side of the House, we have other former municipal politicians who understand exactly what I'm saying when I speak about simplifying existing policies related to planning and development and making them more flexible. Indeed, the Speaker is a former municipal councillor and reeve and mayor and understands the breadth and scope of the changes I'm referring to in making it more supportive, at building new housing.

**1550**

These new policies would increase housing supply by focusing development into urban areas through density targets for areas such as major transit station areas like GO Transit stations like I have in the town of Whitby. It's in the south part of my riding. It borders on Victoria Street, which runs east and west through the town. This type of development has long been a part of the town's current official plan. And as my friend from Oshawa will know, we have a lot of GO stations, moving from Whitby through to Oshawa and, yes, through to Bowmanville.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Right. And we know the effect of that on the economic development of the city of Oshawa in particular but also Bowmanville and Whitby, Ajax, and, to a degree, in Pickering as well.

The new policies would make more land available for development, with fewer and more flexible requirements for expanding settlement area boundaries and a more

focused approach, Speaker, to protecting lands for employment. Why is that important? Well, you'll know, from your own practical experience as a municipal politician, it's going to allow and support the implementation of individual economic development plans at the municipal level. And if you're an upper-tier government, that's going to affect the implementation and evaluation of economic recovery plans overall. It's going to underpin that process. So that's a significant development.

The new policies would balance the need for housing with a need to protect resources by making it simpler and easier to plan for and encourage housing development while protecting prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and continuing to direct development away from hazard land.

I mentioned I was up in Myrtle Station, talking to the farmers about developing and building, taking an acre of land and building another house for their daughter or son. But I also talked about specialty crop areas, because we have a big agri business up in the region of Durham as well.

These new policies would ensure the creation of the necessary infrastructure to support housing developments by integrating planning for land use and infrastructure, protecting corridors for major infrastructure and coordinating school and municipal planning. So why is the coordination of school and municipal planning important? I'll give you a practical example: I've had five new developments built in the west part of the town of Whitby since 2020, now 2022. I would suggest that what those new developments have brought, 20,000 people—there was an opportunity for a more coordinated level of dialogue both at the town level but also with the trustees of all three boards that find a place in the town of Whitby: the Catholic board, the public school board and the franco-phone board as well. The focus here is to ensure the coordination between municipalities and school boards to consider school and child care needs earlier in the planning process.

My colleague from Niagara West, who is just behind me, will appreciate this as a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, because it's an area that has pressure points throughout the province. He has contributed in a strong way some of the solutions that you see evident here today and which I bring forward as part of debate, and I thank him for that.

These new policies, Speaker, will allow that families moving to new housing can expect that local schools will be available for their children. That's part of the discussion that ensues on the capital priorities that we bring to the Ministry of Education and that's worked well. I can speak to millions of dollars that have come into the town of Whitby either to build new schools, refurbish schools or develop child care spaces, whether it's Willows Walk school or other schools of that type. I'm thankful to the Ministry of Education for their level of investment in hard-working families in the town of Whitby.

Speaker, through the new proposed provincial policy statement, we would continue to protect and support our

province's agriculture, including within the region of Durham. Within the region of Durham, we have a very strong agricultural-agribusiness plank as part of our economic recovery plan for the region of Durham. In fact, we have a standing committee within the region of Durham dealing with agriculture and they have contributed significantly over the years in this particular area. As under the current provincial policy statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the proposed new document would continue to require planning authorities, such as municipalities, to protect specialty crop areas with policies to support agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, and various uses on the farm.

I just spoke about a standing committee of the region of Durham. That particular committee deals with certain aspects of what I just said. More directly, the actual policy base falls within other standing committees of the Durham regional council.

Speaker, planning authorities would be required to map and designate prime agricultural areas and to support an agri-food network along the lines that I've just described. My colleague from Oshawa is well familiar with it because, in the north part of Oshawa in particular, there still are aspects that are agri-food-based, contribute to the region of Durham's economic recovery plan, and contribute well to job creation and our local economies, whether it's Oshawa, Whitby or, for that matter, Clarington, which borders the Oshawa riding.

On this new planning framework, yes, there's a consultation under way. It started early in April and concludes June 6, 2023.

But meanwhile, Speaker, the government continues to work with municipal partners, whether it's the town of Whitby or the city of Oshawa or other municipalities that form the region of Durham, to ensure that cities, towns and rural communities throughout the region grow with a mix of ownership and rental housing that meets the needs of people across the province. We live in a very diverse region of Durham.

Speaker, we're also proposing several changes to further protect renters while supporting landlords. There has been a \$6.5-million investment to appoint an additional 40 adjudicators and hire five staff to improve service standards and continue to reduce active applications and decision time frames at the Landlord and Tenant Board. This increase more than doubles the number of full-time adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board, further strengthening protections against evictions due to renovations, demolitions and conversions, as well as those for a landlord's own use, and clarify tenants' rights to install air conditioners.

Our government has been steadfastly focused on Ontario's housing supply crisis since the moment we first took office. We've introduced policies that are helping to get more homes built across Ontario, but we know more needs to be done. We absolutely know that more needs to be done. This legislation is the next step in our plan to ensure that Ontario's housing supply continues to grow

over the long term so more Ontarians can find a home they can actually afford.

**1600**

Speaker, facts matter. In 2022, Ontario saw the second-highest number of housing starts since 1988, with just over 96,000 new homes. This is 30% higher than the annual average for the past 20 years. Ontario also broke ground on nearly 15,000 new purpose-built rentals—the highest number on record.

Importantly, Ontario will continue to call on the federal government to defer the Harmonized Sales Tax on all new large-scale purpose-built rental housing projects to tackle the ongoing housing affordability crisis. We're going to support this measure, as it would help spur the construction of more rental housing units while helping to create jobs, encourage economic development and support growth.

The province is also continuing the process of launching third-party audits of select municipalities to get a factual understanding of their finances, including their reserve funds and development charge administration, as part of its commitment to ensure there should be no funding shortfall for housing-enabling infrastructure as a result of the More Homes Built Faster Act, provided municipalities achieve and exceed their housing pledge levels and growth targets. And 27 of 29 of those municipalities have already submitted their pledge.

Speaker, I've got two minutes, so I'm just going to move into my conclusion right now.

Always a leader in innovation, Ontario is looking at modular construction and other leading-edge options to reduce the cost of building attainable housing and speed up the creation of housing. As part of this work, we'll engage with the housing sector, municipalities and Indigenous communities to consider different opportunities to build housing using modular and other technologies in communities across the province.

Speaker, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act is the latest in a series of steps our government is taking to increase housing supply and help more Ontarians find a home they can actually afford. In my case, that means the region of Durham, the town of Whitby. In partnership with the eight municipalities throughout the region of Durham and in other parts of the province, Speaker, be assured we will help create the homes that hard-working Ontarians need today, tomorrow and in the decades to come.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member for Whitby for his debate.

We're talking about affordability for housing. I looked up the average price of a one-bedroom in Sudbury, and it's \$1,472; in Toronto, it's \$2,400, and it says Toronto has had a 20% increase in the last year. With minimum wage at \$15.50 until October, that means if you work 40 hours a week, four weeks every month, you go home with \$2,480, which is gross—obviously, that's not all the money you go home with. But if it was all the money you

went home with, that means in Toronto you would be short being able to pay your rent every month—actually, you'd have \$80 in your pocket.

In the housing plan, what is the design to provide affordable housing? I grew up in geared-to-income rent housing; I have never seen more built again. I think the government is ignoring the fact that people who cannot afford to buy a house need a place they can afford to rent.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** To the member from Sudbury: Thank you for the question.

The housing supply action is the latest in a series of steps we're taking to increase housing supply and to help more Ontarians find a home that they can afford. I spoke about partnerships. Our plan is a plan that has been developed out of collaboration and consultation with a number of sectors, including municipalities. I purposely alluded in my presentation today—through you, Speaker. I'm sorry—through you to the member for Sudbury.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Response?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Yes, I'm getting to it. Thank you.

I spoke earlier in my presentation about the importance of involvement and collaboration with municipalities—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:**—I think they're part of that solution.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I want to thank the member from Whitby for his eloquent speech. He always does speak so eloquently here in the House. He touched on all parts of the bill.

In my riding, probably about 64% of my constituents live in condos or apartments, and we're growing. We grow every day. As I mentioned earlier, we have high-rises coming up constantly. There are cranes everywhere.

We have a lot of calls that I receive from our constituents with regard to the Landlord and Tenant Board. As we all know, it's certainly not a perfect system right now. You touched on it briefly in your statement.

Can you tell us what the government is doing to help fix some of these problems at the Landlord and Tenant Board? It is an important fix, for sure, for our residents and our communities.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** To the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore: Thank you for all the great work she does on behalf of her constituents.

I spoke about the \$6.5-million investment in the Landlord and Tenant Board to hire more adjudicators. I think that's part of what I want to share.

I also want to share proposed changes which would double the maximum fines for offences under the Residential Tenancies Act, which underpins what we're talking about. Maximum fines for offences under the act would be increasing to \$100,000 for individuals, \$500,000 for a corporation—the strictest and most comprehensive fines in Canada. This sends a strong message to bad actors overall.

Added to that, we're going to bring more clarity and transparency to both landlords and tenants, as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Just to that member's comments around "fines are increased"—they increased fines in long-term care. Give me a list of all the long-term-care facilities that have been fined or shut down as they killed people in those facilities.

Building family homes on the farms—this is a question that was delivered this morning and attacked the NDP on this, even though our critic was very clear today during her presentation, saying that it's something that we're going to talk to shareholders with to see if it works.

We're losing 319 acres of prime farmland every week to development.

In my riding, they're trying to develop on heritage lands to build homes.

