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of Ontario



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Mardi
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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 avril 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REDUCING INEFFICIENCIES ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENTS), 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES INEFFICACITÉS (MODIFIANT
DES LOIS SUR LES INFRASTRUCTURES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's always an honour to rise in this House. This morning, I am going to speak to Bill 69.

I am imagining some of us are a little bleary-eyed from the fantastic overtime win of the Toronto Maple Leafs. I think it's always good to start the morning with some pretty good news. So go, Leafs, go. Speaker, 1967—we need to get a cup sometime soon in this province, not just this city.

Thank you for indulging me to talk about the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Back to the bill that I'm here to discuss: the government's Bill 69. I honestly have to say that this bill is not very clear in what the problem is that it's trying to address. The part that I'm going to speak to particularly is the schedule that will waive the 30-day consultation period that the minister is required—when they've gone through an environmental assessment process.

We have seen that this is a government that nobody trusts when it comes to the environment. Their track record is certainly abysmal when it comes to the environment, and they're continuing to build on that brand of a government that will stop at nothing—development at all costs, even if that means cost to taxpayers, whether it's residential taxpayers or provincial taxpayers. Whether the cost is loss of wetlands, whether the cost is environmental degradation, there's nothing that will stop this government from pausing when it comes to protecting the environment.

Our opinion here on this side of the House is that while you are bulldozing forward on all of your assaults on the environment, a pause of 30 days should not be too much to ask for the people of the province of Ontario.

We've seen a government that has no regard for Ontario's greenbelt. You've taken 7,400 acres out of greenbelt protection; 1,400 of those acres are in Hamilton. The excuse is that you need to build housing, but it has been made quite clear that there is already enough land to build all of the housing that Ontario needs within the existing lands.

The question remains: Why are you opening up the greenbelt? There are certainly some important questions that need to be answered about who owns those lands, when those were purchased and, now that they have been taken out of protections, who is going to benefit, who is going to reap the rewards. It's certainly not the people of the province of Ontario. It's going to be, apparently, developers who were wise enough to buy land just before those greenbelt protections were taken away.

Those are some of the questions—that is the cloud that is over this government when it comes to any decisions they make when it comes to the environment.

Simply put, this government cannot be trusted when it comes to the interests of Ontario's environment.

The purpose of the 30-day waiting period, which is required currently under the Environmental Assessment Act, is to ensure that the minister takes the time needed to consider what the public has to say following a class environmental assessment process. Prior to making a decision, the 30 days should give the minister time to pause to consider all of the information that has been submitted as part of the EA. These public comments come from not only experts in the field but people who live in the community, people who are on the ground and understand what's at risk. The people take the time to write to the minister, to have their considered comments submitted in the best interests of the province and future generations, and we feel that it would be courteous, if nothing less, for the minister to take the time to consider these comments.

In addition, when we waive that 30-day period, this takes away the people of the province of Ontario's opportunity to request a bump-up, which means to take this from an EA to a full environmental assessment.

As we know, the things that are happening willy-nilly and pell-mell and so quickly in this province thanks to this government when it comes to the environment—we certainly need to make sure that the people of the province of Ontario understand their rights under the Environmental Bill of Rights and that they have the opportunity to access them.

Further watering down of the Environmental Bill of Rights from this government, or seeing them watering down these rights, are also par for the course. There are basically no environmental protections left in the province of Ontario—none whatsoever. The people in the province need to understand that the Environmental Bill of Rights is still standing, so far, but this is one step in dismantling it or weakening it.

I'd just like to add that the Environmental Bill of Rights is something that's a legacy of a previous NDP government. It was put in place because the NDP government understands what's at risk for this current generation and future generations, and we understand that the people of the province of Ontario have a right to weigh in on lands that belong to them, not to the government.

I would advise everyone who has any concerns when it comes to the environment to understand that you still have rights existing under the Environmental Bill of Rights. You have the right to be consulted when it comes to the environment—issues that will impact the environment.

This change, waiving the 30 days, effectively says that you no longer have the right to be consulted or informed, because the government is basically saying, "We already made our decision, and we are not planning to listen to what you have to say."

We have seen that this is not the first time that this government has shown absolute contempt for the environmental assessment. The government has been found to have broken the law two or perhaps three times when it comes to the Environmental Assessment Act, which is a law in the province of Ontario. It's quite clear they don't have respect for the environment, for the people of the province of Ontario, and certainly they do not have respect when it comes to laws that are in place and still standing in the province.

We have a government that currently has Bill 23, which is a bill that relied almost entirely on deregulation and developer tax cuts to incentivize delivering 1.5 million homes in this province.

To be perfectly clear, we need housing in this province. We need all kinds of housing. We need to have affordable housing, co-op housing. There is a dire need for rent-geared-to-income housing, single-family homes—the whole continuum of housing. That is what's needed in this province.

We have a homelessness crisis in the city of Hamilton. As best we can tell, there are 1,500 people who are currently homeless, living on the streets. We see them, as many of us will see in our communities—people living on street corners with their tents and sleeping bags, just trying to find a place to exist. In Hamilton, there are only 500 shelter beds. The government's cuts to social housing supports are only making this problem worse.

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When it comes to building housing, what we see is a government that has made changes that will download the costs to municipalities. Residential taxpayers will now pay the costs, because when you take away the obligation of developers to pay for development, to pay for the things

that development needs, that is a cost to the taxpayers. There's nobody else who can pay this but the taxpayers.

That's why Bill 69, which takes people's rights away when it comes to the environment, is a direct attack on people's ability to protect their pockets—to protect down-loading cost to residential taxpayers. Bill 69 is a further erosion of people's ability to not have to just bear tax costs that this government decides they're going to download and also to not have to bear the environmental degradation that they see in their province.