So my question is very clear to you—because you mentioned to our member from Oshawa: Do you agree that we should be building homes on the greenbelt?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** What I spoke of early in my presentation with respect to visiting some of my constituents in Myrtle Station—it's where the farmers in my community reside. I spoke to them about some of the features of the legislation that would allow them to build another residence on their farm. Many of these farmers have been in Myrtle Station for the better part of 50, 60 years. It's generational. They want to pass down their farm to their children. The children who are living in that farmhouse right now—some of them are attending the University of Guelph. They're going to bring a greater degree of sophistication to the farming community, in turn creating more jobs in the town of Whitby, but more importantly, contributing to the region of Durham's economic recovery plan.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I thank my honourable colleague from Whitby for his remarks.

Just reflecting on my remarks that I gave in this House a few minutes ago—I stated that Ontario would maintain all of the greenbelt protections, including the policies of our environmental and agricultural lands.

My question to the great colleague from Whitby is, how do you see this bill and our proposed changes with the provincial policy statement and A Place to Grow help construct a mix of housing in your riding, whether that's single-detached, apartments, townhomes? How do you see this helping your constituents?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Again, I draw on my experience as both a regional councillor and a local councillor—and also stepping back and reflecting on my time as the president of the Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp.

What I see that this legislation does—I'm just looking at my notes here. I think what it does is, it provides, for fast-growing municipalities like mine—I alluded to having five new developments in my riding since 2018-22—specific policy direction to ensure sufficient land and

housing supply. Yes, the town of Whitby has an official plan, but the town's—just like the seven other municipalities and cities—has to be consistent with the region of Durham's official plan. This specific policy direction that we're providing does come with some flexibility. I think it's going to ensure the land and housing supply that this fourth plan and others have been looking to do, and I think it's going to have the type of effect to provide—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you. Question?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** It's interesting; we sit in the Legislature and listen to different sides of debate at different portions of time of day. This morning, I was completely attacked for talking about cost of living against seniors. And now, here, again, we see another bill for housing. I believe it's the fourth one from this government, and yet rents continue to rise.

In Hamilton, a very simple, basic one-bedroom apartment is over \$1,800; a two-bedroom is \$2,200.

Where in this legislation does the member see the cost of living actually decreasing for the benefit of people who are actually the tenants in these units and not to the benefit of builders who are building housing for, more than likely, people who can't afford to live in them?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for that question.

It's why we're working with municipalities. That's what we're doing through the official plan process to support growth. As part of that, when you're developing an official plan for a local municipality, you're looking at affordability as well. And there are features that I've alluded to, both in my presentation earlier and in my responses earlier, that speak to that.

What we're also addressing is opportunities in areas of high growth near transit, and I spoke about the opportunity that exists in the southern part of the town of Whitby.

To the question from the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore—I also spoke about some of the opportunities this legislation brings.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity of presenting today and responding to the questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I'm rising today to debate the government's latest housing legislation, Bill 97. There are many things that come to mind for folks in Ottawa Centre. I do want to ask your indulgence, Speaker, to be able to say a few things off the top that I believe are related to this legislation, if not directly in some of the schedules and some of the aspects of the proposed bill.

First of all, we need housing, of course, but there's also the question of how we get to our housing. A major way in which Ontarians want to get to their housing, certainly in urban centres, is with public transit.

I want to take this opportunity, as I begin my debate on this bill, to thank the Ottawa firefighters who rescued people on April 5 from our LRT, which stalled for a second time—a second time, Speaker, if you can believe it—given an ice storm. We live in a Nordic climate. We

invested \$2.1 billion in this light rail transit system. We managed to convince the government, in the last Parliament, to declare a judicial inquiry into this system because of the mess it has become. I want to note for the record: Transit is critical for how we get to our homes, and twice in 2023, in January and on April 5, first responders had to be called to the crossover by the Rideau River near the Lees station to cut a hole through a chain-link fence that people had to crawl under and through, to get out of an unheated train they had been waiting on for over an hour—including frail seniors, people with disabilities. I mention this for the record of this House, because I respect the job and the responsibility of this House, and it deserves mention that this is an absolute abomination, when we think about how we're supposed to be building public transit that works. So I hope government members are listening to that. I do want to thank the firefighters and the first responders, and I do want to thank the people who took to Twitter as they waited, freezing, on the train. I want to thank them, but it shouldn't have to come to that.

Secondly, I want to give a shout-out to some of our neighbours in Ottawa, who, sadly—because we have to think about how we pay for our housing, don't we? We work for a living to pay for our housing. And 155,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada have given the Trudeau government a deadline of 9 p.m. tomorrow night, after two years of delay and obfuscation at the bargaining table, to finally come to a mutual collective agreement. It shouldn't have to come to this. The very people, when nine million Canadians were unemployed in the pandemic, who made sure that that Canada economic recovery benefit that my colleagues in the NDP federally fought hard for—they're the people who set that system up, they're the folks who made sure people could get income when they were unemployed and their small businesses were shuttered. And now the Trudeau government is insulting them by threatening to throw them out on the picket lines. I want to say to all the PSAC members at home that going on strike is not an easy decision, but we support you 100%. We will be mobilizing to support you 100%, and I hope the Prime Minister gives you the deal that you deserve at the bargaining table. It is not a lot to ask, for people making \$45,000 to \$60,000 a year in key occupations in our public service, at the Canada Revenue Agency and at the Treasury Board. You deserve a deal, and we will be with you on your picket lines to support you.

Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence. Let's get into this bill.

Let's talk about rent protection bylaws—schedules 2 and 5 of this bill. Once again, after Bill 23, we see another measure being introduced here to diminish the capacity of rent protection bylaws. Why is this important? It's critically important because when these large, often investor, companies swoop in and buy up buildings in many of our major municipalities, there is an obligation in the city of Mississauga, there is an obligation in the city of Toronto, and there is an obligation in the city of Hamilton

to compensate people. And why? Because we are losing the affordable housing stock we have at an incredible rate.

The research that I have, which comes from the great Carolyn Whitzman, the housing professor at the University of Ottawa, shows us that for every one unit of affordable housing—“affordable” defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.—that is being built in Canada right now, we are losing seven. When large real estate investment trusts swoop into a community, buy up a property that a landlord has not maintained effectively—in some cases, for decades—and turfs them out on the street, it’s called a renoviction, and it’s one of the things that my friends in government are talking about addressing with this bill. But it’s one thing to increase fines on individuals or companies—\$100,000 for individuals; \$500,000 for companies. That’s negative liberty. That’s one thing. But where’s the positive liberty? Where’s the support you give people? It’s through rental protection bylaws.

#### 1620

In the city of Toronto, the latest research I’ve seen from city staff in this city—over 16,000 units of actually affordable housing that we have have been protected with rental replacement bylaws. That’s critical. If you’re trying to maintain a family on an extremely low income—and so many people, as every member of every caucus in this place has risen to speak about since this Parliament resumed, are suffering out there, scraping by, barely making ends meet given the price of housing, food, getting around. This is critical that we have something to replace rent. I heard a friend over there say that it was all because of the carbon tax. I want to acknowledge that transportation costs are significant. But I want to remind the government that one of the major costs to any person, whether they rent or own, is housing. The poverty line, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.—where they say you’re getting into trouble is if over 30% of your income is going into housing. What I’m talking about in situations I’m going to describe this afternoon are situations in which, for affordable housing—affordable housing people are trying to cling on to—42% to 45% of their income is going into housing.

I want to talk about Amanda, a mom of four who lives in Manor Village, which is an area in the south of Ottawa. Manor Village was targeted for renovictions by its owner, Smart Living Properties. Smart Living Properties said to the low-income, working-class tenants of Manor Village, “You’re going to have to move out. The building is dilapidated. We need to do some repairs.” In Ottawa, unfortunately, unlike Hamilton, Mississauga and Toronto, we don’t have rental replacement bylaws. We were fighting for that in our latest municipal plan, but Bill 23 that this government proposed didn’t help us towards addressing any of it. So Amanda and so many other folks in Manor Village faced the threat of losing their homes. Amanda lived in a three-bedroom home in Manor Village for \$1,400 a month. You cannot find a three-bedroom home for a low-income family in the city of Ottawa for that price—impossible. They faced the threat of losing it.

Years before, in 2018, we had the largest mass eviction in Canadian history since the terrible story of Africville. I invite members, if you don’t know what happened in Africville in the great city of Halifax, to look it up. It was an instance where Black residents of Halifax were literally moved out of their community, with their possessions, in dump trucks. It was a mass eviction led by the city.

That inglorious chapter of Canadian history was actually made worse with Heron Gate in our city, where 500 residents were evicted summarily by Timbercreek. It has since changed its corporate name. I guess when you get a bad reputation for turfing low-income tenants, you’ve got to change your corporate name.

We needed a rental replacement bylaw to make sure that these folks could actually find comparable housing. It doesn’t exist in the city of Ottawa.

So what is in Bill 97 to make sure there are robust rental replacement rules so that tenants, who have rights, as the member for University–Rosedale said very well, can get access to similar housing? I don’t see it. I see fines, but everybody in this place knows that smart, well-resourced people in housing can wait out a judicial process; they can drag their feet. And it puts the onus on the complainant to lawyer up to the same extent that the well-resourced person has. What you needed were resources off the top, a rental replacement bylaw system that actually works, that compels the landlord if they want to massively renovate a property and make a margin for that. Fine—make sure that the tenants have comparable housing. That’s what a fair regime would do, and I don’t see that in Bill 97.

What did residents in Heron Gate and Manor Village do to fight for their rights, in the absence of a rental replacement bylaw—because as I said, we don’t have it in the city of Ottawa. They worked with great organizations like ACORN in our city. They organized home to home, and they made sure that those landlords were held accountable for their decisions. I’m happy to say that the residents of Heron Gate negotiated an agreement with the landlord who threw them out, and people have found new homes, but not without a massive fight. And I’m happy to say that the residents of Manor Village persuaded the city of Ottawa to re-route our LRT so it wasn’t going directly through their community, to save their housing, and they are fighting, as I’m saying these words, to make sure they have comparable-quality and comparable-cost apartments—but by citizen action, people on their own, neighbour to neighbour. It’s important.