I think it's important to know that this government also, when it comes to the environment—there are many assaults on the environment, but none more egregious than when it comes to conservation authorities. People should understand that conservation authorities work in an integrated way across the province to manage our flood plains and our wetlands and to manage our protected areas. They have a history in the province, with 60-plus years of doing this work. But this government has basically kneecapped all of their ability to weigh in when it comes to protecting the environment. The conservation authorities that have dedicated the mission of their organizations to protecting the environment and to protecting people from floods is now being transformed by this government to disallow them from weighing in when it comes to climate impacts on their lands. They're not allowed to comment on that. For example, when the conservation authorities are weighing in on potential development, they can't comment on anything beyond the scope of hazard.

I would like to point to the news that we heard this morning: that the government, who is trying to destroy the Ontario Science Centre and build on those lands, has heard from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority that those lands cannot be built on. They're a flood plain, and they're ravines and protected areas.

That's the kind of work that the conservation authorities across the province do, and that's the kind of information that this government doesn't want to hear. We know that they don't want to hear from the people of the province of Ontario, because they're waiving the 30 days. They don't want to hear from conservation authorities; they're muzzling them and their ability to weigh in. They do not want to have any opinions but their own when it comes to delivering for their friends and for developers at the expense and at the risk of Ontarians and future Ontarians.

I think that the perfect example is the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. This government took away the protections in that area to build. Right beside the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve are also federal lands—Rouge park, which is federal. Recognizing that the provincial government cannot be counted on to protect our lands, the federal government has weighed in and has initiated a study on these lands that will prepare them in the eventuality that this government will build on these protected lands.

So we have lost the ability of the conservationists to weigh in. We are now relying on the federal government to make moves to protect us in the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve area.

When it comes to the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413, we need the federal government to be the sober second thought.

With this bill, we have the people of the province of Ontario—their input is being disregarded, and I would say that is something that should be a concern for all of us. When your government is saying to you, “We’re going to go ahead and do this whether you like it or not. Despite what you say, despite your objections, despite your knowledge and your expertise in this area, we’ve already made our mind up. We are going to move forward with this development,” that is absolutely not the way to be in this province.

I would also like to say that when it comes to transparency—well, this government is no friend of transparency. They’re using taxpayers’ dollars to fight all the way to the Supreme Court to keep closed the mandate letters—mandate letters which will tell the people of the province of Ontario what this government is planning to do with their taxpayer dollars. This government is using taxpayers’ money to fight taxpayers at the Supreme Court because they don’t want to have any eyes on what they’re doing.

This bill is just another step in this government’s lack of interest in hearing from anybody but themselves or their friends.

We heard similar messages at committee. This bill did go to committee. That’s pretty exciting, because sometimes this government bypasses committee.

I know that with Bill 197, which was an omnibus bill that jammed through a lot of changes that apply to the environmental assessment, they didn’t even send that bill to committee.

This bill did go to committee. We heard from a lot of stakeholders. I’ll just read some of those into the record now because perhaps the government may be interested in listening, despite what their legislation says—that they don’t want to listen to the people of the province of Ontario.

Some of the summary of recommendations that came from committee on Bill 69, Reducing Inefficiencies Act, was essentially—people were saying, “Do not allow the minister to waive the 30-day waiting period following a class environmental assessment comment period before any action ... can be taken.” People are saying, “We are concerned that allowing the minister to bypass the 30-day waiting period would expose principal decision-makers to unnecessary pressure as they become solely and personally responsible for consequential decisions.”

General comments were made:

“Environmental assessments are needed more than ever, and should not be made easier to bypass....

“We are concerned that the Ontario government, in its efforts to reduce inefficiencies, is increasing the potential for environmental mistakes, while at the same time reducing its accountability to the people of Ontario....

“We are concerned that this change has been introduced without prior consultation, and without full public accounting of the implications, including data regarding the

current class EA process, and how frequently projects are referred for an individual EA.”

That’s a summary of the recommendations, and it really speaks to some of the things that I was saying. People are not supportive of watering down their rights, when it comes to the environment and their right to be able to weigh in.

Certainly, given the rapid change in the environment—climate change—we need to be careful. We need to be moving carefully.

This government is bulldozing ahead on these changes, but we have reports—the Auditor General, in fact, has two reports that people should be aware of. One is to do with flooding in the province of Ontario. We are, as a province, not protecting people when it comes to flooding, currently. The ministry doesn’t have the adequate resources to map flood plains, and they don’t have the adequate resources to inform people in the province. So the Auditor General’s report says that we’re already failing when it comes to flood protection for the people of the province of Ontario.

Now we have a government that’s potentially planning to build on or near flood plains, as has been described by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, when it comes to the lands around the Ontario Science Centre.

So, absolutely, we need to consider these steps—that the consequences and the mistakes that this government will be making are something that we should be, as legislators, protecting people from.

I would like add into the record some other comments that we received.

The Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation wrote to the committee, and they had significant concerns with this bill. They said, in part, “A 30-day waiting period for class environmental assessment projects is the prudent way to provide decision-makers with time and space to carry out thorough evaluations of all angles relevant to policy proposals. Consequently, the likelihood of high-quality decisions is dramatically increased” when the waiting period is left. “Stripping this 30-day waiting period from the environmental assessment process threatens a sound decision-making process for a variety of reasons....”