But we should actually have a safety net that matters in this province. I don’t see it in this bill.

If you go to downtown Ottawa, in the neighbourhood of Centretown, 142 Nepean Street is a three-storey walk-up that you’ll see. The city council at home just recently made the decision to demolish 142 Nepean Street—for a 27- or 25- or 34-storey building, you would think. It makes sense. Densification—that’s what we need. No, for a parking lot—for a parking lot. Despite the fact that there are parking lots at adjacent buildings, that was the priority for the developer. They told those residents of that affordable building right in the downtown, close to work, close



to transit, close to amenities, that they had to move out. They fought back, but there is no rental-replacement bylaw that exists. The landlord offered spaces for a certain amount of time, three years, but then after that the rent can be jacked up by whatever the landlord would seek to charge, because, as the member from London North Centre said, after 2018, all bets are off when it comes to rent control in Ontario. It's the Wild West.

So what was Amanda's reaction from Manor Village when she was facing the loss of her housing for her four kids? She said to the CBC, "I don't know what we're gonna do. We could ... end up on the street or living in my van."

That, sadly, is the reality of so many of our cities' neighbours, who have become destitute or homeless, because the housing rules that we have favour large, multi-property owners and real estate investment trusts and they don't work for people.

In the time I have left, I want to talk about the expansion of the urban boundary, which this legislation proposes, by changing a previous standard that had been talked about for development of 80 residents per hectare to 50 people per hectare. And the worry advocacy groups have with this bill is that you're going to be encouraging housing further and further from urban centres and not moving towards what everybody seems to agree upon, as we work towards these 1.5 million homes we need to build, which is more densification in the downtown.

I love to ride my road bike at home, Speaker. It's one of the ways I get my mental health. One of the communities I love to roll through when I have the chance is Piperville, southeast of Ottawa, Carlsbad Springs area. There's a great park out there called the Ludger Landry Park on Piperville Road. Well, there was a bunch of neighbours recently there at a protest because they were awoken at 4 o'clock in the morning to the sound of clear-cutting of thousands of trees—thousands of trees.

And this is an area that wasn't zoned for development of housing. This was an area, unbeknownst to the residents of the community, that had historically been farmland, but there had been an urban forest that had grown up. Kids went in there to play—I certainly have that memory from my youth, of just going into the adjacent forest to play, in rural eastern Ontario. People would walk their dogs in there.

But at four in the morning, for some reason, a mass clear-cutting operation happened, unbeknownst to the neighbourhood of Carlsbad Springs. It caused a complete uproar. And my question, Speaker, is the allegation here from Taggart Group—which is the developer—is that this is going to be used for farming, and that we need arable land for farming—no question. But I find it curious—for the record of this place, it is right adjacent to a development that is barely inside the urban boundary, once it was expanded by this government, called the Tewin development. City staff told Taggart that it was extremely expensive to pay for the utilities to be worked out there, to think about public transit to be worked out there, to extend municipal services out there. They actually recommended

to city council, in the last iteration of city council, not to approve this development, to reject it. But this government changed the urban boundary. The Tewin project was approved. And just last month, residents in a plot of land even further away were awoken to the sound of clear-cutting in the middle of the night. I ask you, Speaker, is this the way we do development in Ontario now, where communities have to be surprised?

If I were in the government, if I were at their tables, I would be encouraging them to not move forward with that kind of an adversarial approach. The government has to be present. There have to be clear rules of engagement. And we have lots of success stories in Ottawa of great densification developments that happened, where neighbourhoods are consulted and they work, and everybody wins. But that's not what's happening right now, and I don't see it being fixed with Bill 97.

**1630**

So the rationale that was given to the residents of Carlsbad Springs—because immediately, when the city found out about the possibility of a clear-cutting operation on February 17, they sent their bylaw folk out there with a stop-work order. But apparently, after the clear-cutting happened, what city council learned last week is that there's a gap in the bylaw. According to the city, in the reading of the bylaw, the injury or destruction of trees is required for farming practices. Again, I wish I could show the members of this House on some screen here, because members of the community flew drones to take pictures of the thousands of trees that were felled in the middle of the night. It is not starting off on a good foot to be treating communities like this. Community consultation should not be an afterthought. That's what I'm trying to say.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Any thought would be nice.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Any thought would be nice, the member from Hamilton just said.

Again, I want to close the time I have, Speaker, before entertaining questions by remembering how residents have come together to defend their affordable housing. This is a good story. There's an elderly couple that I've worked with on Elgin Street in downtown Ottawa that were forced to move from their home on Elgin Street, which they have lived in for 38 years, because of a building fire. But what was curious about the fact that this elderly couple—who would like me to not use their names now because we negotiated an amicable agreement with the landlord. They were told to move out of their home, as were many people in this building, because of the fire damage. But as people started to move back in that were actually closer to the fire in the building, they found it curious that they were still being told to stay out.

Their insurance was running out. Their ability to stay in a hotel was running out, because these are low-income seniors, so they gave me a call. They said, "Joel, we don't know what we're going to do. There's a new, shady, kind of property manager guy around our building all the time and he gives us the evil look. He's changed our locks; we didn't even know about it. We can't go in to get our stuff. This doesn't seem right." We hooked them up with

Community Legal Ottawa to get access to their property and their stuff.

But what stepped into the breach once again was ACORN Canada. A bunch of neighbours came together at the doorstep with a locksmith they hired. They got into that building. They defied the landlord. The police came, and we said calmly to the police officers who came, “These tenants are being prevented from accessing their property. They are about to run out of their ability to pay for housing outside of this building and everybody else has moved back in.” Wouldn’t you know it, Speaker, they were living in a rent-controlled unit for all that time and everybody around them were more recent tenants, paying at least twice, if not three times what they were paying.

So this couple fought back. They got in the news. They organized their neighbours. They pressured the landlord, and thankfully, I’m happy to tell this House, they are back in there. They sent me pictures of their newly repainted room. It’s beautiful. They have a beautiful mauve dining room with an old table where they love to enjoy meals with friends.

But again, it shouldn’t have to come to this. There should be clear rules that make sure landlords cannot engage in this kind of activity. And you’re not going to stop this, Speaker, by increasing fines. You’re going to stop this, if I understand what the Attorney General is saying, by increasing the capacity at the Landlord and Tenant Board to give tenants and landlords access to justice, so when they are being harmed, they can get decisions.

But that’s not the Ontario we’re living in right now. We’re living in an Ontario where, under this particular government, the cost of a home has doubled, if you’re in the ownership market. Rent is going through the roof. Costs of life are going through the roof. And there are a lot of people lining up to help: the real estate investment trusts of the world, the Timbercreeks, the Smart Living Properties. They’ve got all the consultants and lawyers they want. What we need is a government that’s going to stand up for tenants, stand up for homeowners and stand up for communities. Bill 97 does not do that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his remarks. As he is very well aware, Speaker, our government has proposed many pieces of legislation to protect tenants and increase fines for bad landlords.

My question is simple: Will the NDP choose, this time maybe, to vote with us and help us enhance those protections under the RTA?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I guess I would ask the member: Would he agree to pass a piece of legislation like this if he were living in a rent-controlled apartment with no ability to move into a new home when he was being thrown out of it? Would he wait for a \$100,000 fine to make its way through the system—or a \$500,000 fine—or would he fight for his family? I want to believe that the latter is true.

We need legislation with teeth to help people who are in a tough position, and that’s not what’s here.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre. He really talked about the people he represents in Ottawa and he does such a good job for them.

I was driving home a couple of weeks ago from Toronto and looking at different apartment buildings and thinking back to my twenties when I was renting in an apartment building. It was all based on where I wanted to live in Sudbury: Did I want to be near Cambrian College where I went to school, or did I want to be downtown where the nightlife was? Did I want to be near the beach, so in the summer I could walk and go to the beach? And really, Speaker, the cost was about 100 bucks. I worked part-time; I was a full-time student. I had my own apartment and rent was affordable and the difference between where you wanted to be was about 100 bucks for a decent apartment.

What’s gone wrong over these years—to the member—and what do you think are some simple things that the Conservative government can do to address this?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you to the member from Sudbury, but what I’ve asked them to do twice, with colleagues—including you, Speaker—is bring in real rent control—tenant-to-tenant rent control—and vacancy decontrol, so people actually have rights, so they have rights and they have the ability to stay where they are. And then, if this legislation could be amended at committee, what might make it more supportable is actual access to justice, where people wouldn’t wait for the possibility of a fine being levied one day. They would have the power to go to an LTB that’s properly staffed with adjudicators to get access to justice right away. That’s not what we have right now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** The member opposite has spoken very passionately about low-income families and the challenges they face with rent, with access to justice—his opinions about that. I’m curious: It’s become patently obvious that the carbon taxes have had an incredible impact on prices across the board—not just on energy, but also on other necessities of life. I would like to know, what price per tonne does the member opposite feel is an appropriate tax to put on those families for whom he is so concerned?

**Hon. David Piccini:** What’s the price—price per tonne?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I want to thank the member, and I think I heard the environment minister chirping about prices per tonne. Do you know what’s a ton of nonsense, Speaker? What’s a ton of nonsense is a government that postures, that constantly loses lawsuits with the federal government and is doing—as the federal environment minister said very clearly—absolutely nothing on the climate crisis of any sincerity.

What is driving up the cost of living, Speaker, are rich folks connected to this government driving up rent, driving up the price of food, ruining our communities. This government is not standing up and fighting for people. They

are fighting for Galen Weston. They are fighting for the De Gasperis family. We will fight for people.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Order. The Minister of Environment will come to order.

The member from Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I just want to correct—I asked a question last time, and I actually made a mistake. I want to admit I made a mistake. I know you're all surprised at that. I actually said that we were losing 319 acres per week of prime farmland. You know what? It's 319 acres per day—per day. So I apologize to the farmers on that particular issue.