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They conclude by saying, “Decisions that impact the environment must transcend political interests more than any other policy area. In the interest of public good, these decisions must be protected from the influence of third parties, for example developers, that are monetarily incentivized to achieve an outcome that does not consider long-term consequences. The 30-day waiting period for class environmental assessment projects is the minimal safeguard that protects government decisions from short-sighted interests and influences and, as a consequence, strengthens politicians and our democracy as a whole.”

I couldn’t agree more with these strong comments.

They conclude by saying, “For reasons outlined above,” the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation “strongly urges the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to keep the 30-day waiting period for class

environmental assessment projects. It is in the interests of the environment, the public, and our democracy to do so.”

Finally, I would like to read into the record commentary from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We understand that in this province the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, for generations, has been protecting the land they live and farm on. We should be listening to what they have to say, and they are quite clear in saying, “We are opposed to these proposed amendments that would provide the ability to eliminate, waive or alter the 30-day waiting period following the comment period of a class environmental assessment. It is essential that there is time for a proponent to review and appropriately consider the submitted comments.”

They close by saying, “Public participation is a critical component of environmental decision-making. Failure to allow for meaningful participation can lead to resentment, animosity, or ambivalence. The system must allow for meaningful participation to empower all those involved, from the concerned citizen to the corporate proponent to the government (at all jurisdictions)... The ability to eliminate this 30-day waiting period effectively negates any public participation in this process.”

I couldn’t agree more with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. This government—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That’s time for the debate.

We have time for questions.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks to the member opposite for one thing we agree on, which was acknowledging that it was important for all of Canada to see the Toronto Maple Leafs finally win a game. There was a bit of sarcasm there because I am an Ottawa Senators fan. However, I think we can all agree we’d like to see the Stanley Cup return to this nation.

That said, I listened intently to some of the ideas that the member opposite had with respect to development and environment and conservation.

I’m dealing with something in my constituency of Nepean right now, where a long-term-care facility is going to be built, and it will require a ministerial zoning order so we can expedite that to get those seniors and those who require care into the appropriate level of care, which they have not had over a couple of decades, predominantly because the previous Liberal government brought in something called Aging at Home.

That said, what I am concerned with is, the member opposite and many people on the left have decided to be obstructionist when it comes to development, in particular for housing and long-term care—

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

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to reply.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for the question.

The thing that this government is doing is creating a fantastic cover story for the assaults that they are making

on the environment. They purport that it is all about housing and it’s all about long-term care.

Do you know what? This government has been in power for five years. The conditions in long-term care are on your watch.

There is no need to build on the greenbelt, no need to build on wetlands, no need to expand into green areas, into farmland, when experts, including your own housing task force, have said that you have more than enough existing land to build the housing that is needed in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her speech this morning.

You talked about the science centre and the potential for development on that site and the risks that one faces. Could you enlarge on that, given this government’s record of not paying attention to environmental constraints?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for the question.

This is a perfect example of this government rushing into plans that they had not made transparent and that are going to benefit—who? We don’t know.

For example, when it comes to moving the science centre from that area in Flemingdon or destroying the science centre building, experts have said that’s a bad idea, that’s a bad plan.

Who thinks this is a good idea? I’m going to say that it’s the private corporation that is now going to get a 95-year lease at Ontario Place. This government won’t even release the details of this lease. I would say that those are the people who will be happy with this.

Future generations and homeowners, perhaps, who end up with a house on a flood plain might not be so happy.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas: We both know many of the same people in affordable housing in the city of Hamilton.

I want to quote an article from CBC Hamilton. It pertains to the frustration that a lot of the not-for-profits face while trying to—in fact, the headline: “Hamilton Non-Profits Face ‘Infuriating’ Delays to Build Affordable Housing, As City Looks to Change.” I’ll quote a woman we both know, Renée Wetselaar, and Graham Cubitt from Indwell—Renée works with St. Matthew’s House. She started a project for affordable housing back in 2018. She said that she has been facing delay after delay after delay with the city of Hamilton, and now a third environmental assessment to get this project from 2018 built.

I know that the NDP—Madam Speaker, through you—doesn’t believe that there are delays. I am a former city councillor, and I can tell you that delays are real.

To the MPP from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas: Do you recognize the delays that not-for-profits face in the city of Hamilton and why this is important to expedite these projects?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Absolutely; we, together, know what a crisis we're facing in Hamilton when it comes to affordable housing—social housing, in fact.

The project that you reference, in fact—I was on that committee, trying to identify surplus land that the city of Hamilton owned and would be able to put forward to build affordable housing units.

We also know that there's the HATS group, the Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters, that is putting forward a solution, trying to find an appropriate location to build tiny shelters that are a temporary solution for all the homeless people in our province.

People are coming up with good solutions and good ideas. Everyone is trying to address this problem.

Financing is a huge issue. That's a delay that these organizations face, as well.

A 30-day waiting period that you're trying to waive is not the magic wand that's all of a sudden going to make all of the social housing units that we need appear.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her comments.

There's a really impressive citizens' group—a number of groups in Hamilton that are trying to prevent sprawl, trying to encourage building homes without sprawl.

We know that the government's own task force said that we don't actually need more land and we can build within existing urban boundaries.

When those groups in your riding, in Hamilton, see the government changing the Environmental Assessment Act in this way—what are some of the local comments that you've heard from those groups?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Many people across Ontario don't trust this government one iota when it comes to the environment, and that is also the case in Hamilton when it comes to the government, the province, big-footing the decision of municipalities when it comes to their own growth plan.

I would say that the organizations like Stop Sprawl in Hamilton, Save our Streams—these are people who are very thoughtful and very knowledgeable about the issue and are very concerned about the supply of all kinds of housing in the province.