I want to talk about a young lady in my riding who was renovicted—told that they were going to fix up the apartment. She had to move out. She ended up getting a place on the same street in a basement. And she waited and looked at the apartment, looked at the apartment—never once was anybody in there fixing it. But then, what did they do? They upped the rent and rented it out. And what happens in this bill? You're relying on that renter who can't afford to pay their rent in the first place to fight through the courts to take on somebody—or a corporation. It makes no sense to me.

In my riding, in Fort Erie, there's a 13-year wait-list for an affordable one-bedroom apartment and a 57% increase in rents. So my question is: Why is there nothing in this bill that addresses the housing affordability crisis in all our communities? To you—I've listened to you—what is the solution to help this government stop the poverty that's going on in this province?

1640

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I'll be actually constructive instead of rhetorical as I was in my last response, because I think that was the invitation for the members opposite.

Do you know there's a Conservative government, Speaker, in England that has actually made sure that price gouging at the pump—they call it petrol in England—doesn't happen? Do you know there are conservative governments elsewhere in the world that are taking on the grocery giants that are hiking up the cost of food? There are rent control arrangements in other major countries of this world that make sure that everyday people—tenants, residents—don't get gouged, and landlords can make a margin so they stay afloat.

But this government believes in a free market where the powerful run roughshod over others. But the good news is—and this is actual advice—if you're at home and you're facing renoviction, pick up the phone and call ACORN. Organize with your neighbours, because that's what works. When government won't help, organize and fight for change, and get in touch with the NDP.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** My question to the member opposite is—I'll quote from one of his colleagues, from Toronto Centre: "We are seeing many people struggling as they're waiting for their hearing date, and of course, while they're waiting, that means everything is in limbo....

It benefits no one when the tribunal system doesn't work." As my colleagues have alluded to earlier today, we invested an additional \$6.5 million in the Landlord and Tenant Board to clear the backlog and provide timely service, both for the landlords and the tenants.

So my question to the opposition is, will they not walk their talk and support this common-sense move?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** The honest response to the member from Perth–Wellington is that I absolutely support more staff going toward the Landlord and Tenant Board and the other adjudicator. I think we've been very clear here. We've been very clear about that. But there is something else you could do that other municipalities have done—as I said, Mississauga; we have people from Hamilton right here; Toronto. They've had rental replacement bylaws that have actually worked.

You're diminishing the capacity of those to help working-class families. Why? Just so a real estate investment trust can make a little bit more margin? How much of those organizations actually care about the Canadian economy and Canadian families? Is their profit much more important than the livelihoods of ordinary people struggling and trying to get by? I don't think it is.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you the member from Ottawa Centre. You're always bringing the fire that we need here when we're standing up to defend people in our communities.

In Hamilton, we have right now about 1,500 people who are homeless, as the best estimates tell. We have 500 shelter beds. And we have growing renoviction applications at the LTB. People end up homeless because they lose what affordable housing that they have, and they're losing it at an extraordinary rate.

My question to you is, why does this bill not have the teeth that it needs to protect people from being evicted from their affordable homes when we see such a crisis in all of our communities when it comes to homelessness?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I think the answer for the member is that the bill is not written for them. The bill is not written for them. It postures. You have a right to air conditioning, as long as you can afford it. You have the right to due process, as long as you can wait out a highly resourced landlord.

At the end of the day, people in crisis know, who have faced eviction from their property, that they do not have a friend in this government. The way they can get what they deserve is to organize with each other and push for change. People are doing that. They will do that.

Hold on, folks, because an NDP government is coming in a couple of years, and then you will really get the help you need.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I'm going to be splitting my time this afternoon with the member from Don Valley West.

It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 97 with all of you this evening. Of course, this government has had nearly

five years to improve the housing affordability crisis that is facing our province. But under this government's watch, we've continued to see both the rental market and the price of home ownership reach all-time highs. Middle-class families starting out are having a nearly impossible time entering the housing market. Couples with a combined income that is higher than the Canadian average are spending years and years and years looking for an affordable option to enter the market and begin their families. When they do finally find something, new homeowners are struck immediately with another phenomenon made worse by this government. Not only is the price of housing skyrocketing, but the price of heating their new home is going up. The price of electricity for their new home is skyrocketing. The price of putting food on the table for their family in their new home is skyrocketing. And, of course, as a result of this government's policies and their actions towards municipalities, these new homeowners are facing skyrocketing property taxes, as well—property tax increases that haven't been seen in many parts of this province in nearly a generation. So when these young couples can finally enter the market, when they can finally afford a home, all of their costs to manage and maintain their new home are skyrocketing, without any support from this government. Because of their policies to starve municipalities, the neighbourhoods that these new homes are in are becoming more and more incomplete. The roads and sidewalks aren't going to be built for years and years because the cities can't afford to do them. The parks and community centres won't be ready until after the children are grown.

When you starve municipalities of the funding necessary to build complete neighbourhoods, you end up with incomplete communities.

The government has set a goal of building 1.5 million new homes by 2031. They've all but explicitly acknowledged that their efforts aren't working. This is, I believe, their fourth attempt to get things right, their fourth attempt to move the market in the right direction. The government's biggest problem has always been, as we know, their inability to take responsibility for the failure to deliver on their promises. Clearly, what the government has been doing, what the government has been trying to do, what the government further promises to do isn't working.

So what might work? Instead of putting all of their eggs in the basket of private builders—and unlike the New Democrats, I'm not attacking home builders. Many of Ontario's home builders are family-owned and family-operated businesses. Most of us, if not all of us, live in a home that was built by a developer or a home builder. They contribute immensely to our communities, both with their core business and of course with their charitable work. But the reality is, their business is making money. There's nothing wrong with that, but if we want to bring prices down, perhaps we should be looking at more not-for-profit options.

We need a government that is going to make the province a true partner in building affordable homes in

Ontario. We need a government that won't continue to push responsibility for building affordable housing onto overloaded and financially starved municipalities, unlike nearly every other province in Confederation.

To help double the pace of homebuilding, just last year, the Ontario Liberals proposed the creation of the Ontario homebuilding corporation. What is the Ontario homebuilding corporation? The corporation would allow the government to work with communities, not-for-profit housing partners and developers to build and maintain affordable homes of all types for new home buyers, either as a primary financing source or as a builder. This corporation could leverage provincially owned and underutilized lands—efforts I think the Minister of Education might have been talking about earlier this afternoon. We don't need to be paving over the greenbelt to develop surplus lands and to build affordable housing. The corporation should be provided with the capital funding, subject to strict oversight by whatever measures the government wants to bring in, including a hard cap on the administrative expenses and salaries and a 15-year mandate to ensure housing is built rapidly. It will help cool the housing market, and it will end the wait-list for affordable public housing. Most importantly, homes sold by the corporation should only be made available to first-time homebuyers, and all the proceeds could go directly back into creating more affordable homes—it would be the never-ending cycle of financing of new home construction for new home buyers and so on and so forth.

In summary, if the government wants to address the affordability of housing, their actions to date haven't done so. We've seen skyrocketing prices, both in the home ownership market and in the rental market, and it's time for the government to explore more not-for-profit options.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The member from Don Valley West.

1650

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you to my colleague from Orléans for his excellent suggestions.

The housing crisis in Ontario has reached the point where it's affecting many more in our society. Workers are being forced out of Toronto because they can't afford to live in the city anymore.

I spoke to the owner of a small business, a garage, who felt forced to sell his business because he couldn't hire mechanics, because mechanics are moving to the suburbs and to small towns because of high rents here in Toronto, and choosing to work nearer to where they live.

People will keep fleeing this city and province to cheaper locales out west or in the Maritimes, and that will affect the ability—it is affecting the ability—of our province to thrive. This trend is a threat to our economic health, and it must be addressed. This government has been in power for five years, and this problem is not getting better; in fact, it's getting worse. We risk a society that lacks sufficient young and middle-aged people to do the work that keeps our province working.

There was an article yesterday in the Toronto Star about Toronto Island and how it's disproportionately occupied

by elderly people, because young people can't get there, can't make their home there.

That's the future we risk for the province at large, which is why it's particularly disheartening that this government has failed to take meaningful action on the housing crisis. The refusal to adopt the recommendation of its own expert housing task force would be farcical if it didn't have such a damaging impact, but the consequences of this inaction are grave and cannot be waved away by boasting about how many cranes we have in the province.

This government's focus on sprawl and tall, and no other creative solutions, at the expense of farmland and our environment, hurts our province's overall well-being. This legislation's provisions for expanding urban boundaries go against the recommendations of this government's expert housing task force.

That being said, there is a part of this legislation I could support. The tenant protections strengthened in this bill are a positive step in the government's track record on rights for tenants. Half of the residents of my riding of Don Valley West are renters, and the increasingly precarious housing situation in Ontario disproportionately affects them. With the average price of a one-bedroom apartment reaching \$2,500 a month, it has never been more difficult to be a renter in this city, and this government has thus far failed to help them. I receive countless phone calls and emails from constituents, many of them new immigrants and elderly women living on a limited pension, who are scared that their landlord will force them out through a renovation or that they will be forced out because of above-guideline rent increases. Displacement has a serious impact on people's lives, particularly those who have lower incomes or are already in a difficult financial situation. So we'll need to see the details of how this bill will be implemented to see if the new protections do indeed deter renovations, but it certainly is a step in the right direction.

But one must also wonder why the government is introducing these protections now, when they removed the city of Toronto's ability to regulate demolition last year in Bill 23. Toronto had possibly the best rental replacement policy in the province, and this government removed it. Rental replacement makes sense from a supply perspective, because it does not make sense that it's easier to redevelop an existing apartment building than to build the missing middle in residential neighbourhoods. The government has real power to address this crisis, if only they would wake up to that.