It has been made clear by professional planners and the government's own housing task force that Hamilton has enough space within the urban boundaries to build 110,000 units. So we have the land we need. We have the space.

What we need is a government that's more focused on building and incentivizing people when it comes to finances than they are on enriching developers by making their land now developable.

0930

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently to the member across talking about the interests of the public and saving money. It is a huge issue for my constituents and, I would think, every voter in Ontario and every resident of Ontario.

One of the biggest problems we have in Canada, as we all know, is, there are two seasons for construction—there's the winter, and then there's not the winter—so sometimes we only have a few months to get the job done.

I'm wondering, given these deficiencies in our system and the fact that we only have a few months to get things done, what impact that will have on, say, a building project, a long-term-care facility, a retirement home, when they can't get those shovels in the ground a few days earlier to complete that construction on time and in a faster manner for the taxpayers and the people of Ontario.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would say to the member, with all due respect, absolutely nobody is buying this cover story.

In the province of Ontario, have we been building? Yes. Have things got shovels in the ground? Absolutely. So this notion that with those two months of construction time—by the way, we have a lot longer construction period in the province.

Waiting 30 days to do it properly, to listen to the people of the province of Ontario, to make sure the people who are moving into a long-term-care facility aren't, in fact, putting themselves at risk, because they're on a flood plain—what does it harm the government to do your job, to take the time to do the due diligence that is your responsibility, to protect the environment and to protect the people of the province of Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for another question, so we'll move to further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 69 this morning.

We heard from our two respective ministers yesterday. And I heard from members of the opposition. We heard them in the second reading debate as well, and they're really challenged, quite frankly, to come up with something legitimate when it comes to the criticism. They're just throwing 77 tentacles out there hoping they can say something negative about the government, because—surprise, surprise, to the people of Ontario—the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives do not agree. The NDP does not agree with us.

Well, we're very, very happy that the NDP does not agree with us. Do you know why? Because the people of Ontario do agree, and they want to see progress in this province—and that has been the catchword for everything we have done since 2018, when we were first elected.

They're throwing everything about every possible bill—they look at Bill 69, and they don't talk about what's in the bill; they throw out all of these ghosts and goblins hidden under the bed that may or may not exist. “We're the NDP, and we're here to protect you, so we're going to warn you about every possible UFO that might be out there that the Tories are going to put on you.” The member from Hamilton—several words in that Hamilton riding there—went on about how there are really these fearful

things out there. It's just an exercise in fiction that's coming from the opposition, because they don't have any real, legitimate criticism on the bill—because, you see, it dovetails with their whole *modus operandi* when it comes to being critical of our government.

They speak to our housing bill—or “bills,” I should say, and so one has to ask themselves the question. Thank God the Conservatives are here to actually get housing built here in the province of Ontario, because if it were left to the NDP, there would be nothing built, or the alternative would be that the government would build and own everything, and this would be—well, that's kind of communism, isn't it? That's what they want. They want a completely socialist system when it comes to housing.

They hate developers, but yesterday, the member from Niagara Centre, who's here with us, was asking us to do something positive for developers, because, you see, they're so conflicted. It must be tough sleeping when you're like a pretzel. The bed has got to be uncomfortable because you've got yourself twisted in so many knots that you don't know what you're actually saying.

So the people of Ontario are not buying any of it.

Every morning, I see the Leader of the Opposition ask her questions, and even she's probably putting her hand on her forehead and saying, “Why did I sign up for this?” And you see the members behind her with these downtrodden looks, saying, “This is all we've got? The same old story every day? No new narrative, no positive initiatives for the people of the province of Ontario?”

Just to be—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Excuse me. I have a point of order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member has absolutely no idea what we face and what is going through our minds when we look across at this government that is destroying Ontario, so he's impugning our motives.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I will disagree that there is motive there.

I will allow the member to continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

As she knows, that's not a point of order. If we were going on points of order on those kinds of narratives, you people wouldn't have a thing to say in this House. That's just the reality. You can't stick to the subject—not once, not ever—because you have nothing to say about the subject.

So here they're going on about this 30-day waiting period for a class environmental assessment, which my minister spoke to yesterday.

When there is a class environmental assessment, the consultation process goes on for, not days, not weeks, but months. When the proposal is first initiated, that consultation process goes on continuously until that class EA is granted. Under the current legislation, you then have to wait 30 days, where you just do nothing and wait. Anybody who has anything material to say about that proposal has already made their views known. This is a period of limbo so that nothing actually happens.

To the point that was being made by my good colleague from Thornhill: Projects that could get started in the fall get delayed and then can't start until the following spring because, as you know, here in Canada and Ontario, we have winter. So we've now delayed that project not 30 days, but several months, because of that key window that we haven't been able to act in.

I'm going to draw a little analogy. This is what the NDP really wants. A young couple are dating and they're going through the engagement process. They're getting to know one another—that's like a consultation process—and this goes on for perhaps a year. They've met the families. They've met the relatives. They've dated and have gone places. They've talked about their future together. They've really thought this out. Then, they decide they're getting married. Then, just like I did many, many years ago—my wife and I got married. But according to the NDP, then there should be a 30-day waiting period before they can go on the honeymoon. That's what they want to do in this province. They want you now to go into a 30-day limbo. “We've done all the talking, but no, we can't really move ahead because we've got a 30-day waiting period, for no particular reason.”

The NDP go on and on and say, “Well, somehow, some lightning bolt is going to come down and is going to change something that has been talked about for a year, and all of a sudden we're going to get”—it's good governance to wait 30 days simply for the purpose of waiting 30 days?

Let's be clear: This does not mean that the 30-day waiting period is gone. What it means is that the minister can decree that the 30-day waiting period in this particular case is not necessary; that we can proceed with the projects—vital projects such as waste water and sewage projects—in our communities.

0940

I've got a couple of projects listed here that were subject to this 30-day waiting period. Maybe the NDP could tell us that that was a good thing to do—to hold these up for 30 days.

In the city of Brampton, Clark Boulevard and Eastern Avenue—that's Rutherford Road to Kennedy Road—a project under the municipal class environmental assessment held up for 30 days. Did anybody object during those 30 days? Perhaps the people in the opposition, who seem to know everything, could tell me if there was an objection to that project in that 30-day period. No, there was not. You see, that's just one.

“But this is the most important issue facing the people of Ontario right now. We've got to make sure we have that 30-day waiting period because there might be that lightning bolt.”

Another one is the region of Peel's Front Street waste water pumping station and waste water diversion addendum project under the municipal class environmental assessment.

These are municipal projects that have already been proven, taken to all the necessary thought process and checks and balances—and the municipality has approved

them, and they want them. And do you know what? The residents of Clark Boulevard and Eastern Avenue want them too. But let's just wait another 30 days because the NDP believes there could be something really, really critical to come forward and tell us we shouldn't do it, we should wait longer. This is the party of "wait and get nothing done." This is the party that wouldn't build anything in this province except if it was government-operated and government-owned.

Where is the incentive to anyone to actually build anything?

We're committed to 1.5 million homes in this province by 2031, and we have standing in front of us an obstreperous opposition that doesn't want anything done. They get up there on their high horse and try to pretend that somehow they're doing it because it's in the best interests of the public. Well, I'm going to tell you, they're doing it because they believe it satisfies their stakeholders.

Speaker, I want to give them a little advice, not that they've ever taken any advice from me and not that they're going to take this advice from me—but maybe if it came from someone else and there's someone else other than me out there who would be more than happy to give them the same advice.

You've got it all wrong. You got it wrong in the last election in 2022.

They're sitting here with 31 members, and they think they're doing just fine because the Liberals have less than they had before with all the retirements and moving on to other things. But the reality is, the Liberal vote went up in 2022. The NDP vote went down. Our vote went up. So only one of the three main foundational parties here—their vote went down. Why did it go down? They like to use the term "out of touch." Well, man, they ain't even close to feeling distance, let alone touch. They can't even get a static shock, they're so far away from the real people of Ontario—and they voiced that in 2022, and they're going to voice it in a big way in 2026.

You are narrowing your scope every day because you're being taken over by the wings in your party who just want to look at the socialist, leftist view of everything out there. You're doing yourselves a disservice, and you're doing the people of Ontario a disservice. Your members—many of your people sitting there today won't be here in 2026, because your party doesn't understand what is happening in the real people's homes across Ontario. Do you know what? When they get up in the morning, they're thankful that they've got a job. Do you know what else they're thankful for? They're thankful that there's a government here in Ontario that is going to make sure that not only do they have a job, but when their children are old enough to go out and work, they're going to have a good job too, in the industries in Ontario that we have cultivated by good government policy.

Do we create the jobs? Of course we don't. But it is incumbent upon us, as it is on every single member, regardless of your myopic philosophy, to create a future in this province so that the people, the next generation, will have the jobs to raise the families, and to make sure that

Ontario continues to be the best place to live, work, raise a family and play—anywhere in Ontario or perhaps the world.

So when they stand here, and simply for the purpose of criticizing—oh, my goodness. I listened to the hour lead on Bill 69, on the second reading.

By the way, Speaker, did you know that they didn't even stand up and vote against the second reading of Bill 69? They talked for hours about all of the terrible things that Bill 69 is going to do, but they didn't even vote against it. They voted on division, because they're so confused about what is right for the people of the province of Ontario.

I know the member from Hamilton didn't like me talking about what's going on in the backrooms. I don't have to be in the backrooms; I can see through the wall. They're having discussions every day, wondering why—some people in that party are asking themselves, "Why do we keep going down this same road every day?"

Yes, this province is facing a housing crisis, and we need every single level of government working together to get it fixed.

They seem to think that when we remove charges, remove taxes, remove impediments so that we can build more houses, that's a bad thing. They want to stick things in the way—more red tape, more impediments, that drive up the cost of housing.

We're doing things that will bring down the cost of housing, but it will only work when the supply is satisfactory to meet the demand. We can't get there if we don't start with the legislation, the regulations—the removal of regulations and creating the environment that allows it to happen.

As much as they would like to have the government build every single home in this province and put it on locked-in rent for life—nobody is going to build them. Somebody has to be in the business of actually doing something to earn a profit.

They talk about non-profit health care, for example—public health. Health care is public in this province. Everybody who has an OHIP card, or even those without one, has the right to province-paid health care in this province. But the health care system is one of the most profitable in the world. Do you think the people who put beds in hospitals and medical supplies and everything else that goes into hospitals are doing it on a not-for-profit basis? The health care system is full of profit. We provide health care for anyone at no cost in this province of Ontario, but the system is massively profitable—the development, the research, everything, everybody who is in the system.

So when they talk about public, being non-profit, everything—it's not the case.

0950

What we have to do is make sure we have the most efficient and effective way of delivering those services. That's what we're doing with Bill 97, the new housing bill. Bill 97, which they're railing against—they want everybody to live in a condo in Toronto, for example. It's the

only place you should live. It's the only place we should build them. It just shows their bias and prejudice against rural Ontario, when we're trying to do something—so if you've got a farm with nice acreage and you're making a living on that farm, and your son and/or daughter or their families would like to stay on that farm, we would like to see that farm continue, because the people who begin the process of putting food on our table are some of the most important people to this province. We need our farmers.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes.