A way this government could further prevent displacement and help the affordability issue that so many Ontarians are facing is by looking at creative solutions for rent control that do not deter the building of new rental units, like rolling rent controls over a 10-year period. Because of this government's current policy, all new builds are exempt from rent control, which means that anyone living in a new apartment is at further risk of displacement. I have heard of tenants in non-rent-controlled apartments receiving notices of rent increases

of 10%, and they just cannot afford that on a big-ticket item like rent.

I will continue to advocate to this government to be creative, instead of offering Ontarians more of the same—that is, tall, sprawl, and removal of rent control. There are ways to implement rent stabilization that do not impact the ability to secure financing for the building of apartments, and I strongly encourage the government to consider those options. New challenges call for new solutions.

When affordable rental units are not being built—and they certainly won't get built in the greenbelt—why not consider an idea like my colleague mentioned, the Ontario homebuilding corporation, to finance and build the affordable housing we need?

The new regulation permitting tenants to install air conditioning units is welcome, especially as climate change is causing warmer and hotter summers. I think my colleague from the NDP mentioned that earlier. Our reliance on AC will only continue to grow. And while this legislative change is positive, it's a further reminder of how this government refuses to acknowledge the gravity of the climate crisis. We need to reduce our carbon emissions, not increase them. But under this government, we will be increasing our reliance on fossil fuels.

That's not the government's only failure on energy policy. This government came into power pledging to reduce the cost of electricity, that Ontarians would see lower electricity bills, but, in fact, the opposite has happened; their bills have increased. They discarded the long-term energy plan of the previous Liberal government, refused to implement a new one, and now energy costs keep soaring. With that kind of policy, low-income tenants may not be able to afford to keep their AC running.

I'm happy to see that this government is waking up to some of the struggles of Ontario tenants, but they need a new plan on housing if they want to get serious about helping tenants with affordability now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to my Liberal colleagues for their comments.

My question is to the member from Orléans. It was very interesting listening to his comments.

I'd just like to highlight they had 15 years to address housing in this province and did nothing, Speaker.

We're listening to municipalities. That's why we're tabling a fourth housing supply action bill, and we're going to table more. We were very clear with the electors in Ontario during the election that we would table a housing supply action bill every year of our four-year mandate, if we got one. Guess what? We got one. So there will be more, because we're listening to municipalities.

He was talking about non-profit housing and rentals. I was wondering if the member from Orléans would be willing to call his friend Justin Trudeau and tell him to take an ask that they remove HST from large purpose-built rentals, as this government under Premier Ford is asking the federal government to do.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Unlike the Premier, who claims that the finance minister is a close personal friend who is in almost daily contact, I'm not a friend of Mr. Trudeau's and I don't have his phone number—although I'm happy to talk to him next time I see him.

I wasn't here for the 15 years of the previous government. I was on Ottawa city council, and when I was on council we were building homes faster than any pace before that. My signature is on subdivision plans and community-design plans for the construction of thousands of new homes which I was happy to oversee as councillor for Cumberland, one of the fastest-growing parts of Ottawa. And I'm sure the city of Ottawa will continue those efforts to expand housing.

If they were truly listening to municipalities, they would provide the financial assistance to bridge the challenges that cities are going to face financially as a result of losing development charges; they would provide the transit funding bridge to address the enormous impacts that COVID-19 has continued to have on transit systems. Those are the kinds of things they would do if they were listening to municipalities.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member from Orléans for his debate.

During his debate, he talked about how the cost of everything has gone up, and we heard that very loud and clear at the doors about a year ago. The cost of food, housing, utility, property tax—now that the developer fees are being downloaded onto municipalities—are all going up. Utilities have gone up—when you think about electricity—ever since Hydro One was privatized. When you look at Hydro One—it has been five years the Conservative government has been in place. If you look at the affordability issues with food and housing and property tax—it has been about a year.

What do you see that's new in the last year that has made things more affordable for people? Can you think of anything?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I don't think anything is more affordable under this government. We've seen the price of electricity go up. We've seen the price of natural gas go up. We've seen the price of groceries go up. As I've said before, you can't even go to the game and drink a beer without looking down the nose at a price increase, as a result of a broken promise by this government. Buck-a-beer—or two bucks a beer or whatever the promise was—didn't last very long.

So, no, I don't really see anything getting more affordable for families. Things are only getting tougher and tougher and tougher, and what we've seen from this government are policies that will make that worse and a budget that really ignores middle-class families right across the province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** To either one of my colleagues here—I'm just wondering if you feel that these

policies that we're looking at in all these different bills are going far enough for this goal of 1.5 million homes in 10 years? Three units per property, not looking at main streets but instead looking at the greenbelt—what do you think of actually having the backbone to push further and get four units per property, build up main streets, especially along the subway corridor? Why not just upzone main streets to six storeys and really get behind that 1.5 million goal and build in urban centres where the services are, where people want to live?

**1700**

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Yes, the latest budget showed that this government's plan to build 1.5 million new homes is not working. They're only at half the target. Their plan seems to be, as I say, all about tall or sprawl.

In my riding of Don Valley West, we continue to see applications for 35-storey condo buildings get approved at the OLT, despite the objections of the city, because the infrastructure isn't there.

There are lots of opportunities to build that missing middle, to build those six-storey buildings, to build walk-ups and other options for people who don't want to live in tall condos.

So I think there are lots of other opportunities this government could be taking to increase density in our cities and our towns without going into the greenbelt and causing further environmental harm.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I just want to ask a couple of questions to my colleague who decided to throw something into his presentation. I want to know if he's aware that the Conservative Party was in official opposition for 15 years. I want to know if he's aware that the Liberal Party was in government for 15 years.

Are you aware that the Liberals sold off Hydro One, causing hydro rates to skyrocket? Are you aware that the NDP voted against Bill 115? Are you aware that the Liberals and Conservatives voted against anti-scab legislation and increases to minimum wage?

Do you think that the decisions over those 15 years that you guys were together led to the affordability and rent crisis that we're currently facing today? We are in an affordability crisis in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** What I am aware of is, the last time the NDP was in power, they sent public servants home without pay for two weeks a year.

Liberals have a strong track record of investing in education, investing in health care, and, as I said, investing in home construction across the province.

If the NDP want to go back in time and recall Bob Rae and the infamous government of the 1990s, I'm sure both the government—and, I know over here, we would love to have that conversation over the next couple of years.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** My question is to the member from Orléans.

He was referring to non-profit, and I know on this side of the House and in the middle over there we support our non-profit sector. Habitat for Humanity does great work in building affordable rentals and houses for people in need in Ontario. Obviously, in Bill 23, we removed development charges from non-profit housing, but unfortunately, the members opposite voted against that.

My hope is that they will choose to support this bill, which freezes 74 provincial fees related to building permits and other fees to get purpose-built rentals built.

Again, for the record, we are at the highest number of purpose-built rentals in the province of Ontario—the highest number, ever, building right now.

So will the member opposite support these cost-cutting measures in our bill?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Certainly, cutting costs for not-for-profit housing, whether those are development costs or other costs, is a step in the right direction.

One of the major challenges with Bill 23 was the definition of “attainable housing,” the yet-to-be-defined “attainable housing,” and the risk that that provides.

Most cities and most suburban or outlying cities that are building new subdivisions are building with densities that are much higher than in the past. Many of those homes are townhomes, executive townhomes etc., which would be considered attainable housing by many definitions.

If cities lose development charges for 50% or 60% of new builds, that’s going to create a financial crisis within cities.

That was one of the major problems with Bill 23 and the yet-to-be-defined definition of “attainable housing.”

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** A very quick question?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I have a question for my friend from Orléans.

I couldn’t help but notice the assertion there that we hate developers here in the New Democratic caucus. It will come as a surprise to my uncles in the development industry, I will say. But what I can say we don’t like are developers who build improper homes.

So my question to the member, because that isn’t something focused in this bill—Cardinal Creek is a community in the member’s constituency that has had serious problems with improperly built homes, with zero help from Tarion and zero help so far from this government. Do you have a message for them, some vision for them, about how we can make sure that when people make that risk of buying that home, that it’s a properly built home?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** One of the biggest challenges facing suburban growth communities, which will only continue to get worse if the government actually can come up with measures to achieve their homebuilding targets, is the inability to produce the number of building inspectors necessary to go out and do inspections throughout the homebuilding process. Focusing on getting more young people, more Ontarians into the diploma programs and the other certification programs to become certified home

inspectors will go a long way to avoiding some of the challenges that we’ve seen in Cardinal Creek Village and other communities, relating to new home construction.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I met earlier today with one of the legislative interns that is doing a paper on polarization in political debate and politics at large, and I’ve been sitting here listening to the various speakers talk about this bill and that word, “polarization,” has gone through my mind multiple times. One of the questions he had asked me was where I thought it came from and what was feeding it. One of my answers was media and social media. In a party system, there will always be an aspect of winning and losing, and it’s traditional, unfortunately, in humanity that we are easier to unite around what we dislike and distrust more so than we are easy to unite around what we like and want.

So I don’t have a background in zoning, in municipal government, in urban planning. I have no idea what Facebook algorithm brought this up years ago, but there’s an organization—it’s American, but a lot of their principles apply to Canada as well—called Strong Towns. Strong Towns calls itself sort of roughly an advocate for urban prosperity. A lot of that is through urban density, so I fully admit the organization itself definitely has more of a pro-transit, anti-car stance, however, which I think is less possible in our area. But a lot of what they wrote about really interested me, enough so that despite the fact that, as I said, I have no idea how the algorithm decided I would be interested in Strong Towns, they were right, and I did become very interested in Strong Towns.

One of the things that they talk about is how the concept of the traditional downtown didn’t need to die, but even having died, it is impossible to bring it back to life again. Places that attain a certain level of urban density, almost by virtue of that density, tend to attain a certain level of urban prosperity as well. And what I keep hearing about this bill in the criticism of this bill is this very sort of polarizing description of it being “sprawl and tall” versus, in some way, an urbanization infill or densification bill. The more I look at it and the more I look at the housing bills that have come before it, I am still failing to understand how this bill prevents or complicates any of the urban densification or infill that we also need to have happen. What I see here is a bill that is written in the context of a national emergency, and I think that is one of the most important things that we need to consider here when we get into this polarizing debate about sprawl versus urban.