So maybe we could build a home on that property so that one of the children of that farmer could also maintain a life on that farm, live and work it. Up until now, you can't do it. We want to do it in Bill 97. They're against it.

Speaker, every single piece of legislation that we have brought forward, whether it's to provide jobs in this province—we lost over 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs under the last government that was supported almost always by the NDP. Every bill we brought forward to bring new housing starts to Ontario so that we can build that supply, so the price will slowly but surely come down, if the supply dictates it—they voted against it. They continue to vote against relief for taxpayers and the red tape burden relief for businesses so that we continue to keep building those and help them create those jobs.

We're bringing more jobs to the province in a time frame than we've ever done in the history of the province.

We have over 15 million people in this province now, and we're going to have more and more every year because of our immigration policies, which we need—we need more population, but we've got—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's time.

We'll move to questions.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his comments. They were very enlightening this morning. They certainly reveal how the government views environmental assessments as a joke; also, how the NDP is living rent-free in the member's head.

When the member is not spending his time obsessing over the NDP, he might notice that people in Ottawa are incredibly stressed about flooding that is taking place again this year. We've had two once-in-a-century floods in the past six years. Levels are again above normal this year. Homeowners have spoken about how incredibly stressful it is every year to wonder if their home is going to be flooded, what kind of damage will happen. That speaks to the importance of why we do environmental assessments and why they need to be taken seriously.

Why does the member not believe that environmental assessments deserve that kind of serious consideration?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for the question.

All I can say is, I haven't been living rent-free in the heads of the NDP for the last 20 years—but I do believe at

least it has been under rent controls, because you believe in them for no matter what kind of rent it is.

Anyway, let's talk about environmental assessment. We see the process as being absolutely, critically important, but we don't believe that a 30-day waiting period, once all the consultations have been completed, is in the best interests of anyone, because if anyone believed there was an issue there, they've had umpteen weeks, days, months, whatever the case may be—they've had ample time to exercise their right to comment. And the reality is, even once things are done, people continue to comment. People are commenting about environmental things that were done 20 years ago. We live in a free country. They can comment any time they want.

But we're going to make sure we build Ontario.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I represent a number of farmers, including one who has been fighting for years to build an additional bunkie, if you will, for foreign workers who work on his farm. He wants to improve their life and give them a little bit more room because they're there every year and they spend many, many months with him.

I would ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to speak to how out of touch people who are opposed to any sort of construction in rural Ontario are. Our farmers need barns. As you said, they want to build housing for their own families so that they can inherit and continue farming. Yet, we see continuous opposition to any sort of growth in rural Ontario. Could you speak to that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for the question.

You've heard question period here for the last several months, and you actually just have to shake your head. Are they really talking to real people out there or are they just talking to their inside advisers? Are they stuck in their own echo chamber and have never actually gotten out there and talked to the real people? That suits us fine, because they're actually hurting themselves.

I say to the member: We've talked to the people—but we haven't just talked; we've heard, and we've listened. We've listened to what they want—and also to try to protect our foreign workers when they come to work here, so that we can prevent what happened, for example, during the pandemic, so that they have adequate housing. We have very good agricultural people and leaders who want to see those people protected, but under the current rules, they can't do it. We're going to make sure they can do it. All we need is for the NDP to pull their heads out of the sands and actually support us.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his presentation.

That government has claimed that schedule 2 of Bill 69 is a response to the Auditor General's 2017 report. That report criticized Infrastructure Ontario's uncompetitive procurement and their poor oversight. Infrastructure

Ontario pays big P3 companies that are unsuccessful in their bids on P3 projects up to \$2 million per bid. That's for unsuccessful bids—what a consolation prize.

My question to the member: Does the member think it's okay for Conservatives to continue the party with the public purse?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm going to party on my own dime, and that will be on Thursday night, when the Leafs knock off the Tampa Bay Lightning. I'll certainly be partying on my own dime, and I'll be doing it on behalf of all the people of Ontario—even my colleague from Nepean, because deep down, she's going to be cheering for the Leafs too.

I'm not sure where the member comes from. They dig these things up, and they think that this is the smoking gun of smoking guns.

The reality is that we take a holistic approach to governance, and we're making sure that all the issues that need to be dealt with are dealt with. We're making sure that we bring in the private sector. We respect the public's need to know. Accountability and transparency are paramount to this government.

So when I hear the NDP going on and on about something, that they think they've found the holy grail here—the reality is, on June 2, the people said, “Mr. Doug Ford, we like the job you're doing. Keep doing it.”

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank goodness, on June 2 the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke looked at you and said, “John Yakabuski, we like what you're doing. Keep doing it.”

I have more of a comment, Speaker—and it was just watching my colleague give a speech. I wish that all members of our caucus were here, particularly the newer members, to see what a master is—a master class in how to speak up in a very clear, concise way about what government policy means to his constituency, and by and large, what it means to all of us. I've had the privilege of sitting with him as a seatmate for many, many years, and it was a real pleasure to be able to watch him speak concisely, without talking points, without ideological points of view. Common sense for common people—that's who we're here to represent. I want to congratulate him for that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How do I respond to that? I'm trying to find the question there. I think the question was—

Interjections: Why are you so great?

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Well, I've had a lot of people in this House as mentors over the years, quite frankly. But I think what matters most is that you bring some passion to this place because you actually believe what you're saying; you're not doing it because it's some invented thing, because that's what the backrooms are telling you—you believe that these are the things that you care about. Because do you know what? When you talk to the people on the street in your own ridings, that's what you're hearing from them.