I remember—I think it was 2021 when the Scotiabank article came out that put Canada last among G7 countries for homes per Canadian. It was something like, I don’t know, 420 or something homes per 1,000 Canadians, with, frankly, eye-watering amounts of homes needing to be built in order to bring us up even to the average of G7 countries and certainly to a point where we would be comfortable.

1710

As a member of this government, when we were first elected, obviously we ran on a platform of building and of building homes. We already knew that we were coming into this second term with the housing crisis continued. Particularly in COVID, we saw a shift, actually, from urban living to more of a suburban sprawl-rural living, which also changed some of the requirements. But ultimately, we were still behind the clock as far as providing homes required.

It doesn't matter what party you're in; if you've talked to your stakeholders, you will have been told by countless people that they have a labour shortage, that they need more people to work. And then on top of that, we received the information from the federal government about the immigration targets that they are looking for and how many people are going to be coming to Canada, to Ontario, and to southern Ontario specifically.

It would be lovely if we could put our heads together and come up with ways to attract some of these new arrivals to places other than southern Ontario that are looking for workers. Frankly, I don't think that's impossible. But right now, here is where they will undeniably arrive. I feel that our housing bills and this housing bill are being written in an attitude of recognizing that we are years behind and that we are in a state of emergency when it comes to providing housing.

I'm from Waterloo region. The Waterloo region plan was sort of amended in a way. They had written several versions, and one was their worst-case scenario of maximum arrivals to the region, which is essentially what the province took, what the government took. We've kept this countryside line intact, which doesn't mean anything to many people here, but it's very important in Waterloo region.

What I see happening here with the bills we've had before, with accessory dwelling units, with starting to target exclusionary zoning, with the language in this bill talking about focusing on downtown areas, transit areas, that type of thing—I am not seeing a bill that is hostile to urban development. In fact, when I speak to urban home builders, I don't receive criticism for these bills. In fact, I receive a lot of praise and appreciation and, frankly, feedback on what they would love to see in our subsequent bills in order to make urban development even easier.

Interestingly, when you talk about urban prosperity, places that are nice places to live tend to attract labourers and attract people that want to be there simply by virtue of being nice places to live. The member from Cambridge will recognize this, but one of our local urban home builders who's quite innovative wrote a book about happy cities. He described a road in Cambridge, Hespeler Road, as being one of the signs of Cambridge's unhappiness. It's a six-lane road full of parking lots and strip malls right next to the 401 that he described as being a place where you would simply drive to as the most efficient place in order to shop and then drive back home again with no community aspect.

As a resident of Cambridge, I've always found Hespeler Road not exactly the most attractive place. But particularly after I discovered Strong Towns, I began to be increasingly frustrated by it, because what I would see—and what I see throughout Ontario—is the result of poor municipal planning and the idea that you would simply toss something up where it was convenient. And so we now have all of this land that is, as the author of that book put it, dedicated to parking lots, to single-storey strip malls etc.

What I see in this bill, when I read about being transit-oriented, about downtown, about looking at areas that we can target, is I see a government that is acting, as I said, in awareness that we are in a state of emergency, but also extremely open to the concept of urbanization, to infill, to densification. I believe the reason that, as I said, we need to act as though we are in an emergency is, first of all, because we are in an emergency. But secondly, as a resident of Waterloo region, when I look around—I've been there since I was seven years old. I've seen the planning decisions, I've seen the sprawl, and I've seen the lack of urban development that has occurred, and all of that—that sprawl, that lack of urban development—occurred under the municipality's watch, under the region's watch, under the local politicians' watch, not anything to do with the province. This isn't the case where they were headed 100 miles an hour in the right direction and the province has somehow interfered.

Rather, what I see, particularly after the most recent municipal election—one of my closest friends ran for city councillor—is municipal politicians are faced with, in comparison to our type of campaign, not being connected to a party. The amount that they can raise and spend is very small. The number of people who come out to vote for them is very, very small. And so, frankly, I don't love the term “NIMBY,” but a small community of NIMBYs can very, very easily influence a municipal councillor to make decisions that are really only benefiting the current residents of a community and not the future, the yet-to-arrive residents of that community, because, as I said, they may be able to leverage the loudest voice. They may be the ones that are able to organize to come to the community meeting. But really, is that listening to everybody? Is that actually being equal, being forward-thinking? I don't think it is.

From my perspective, a lot of municipal politicians, in many ways, have had their hands tied for years now by that attitude and by the requirement that they stick by that. We've seen it in Toronto, where we've had councillors say that supporting a certain project would be political suicide and they, indeed, found out that it was and lost their position in the next election because they went against the small group of people that were able to mobilize in a municipal election.

The way that I look at this is, this bill—for example, take Waterloo region—unlocks a much larger area of land for development than the region's, perhaps, ideal version would have done. However, that ideal version is, again, based very much on that small group of people who are



able to mobilize, who are able to have their voice heard and, frankly, very, very rarely live in an apartment building, based off of at least my data that I've received and my somewhat unofficial polling. But again, these bills are not stopping urban development. They're not stopping infill. They're not stopping innovation. In fact, I believe that that is the direction we are heading, and we have already shown a clear commitment to innovation, to listening to other voices in the housing debate. I see no reason why that would stop, and this bill, to me, is just another example of that.

At the end of the day, I'm almost 36; I bought my house in 2015. It was a foreclosure. It's one of those 1950s one-and-a-half-storey bungalows, and it was kind of falling apart. I went in at asking, and I bought it for \$187,000—and this is in Cambridge. An identical house—frankly, not nearly as nice as mine—sold during the peak of the real estate prices last year for \$860,000, the house across the street. So I am faced every day with the knowledge that even on an MPP's salary—for those listening, it's a base salary of \$116,000; I'm a parliamentary assistant, so I get another \$16,000 on top of that, so \$132,000—I wouldn't be able to afford my own house if I had to buy it now.

1720

I love my house. It's a detached house. It has a garden. I love the ability to have a garden, and so I don't feel that I'm in any position to tell somebody who has that same dream that I had of white-picket-fence homeownership that they can't have it. I also think that we are not currently, because of years of neglect of urban densification of infill projects, in a position where municipalities or regions are ready to be full speed ahead on infill projects. When you look at a place like Hespeler Road, you see competing ownership, competing zoning. It's a perfect place to intensify and develop, but there are so many strings in order to get through to be able to do that that it's going to take quite a lot of time. It's going to take a lot of political will in order to make it happen.

The way I look at it is that we are still in a state of emergency, so if continuing to build the way we have always built is the most efficient and fastest way to get homes built and get them occupied, then that is what we have to do, but there's absolutely no reason that any of these bills prevent us from working together, from listening to our stakeholders, from listening to those who are in urban homebuilding, from listening to people advocating for missing-middle housing, to make that happen.

One of the things that has occurred to me: There's some talk in this bill about seniors, about building for seniors. We have a lot of seniors who are aging at home in very, very large houses that arguably a younger family could perhaps make better use of, and perhaps they might have considered downsizing, but we really don't build a good community for them to downsize to. We built a retirement home, an adults-only home somewhere on the outskirts of Waterloo. We don't create a retirement home that has two or three bedrooms, that's located in the heart of the city, that's a place that their children would want to come to.

That is not historically what we have built, and therefore how can we expect them to leave their houses?

I believe that what these bills are doing is saying that there are a number of different pathways to creating housing. I do firmly believe that the housing supply crisis—really it is at the most basic level the reason why we do have an absolute crisis: because supply is so incredibly low. But by working together, by trying to take down the polarization of this debate and instead looking at these housing bills, including this one, as increasing opportunities to do things differently—but again, always in the actual, current environment, which is a literal state of emergency as far as housing goes. Are we all going to love everything that we're going to do? No, but we're making up for 20 years of inaction.

And this is inaction across Canada, you know. This isn't a particular party or a particular province; this is something that has been happening for years. If we don't act now, if we don't act dramatically, if we don't act quickly, it is only going to get exponentially worse as time goes on.

Ultimately, I would never take that dream of white-picket-fence homeownership away from somebody, and I'm not going to support anybody who tries to do that, but I do believe that there are a number of other housing options that we can look at, and that these bills make possible—the legislation that we have done before and the legislation that we are doing now. When you read the text of this bill, when we talk about transit-oriented, when we talk about downtown areas, in my head I'm thinking Hespeler Road. And the funny thing about Hespeler Road which, as I said, was called a symbol of Cambridge's unhappiness by that urban home builder—who actually loves Cambridge very much. There's a Hespeler Road in practically every city in Ontario.

Again, we absolutely need to, I think, take away this “sprawl and tall” versus “urban and infill” discussion of this bill. This is about building homes. It's about building homes in the context of a national emergency. It's about making sure that young people are not locked out of that dream that probably many of us in this chamber have of owning a house—one that I relatively recently went through, and I know that if I was in their position, I wouldn't be able to have my house. Really, those are my thoughts on this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you to the member for that address. I enjoyed it. I want to just begin on a point of agreement: I agree, we are in a housing emergency. Something I brought up with the infrastructure minister at committee a couple of weeks ago is a revelation that I didn't know about until preparing for that committee. In a report the Auditor General wrote in 2017, she noted that there were, at that point at least, 812 vacant government of Ontario properties in the province of Ontario—heated, electrified, utilities supplied, vacant. It would seem to me that a great thing to work on at committee with this bill is having an action plan on how we reutilize that vacant

housing for housing and other purposes, and I'm wondering if the member agrees.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** Obviously, I can't speak to a specific building, but I do know that the Premier in the past has referred to using government buildings. When we talk about red tape reduction, I think that's part of it. Red tape has become sort of metaphorical for messy, duplicate laws, but it's also about just all of the unbelievable extra material that the government carries, that it has accumulated about itself. You know as well as I do that reutilizing or divesting government of those types of assets is not an easy process. It is something that seems like it should be easy; however, it becomes incredibly difficult in the actual execution of it. Again, none of that means that it is impossible, but it goes back to my point about continuing to talk about this openly and with less polarization.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler. In response to her comment, yes, every single place in Ontario has a Hespeler Road; mine is called Tecumseh Road. One of the great things that I remember from my time on municipal council is our community improvement plan to try and get purpose-built rentals and intensification to turn a downtown that was not vibrant, not walkable and get it to a place where it was once again the pride and joy of the community. Unfortunately, the member was correct: There are a lot of people who don't like the reduction in traffic lanes or the street-scaping to be added, it being seen as frills and not worthy of incorporation into a complete community.