Do we get it right all the time? Do I get it right all the time? Just ask my wife. No, I don't, but I don't expect to. But if you can sit down at the end of the day and look yourself in the mirror and say, “I believe we're doing a good job for the people of my riding”—which I believe everybody does. That is why we're here in the first place.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: There's something we can say when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke speaks: It's not boring. I always like to be sitting in the House when he speaks.

But that being said, when we think about the 30-day waiting period, First Nations are really concerned, as you know. I'm sure you also have First Nations in your community. I represent a lot of First Nations on the James Bay coast. Their prior and informed consent, for them, is very important. We've seen that the government has not been respecting that, has not been respecting the First Nations when it comes to their traditional territories, Treaty 9.

We will see a lot of First Nations coming in this week, but I'd like to hear from you, sir. Because of the pre-informed consent—what do you say to First Nations that, when it comes to their traditional territories, are not being respected?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for his question. He's right; I do have a First Nation in my riding: Algonquins of Pikwakanagan. Not only do I have a First Nation in my riding; two of our grandchildren are Indigenous.

We do understand that situation, and we do respect the wish of First Nations and the right of First Nations for consultation.

I don't think the 30-day waiting period is the big issue. The big issue is the general consultation requirements under section 35 of the Constitution. You've heard from our Minister of Indigenous Affairs—that is of an absolute, utmost importance and one we are fully committed to.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I don't think I'm going to range as widely as the last speaker on this bill, but I still have a fair amount of material to work with.

As you're well aware, environmental assessments are one of the few tools that people in this province have to protect themselves against arbitrary or dangerous decisions on the part of governments.

We in the NDP are very concerned that amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act could lead to further degradation of public consultation, to further destruction of the environment.

Part of the problem here with the “waiver of the 30-day period for consideration after public comment has been made” is that this is a government that has shown time and time again that it can't be trusted when it comes to protecting our environment or doing land deals in the public interest. As you're well aware, they're currently involved in carving up the greenbelt through shady deals

with their well-connected insiders. They've abused ministerial zoning orders to ram developer deals through, despite local community opposition. And they're spending \$650 million of public money to give away a massive chunk of Ontario Place to a for-profit company based out of Austria.

The particular issue I'm going to speak to, or part of the bill I'm going to focus on, is the change to the Environmental Assessment Act which allows the environment minister to "waive the 30-day waiting period currently required after public consultation has been engaged in." The purpose of those 30 days is to give the minister time to consider what has been brought forward and respond to it, because there may be very substantial things that come up; there may be a request for a bump-up to a full environmental assessment. I would say that although this is not the biggest thing ever in the Environmental Assessment Act, it's of consequence, and the deletion of public right for those 30 days is indicative of the general approach of this government to public input.

The way the new law is written is that "subject to any prescribed limitations, the minister may, by order, provide that subsection (5) ceases to apply"—the 30-day waiting period. What's problematic here—there are a lot of problems, but one problem is that the prescribed limitations are not set out. Effectively, the government is giving itself a blank cheque to put in limitations or put in no limitations at all when it comes to any future ignoring or waiving of the 30-day period. Given their history, I would say that it's fair to expect that the 30-day period will be eliminated. If it is, in fact, occasionally waived for some reason that the public in general would accept, I suspect that will be fairly limited. I think that this government will take every opportunity it has to make sure that the public's voice is not heard and certainly has no impact on what the government wants to do. The failure to put conditions in the act itself—conditions that would limit the ability of the minister to waive that 30-day period—just leaves us, the people of Ontario, to the tender mercies of this particular government when it comes to looking after the environment.

Speaker, I'm sure you're familiar with the film classic, *Bambi Meets Godzilla*. In that very short film—and a brilliant piece of cinematography—you have Bambi at the beginning with flute music and butterflies, just sniffing the air and being young and a deer in the spring. And then Godzilla's foot comes down and squishes Bambi. Well, Bambi, in this case, plays the environment, and Godzilla is played by this government. This act, this change, is just another part of that huge foot coming down and crushing the environment.

This is a government that has shown repeated contempt of public consultation, particularly with respect to the environment. This change will make it even easier for the government to ignore public opinion, public consultation.

Ontario courts have twice found that the Ford government violated the Environmental Bill of Rights, which guarantees not only the public's right to get notification but the public's right to be consulted. From the CBC report on one of these: "In a split decision, an Ontario court says

Doug Ford's government broke the law"—law is not a big constraint on these folks; often, they refer to them as "guidelines"—"when it scrapped the cap-and-trade system, but the court won't force Queen's Park to reinstate the program," which is unfortunate.

"Greenpeace had challenged the cancellation on grounds the government did not hold public consultations before making the decision, a process required by Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights...."

So here is a government asking for even more discretion, when it has a history of breaking the law, ignoring the law, when it comes to the environment.

In another case, the media reported: "An Ontario court has found the provincial government broke the law by failing to adhere to the Environmental Bill of Rights.

"Several environmental groups brought forth applications for judicial reviews over the province's alleged failure to consult with the public before enacting the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act.

"Late last year, the province opened up consultations to the public months after the passage of Bill 197....

"The Superior Court of Justice says the Minister of Municipal Affairs acted 'unreasonably and unlawfully' by consulting with" people after the act had been put through.

To some extent, if you had a government that was consistently acting to protect the environment, consistently cautious, consistently respectful of public input, you'd say, "Here's a government that is going to ask for a waiver to actually expedite things and do the right thing." But that isn't the history of this government.