I wanted to ask the member this: Can you elaborate a little bit on what might exist in our bill to help incentivize the improvement to our supply for purpose-built rentals and to ensure that this intensification and improvement to density does occur in our communities?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Response?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I think what that is really about is trying to make sure that we are identifying the land that we need for that appropriate housing supply and making more of that land available for development. Again, when you look at this bill, it talks about building all sorts of homes for people in Ontario—urban, suburban, rural—and planning for that future growth. Tecumseh Road or Hespeler Road or the road that I'm sure almost all of you have, as I said, is a perfect target. It's an area of retail and commercial activity that provides jobs, but it's underutilized. So if we all can look at those areas that we all share and figure out legislatively how we can facilitate that, I think we're well on our way to opening up more land in areas that are already prime for transit.

1730

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Two weeks ago, we stood here and wished our Canadian national women's hockey team the best in the world championship. I didn't hear anything today, but I want to say congratulations to the Canadian

national women's hockey team at the world championship. They played in the championship game up in Brampton, coming up just a little short. They won a silver medal, getting beat by their archrival, the USA, who won the gold medal. I just want to thank the women on that hockey team for showing the best of women's sports right here in Ontario, right here in the country of Canada. Thank you to the Canadian women's hockey team for winning a silver medal.

My question is, why does this government refuse to commit to bringing back vacancy control and protecting affordable housing units in our community?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I think what we've seen in our legislation is a commitment to taking as balanced an approach as possible to the competing interests of landlord and tenant. Obviously, we see here legislation about preventing and reducing renovations, the air conditioning legislation.

Ultimately, the existence of private landlords—they provide a key source of rental housing in the market. The more we penalize landlords or force landlords to subsidize housing, the fewer of them will bother to be in the business, and we will end up having far less access to a diverse range of rental properties than we currently have.

While I hear these concerns, it's really about balancing it, because losing the landlords will not help the housing crisis.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I really enjoyed my colleague from Kitchener South–Hespeler's comments.

She alluded to some of it already in her remarks, but I was wondering if she could, through you, Speaker, talk about some of—being next door to Waterloo region, I'm well aware of the growth there and the official plan that came out, and we're protecting the countryside line. I know the mayor of Kitchener has supported this move in maintaining our farmland but also still growing. I was wondering if my colleague could talk a little bit about how this bill and our proposed provincial planning statement help continue those houses all across Ontario while maintaining our agricultural farmland.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I think what's important about this bill—it's about identifying land, opening land up. As I said, I think the text of the bill itself makes it clear that it's not just focusing on vacant or farmland—it's also focusing on currently urban land.

Waterloo region takes its farming history very clear—and again, I come back to that context of national emergency.

I think what's important here is for communities and municipalities to come together when it comes to identifying the green spaces, the farmland, the wetlands that need to be protected, and at the same time, looking at areas that can be turned over for housing and taking a very critical and practical view of it. I think what this bill is making clear is that that is the goal—to be trying to identify that type of land.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Question?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

She talked about buying her house for \$187,000, and it reminded me of when I bought my first house. We went to look at one that was \$210,000, and I told my wife, “We’re never going to spend more than \$200,000 on a house.” Today, if you found a house for sale for \$200,000, you would buy it sight unseen. You wouldn’t care if it had floors. You wouldn’t care if it had wiring. You would just buy it like that—because it’s so expensive. She talked about a house similar to her house for \$800,000, in the same neighbourhood, many years later. That’s what I’m seeing in Sudbury, as well—that once-affordable housing no longer exists.

The member talked about partisanship and that polarization of views in the beginning—and I’m asking this question not to be polarizing, but to explain to you the concerns that I have with bills like this.

These bills for housing make it more desirable to build very expensive, \$800,000 houses. I don’t see anything in these bills that makes it desirable to build that starter house or affordable housing or geared-to-income or co-op. Where is that in this bill, or where is that in the plan for the Conservative government?

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I would refer you back to some of our older bills, particularly when it comes to reducing or waiving development charges for units that have two, three, four-plus bedrooms.

I commented on this briefly, but one of the things that bothers me so much about what I think is literally a missing middle type of housing is that we do not build apartments, high-rise, condo-style living for families, for people with pets, children and hobbies. I refuse to accept that it’s because it’s impossible. We just haven’t done it. There hasn’t been a great deal of incentive for developers and home builders to do so, partly because of development charges and also because of the way that these builds are financed. You need to sell most of them before you can actually build it. Right now, a four-bedroom, family-style apartment is a bit of an unknown quantity on the market, and so it would be harder to sell. But again, that’s where I think that comes in—saying, “Hey, if you’re going urban, if you’re going infill, if you’re building family-style, reducing or waiving the development charges.”

So I think that’s where you need to look at—unconventional types of housing and how we’re encouraging that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It is always my pleasure to rise on behalf of the good folks of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and provide some context to the bill that’s before us today—it is the government’s Bill 97 that the government is saying is called Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants. In the time I have here today, 20 minutes, I’m going to show the many ways that this bill could actually do more to help homeowners and protect tenants than

what’s presented today in this bill. As has been said by the member across, this is a national emergency. My question would be, in a national emergency, a housing emergency, a homelessness crisis, is this the bill that you want to put forward? It seems to me that it’s coming up pretty short.

Let me just talk about the context of Hamilton. I’m sure that this will be familiar to so many people in your communities, whether you want to share that or not. Hamilton is struggling with a housing affordability and homelessness crisis. Hamilton is one of the first—actually, maybe not. It’s a community that has been one of the few—I think Niagara is the other community that has declared a state of emergency over homelessness, because the municipality is struggling to keep people safe, to keep people from dying, to provide services. It was voted unanimously by city council just this past week, and they decided to declare a state of emergency related to homelessness, opioid addiction and mental health. There were many presentations, several emotional comments and pleas to the province for help during that debate. The councillor who moved it forward, Brad Clark, actually served in this House as a Conservative minister. It was Brad Clark who moved this motion.

“He spoke of overflowing shelters in the city that regularly turn individuals and families away, and of staff burnout at some of those facilities, where employees are leaving the work because they are unable to help everyone who needs it.”

Clark went on to say, “They didn’t fail, the province failed them.”

He proposed the motion because he was hoping that this would be a strong message—that Hamilton’s council is asking the province for long-term, affordable and supportive housing to help them address this humanitarian crisis.

This bill, in my opinion, does nothing to support Hamilton’s council in their struggle to provide safe and affordable housing for people. There is, in this bill, very little around municipal rent protections that could possibly now be replaced by weaker rental protections, which again, would contribute to the homelessness crisis that Hamilton is declaring. There’s just—it has been called meek action on illegal evictions, which, as I’ll talk about, are happening in Hamilton at a record pace. And really, what would a government bill be without a little side-swipe against the environment and our loss of agricultural land and sprawl? So I’m going to talk about those things in my time here.

I would just like to add that Hamilton, as best as they can track, has 1,500 homeless folks living on the streets, and to support them, there are 500 shelter beds. They’re not even coming close to being able to address the need, and I know this is true for all of our communities all across Ontario.

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We’re also losing affordable housing units at a record pace. I don’t know if that’s true in other communities. But in Hamilton, last year, we lost 16,000 units of affordable housing. This bill does not really do anything to stop that bleeding of affordable housing units. The city of Hamilton

has lost 29 affordable housing units for every one created. They can't keep up with the loss of housing with affordable units that are being created.

And it's not easy to create affordable housing, social housing. They say the cost of one social housing unit is about \$450,000. I notice that the government, in their last bill, talked about \$202 million for supportive housing. There are 444 municipalities in Ontario. I know it doesn't work like this, but if you divided that, each municipality in the province, if they shared that equally, would get about \$450,000. So your money that you put in to develop supportive housing equates to one unit of supportive housing all across the province. That is just not going to come anywhere close to meeting the need.

Let's talk about renters: 30% of all voters in Ontario are renters, and in Hamilton, it has been noted—my colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain has said that the average rents in Hamilton are skyrocketing. An average one-bedroom apartment is \$1,800 a month, and a two-bedroom apartment, which is what you would need if you had even the smallest family, is \$2,200 a month. That's a huge amount of money, and that has gone up, skyrocketed, under this government's watch and under this government's term.

So despite all of the housing bills that you're putting forward, housing has never been more expensive—ever—in the history of the province of Ontario. Under your watch, housing and the ability to put a roof over your head have gotten more expensive, not less expensive.

One of the things that we were hoping for from a bill like this would be for there to be real, strong protections for tenants, but that is not the case. They're not strong protections for tenants.

In Hamilton, one of the big problems that we face in trying to maintain a stock of affordable housing is renovations and illegal evictions. I know that is something all of us have talked about. In Hamilton, the applications to evict tenants are just piling up at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Last year, it was 103 applications from landlords for renovations—in 2019, it was 21; in 2020, there were 30; in 2021, there were 60; and last year, there were 103. What's going on here?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Easy trading.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Exactly.

What is going on here, that there is such a huge call for tenants to be evicted from their buildings? There must be a financial incentive. I can't think of any other reason why landlords and property owners would seek to evict tenants at such a great rate, a large rate.

There are no real rental protections in the province of Ontario. This government, in whatever wisdom, if I can even say that, has exempted all new buildings in the province from any rent controls at all.

So you can see why there is a financial incentive—where the financial incentive would be for landlords to want to evict tenants, raise the rents, and put new people in those units. And this government has not provided strict enforcement or follow-up.

At the Landlord and Tenant Board, it has been said, it takes up to two years for anybody to get a response, despite your government increasing—which is great—the amount of money to support the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's still not enough—because it's not only the hearing, but it's the tracking and the enforcement of orders, which is not mentioned anywhere in this bill that is purporting to protect tenants.

I'm just going to talk a little bit about a Hamilton tenant who is a perfect example of what could happen to any of us in how they're being failed by this government in their ability to be protected under the Landlord and Tenant Board. There's a tenant in Hamilton who says he's being eaten alive after living with a bedbug infestation for over a year. And so, this tenant said that he has had a bedbug problem in his apartment that is affecting nearly every aspect of his life. He's spending hundreds of dollars washing and drying his clothes, buying new bedding, including new beds, trying to get rid of the bedbugs. The landlord has sprayed—the landlord has done that, but it has not been effective. He continues to live with this horrible situation. He says he rarely gets a good night's sleep without feeling the tiny pests crawl across his skin or itching the bites. I mean, this is what this young man is living with and he said he never experienced this in his life. In fact, he started experiencing it just within three weeks of moving into his new building.

Despite going back and forth with the landlord, trying to get some resolution to this horrible problem, he emailed the property owner—it's a group, a corporation—about the bedbugs and he finally said, "You either need to book a spray or find me different accommodation because I'm getting bit daily." And he said, "Why should I have to suffer through this?" And this is really a legitimate question to ask.

Despite his efforts to get his home rid of these bedbugs and to live in the kind of condition that everyone should expect to live in, he ended up being served with an eviction notice. The suspicion of this is that the day after the landlords were contacted by CBC for this article, he was served with an N5 eviction notice. And so, not only has this person had to live in these conditions forever, despite trying to get the landlord to help him out, he's now facing an eviction notice.

My question is, what is going to be this tenant's experience if he decides to fight this at the Landlord and Tenant Board? We know that it's costly, we know that it's difficult and we know that it's rarely the case that the tenants are on the proper side, or on the winning side, of remedies of the Landlord and Tenant Board. And even if they are, the enforcement is not there, so people can take the time and effort to go advocate for their rights, but when they do get a judgment, there's no follow-up, there's no enforcement on the part of this government. And you would think that, in a bill—like, these problems are common. They're common to all of our constituents and all of our communities. You would think that, in this bill, the government would choose to be very clear about putting in here protections and enforcement so that people are

not left just at the mercy of landlords and developers, that they actually have a government that stands up for them when they most need help. This certainly is the case for this gentleman, who now is facing an eviction and facing the problem of trying to find a new affordable home for himself to live in.

Let me just say that renovations are illegal evictions. They're one of the biggest contributors to people being homeless and not being able to find a place to live, not being able to put a roof over their heads. The financial incentive that appears to be here for renovations is something this government is just not addressing and is turning a blind eye to, but it's causing real harm to people in our communities. What happens to people and families when they're evicted or they can't find a safe place to live? We see in all of our communities that people are dying living on the streets. They live on the streets and they are dying living on the streets.

I have a very sad story to share about a young man in Hamilton who died on our streets. He was homeless. He could not find supportive housing. He couldn't find support for his mental health challenges. And he was living in buildings that were slated for demolition in the Westdale area. A number of times, police were called because there was a fire started; he started a fire to keep himself warm living in these buildings with no heat. Sadly, at some point, he died from the impact of being in a fire. The building caught fire and this young person died. This was a 20-year-old. In what world does a 20-year-old—a child living on the streets and dying on the streets because they don't have a safe place to live, they don't have a warm bed to sleep in, they don't have somewhere to cook their meals. When you look at the pictures of where he was living, you could see that he was trying to feed himself—some of the cans of food. I mean, it's just deplorable and it's really nothing short of a humanitarian crisis. It's a tragedy.

This is the ultimate failure of the system. It's a perfect storm of failure that led to this young homeless man's death: the failure to provide adequate housing, the failure to provide any of supports that he needed. We have an opioid crisis, we have a mental health crisis, and none of the supports are there. That's why the municipalities are declaring states of emergency. That's why the city of Hamilton has declared an emergency, not only to do with homelessness, but to do with an opioid and mental health crisis.

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These are real stories of young people that are dying in our province, and this bill lacks any kind of the humanity, any kind of the urgency. It doesn't seem to address what is needed when we talk about protecting tenants, when we talk about trying to provide supportive housing for people that have been evicted, that have fallen through the cracks. This government seems to think that just deregulation—taking regulations away, reducing red tape, giving tax breaks to developers—is going to solve the problem, but it's not solving the problem. The problem is getting worse in this province. Housing starts have gone down. Rents are skyrocketing. The cost of housing is not going anywhere

but up. So your plan is not working, and not only is it failing at the housing, it's failing people actually to keep them safe and to keep them alive.

I just want to talk about the confluence of this government letting developers essentially off the hook for development charges. Development charges are what municipalities use to pay for services like supportive housing, to pay for services like mental health and addiction programs, to pay for—

**Interjection:** Water and sewer.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Water and sewer, exactly—to pay for the kinds of things that people need to live their lives. They pay for, really, everything. They pay for waste collection. They pay for water and sewer. They pay to fix our roads. They pay to build our schools and our parks. And now this government has let developers off the hook to the tune of—I mean, it's been estimated that it's about a \$5-billion hole in municipalities' coffers all across the province, and Hamilton is no exception. Hamilton, like other municipalities across the province, has had to raise taxes to compensate for this gift that you have given to developers, because in your magical thinking, you think that this is going to create housing that people can afford. People don't want a house on the greenbelt, on a floodplain. They don't want a house on farmland. They want an affordable house that they can live in, and they don't want to then be saddled with a tax bill that's tripling because you've given developers a free ride. Developers, like all of us, need to pay their fair share.

I'm sort of running out of time here, but let me just say that I think it's important to note that this bill continues on the trend of this government to concentrate power in the hands of a few ministers and to shut out the democratic process. Democratically elected municipal councils are being bigfooted by this government all across this province, and Hamilton is no exception. You've forced Hamilton to sprawl; to grow into the greenbelt. You took 1,400 acres of greenbelt out of protections; for what? To build houses where there are no services? I have a constituent who said, "I'm not looking forward to my taxes to go up so that I can pay for the developers' costs to build on the greenbelt when my road is falling apart," and that's what you're doing here. It's unbelievable—not to mention the loss of biodiversity, and we talked about the loss of farmland, which is about 320 acres a day that we're losing. Your thinking is convoluted, and it's not helping anyone in the immediate, and it's in fact making things worse when it comes to the downloading of services that municipal taxpayers will have to pay.

So I find it really disturbing that not only are people outraged by this government's greenbelt grab, by their lack of concern for the environment, for climate change, but we have a minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who was asked directly, would he commit to no more further encroachments on the greenbelt and on farmland? And he would not commit to that.

So I would say to communities all across Ontario, look forward to losing more of your farmland. Look forward to encroachment on green space. Look forward to—

**Interjection:** More flooding.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Exactly, flooding: flooded basements that won't be covered by insurance and won't be covered by the province or the municipality because of poor planning, because of a government that is planning to build willy-nilly, just to make sure that their developer friends are profiting and are doing well in this province while everyone else is struggling to keep a roof over their head.

I'm going to end it there, but there are many concerns that we have with this bill. We would have expected that this would be a government that, instead of putting this weak bill forward, would have moved seriously to protect the people of the province of Ontario so that they're not on their own when it comes to their housing costs in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to my colleague for her comments on Bill 97. Speaker, through our consultations on the newly proposed provincial planning document, the provincial planning statement, we're proposing to allow more residential lot creation on farms, as the member opposite alluded to. This does not mean that we'll have widespread loss of agricultural land. I hear this often from farmers in my communities. They've heard the news, as well, and they're actually supportive of these changes because it means a farmer would be able to sever a lot for his son or daughter or someone else to come on board, to help take over the farm eventually. It also means that they could create more housing for any farm workers they employ.

Does the opposition oppose this, Speaker?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to be clear that I think that we need to understand that losing 320 acres of farmland a day is not acceptable. That needs to change. Let's start with that.

But you also need to be clear with people that this is not just farmers who are going to be able to subdivide agricultural land; it's anybody who has bought agricultural land under this government who will be able to subdivide. So yes, this is going to accelerate the loss of agricultural land in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I just want to talk real quickly, because one of the members over there talked and he said that seniors live in these big homes. Well, I'm going to tell you, in their riding, in my riding and in ridings right across the province of Ontario, we have seniors hurting today. They're living in poverty. They're living on the streets. It's wrong.

Here, at 5:15 today, I got an email from somebody, Jennifer Leigh—I won't say her last name.

"Hi Wayne,

"I'm hoping you can help me out, please. Okay? My name is on the list for Ontario housing. I have been since 2012. I'm on disability for my hearing. I'm floating from couch to couch to try to get back into the good graces of housing. Can you please"—in big letters—"help me?"

"Thank you,

"Jennifer Leigh"

So my question is, why is there nothing in this bill to address the housing affordability crisis in our communities, to help people like Jennifer?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much to the member for Niagara Falls, and also for being such an awesome MPP and advocating for your constituents, who clearly need help from this government.

Seniors should be our highest priority. We should be ensuring that they have a roof over their heads. We should be ensuring that they're not priced out of their homes because of the increase in municipal taxes that should be labelled a Ford tax because it's what your bills are doing: downloading the costs onto property taxpayers all across the province.

When it comes to supportive housing, in the municipality of Hamilton, there are about 10,000 people waiting for supportive housing. It's something like a two- to five-year wait-list. People are desperate for housing, and this bill is not helping them with that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you very much.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** It is now 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*







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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	