Again, I'll repeat: This government breaks the law openly, and only when it has been found in court to have broken the law is there any admission, "Maybe we did something wrong. These laws, these revised statutes of Ontario—maybe they're of consequence."

1010

In 2020, the Ford government severely weakened the Environmental Assessment Act with amendments slipped into Bill 197, an omnibus bill purporting to be about recovering from COVID-19. The bill was jammed through the Legislature, and they bypassed committee, denied the public any opportunity to provide comments.

There's a consistent theme here. You weaken environmental protection laws, and you do your best to make sure the public has nothing to say about it. And even if they have something to say, you make sure that what happens is, they're not heard.

What this change signifies is, "Sure, you can make any comment you want. You can point out fundamental flaws. You can find bedrock problems with what's being put forward. But when the time is up, we're not going to spend time thinking about it. It's out the window. It's gone. We've forgotten about it already."

There are a number of things that people should be aware of when it comes to considering how this government has acted. Look at its policies, look at its track record since 2018. We've got a government that is quite willing to break the law when it comes to environmental consultation. This is a government that axed the Environmental Commissioner's office in 2019—an office that had been

in place, frankly, through the Mike Harris government, when we had a very strong Environmental Commissioner who was critical of the government. He was a Tory. He had been a Tory candidate in Timmins, but he was a guy who was fundamentally committed to protecting the environment. Even Mike Harris didn't axe the Environmental Commissioner, but this government did.

This is a government that consistently fails to uphold expert opinion on environmental issues, and it's one that the Auditor General has found is consistently bad news when it comes to environmental policy and when it comes to public consultations.

This is a government that cancelled the cap-and-trade legislation and, in doing that, eliminated billions of dollars of investment in energy efficiency and making sure that buildings and infrastructure were climate-resilient. It cancelled an act, which, by the way, had a lower carbon price than the federal carbon price. So, in fact, this is a government that increased the carbon price in Ontario and, in the course of it, did less for the environment. That's the kind of commitment we're talking about.

We're talking about a government that will not only act contrary to its own language—no surprise there—but will also make sure that the ability to actually come to grips with the climate crisis is undermined. That's who we're talking about. Why would you trust them?

As I referred to earlier, this is a government that's attacking the greenbelt. The member who spoke earlier talked about protecting farmers. Is that why the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve is being taken out of the greenbelt and that farmland is going to be converted into subdivisions for multi-million dollar homes? Is that protecting farmers? Is that protecting the land in Ontario that we need to grow food?

The member asked, "Are you guys in touch with normal people?" Well, I knock on doors in my riding every week, and I've been knocking on doors the last few weeks talking to people about what's going on, talking about the greenbelt, and one of the things that comes up time and time again is people saying, "Where are we going to get our food when you pave over all the farmland?" Because that's their intention. They're starting with one of the most sensitive agricultural areas in Ontario, preserved at great cost decades ago—important in terms of food, important in terms of wetlands. They're going to pave that over. So any complaints about higher groceries, it's on—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member for interrupting. We need to move to members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN POLLANDS GIRVAN

JEAN ELIZABETH SWORD

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This weekend, I was invited to address the 48th Highlanders of Canada, a

Toronto-based infantry regiment that proudly parades out of the Moss Park Armoury in my riding of Toronto Centre. We gathered to commemorate the service of Brigadier John Pollands Girvan and his wife, Nursing Sister Jean Elizabeth Sword.

Nursing Sisters were trained civilian nurses who enlisted with the Canadian army, making them the first women in the modern world to hold military commissions as officers. Jean Sword followed in that great tradition, and she was awarded multiple medals for her brave service. Her husband, John Girvan, commanded the 48th Highlanders and fought in two world wars, rising to the rank of brigadier, and is the most decorated individual in the regiment's history.

Brigadier Girvan's service medals were auctioned on the open market last year, a development that could have resulted in those medals being split amongst multiple and different bidders. The regimental community responded with great conviction, and 51 donors came forward and successfully bid and repatriated those medals to the regiment and the perpetual care of the 48th Highlanders Museum, where they will now be on permanent display.

I hope you will join me in applauding the faithful service of the 48th Highlanders of Canada.

Applause.

VETERINARIANS

Mr. Kevin Holland: It was a pleasure for me to join Ministers Thompson, Dunlop and Bethlenfalvy and my colleagues MPP Harris and MPP Flack this past Thursday at an incredible announcement for the University of Guelph and Lakehead University. The investment of over \$15 million to address veterinary shortages in rural and northern communities will greatly benefit the farmers and large-animal owners in my riding. This support will greatly assist the Northwestern Veterinary Hospital in Thunder Bay, northwestern Ontario's largest vet hospital, reducing backlogs and expanding services. Not only will this investment help provide needed care for my constituents' animals, but it will also assist in the recruitment of new veterinary students and the support of graduating veterinary students. The new collaborative doctor of veterinary medicine program with the universities allows 20 additional veterinary students to enrol per year—totalling 80 new seats by 2028. The goal of the new DVM program focuses on bringing in northern, rural and Indigenous students. The Veterinary Incentive Program being launched means that program participants will be provided annual grants totalling up to \$50,000, if the participant practises on large animals in underserved and northern communities.

The growing demand of vet human resources needs to be met, and our government is doing that.

I look forward to the upcoming announcement in Thunder Bay, at Lakehead University—

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

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I am saddened today to rise and discuss a member of my family, Captain Craig Bowman, and his battle with cancer. My cousin is a firefighter who has been diagnosed with esophageal cancer, like many firefighters unfortunately are. Craig and his family are being denied coverage by WSIB because he does not meet the 25-year threshold for presumptive coverage. Craig has been a firefighter for 22½ years. Prior to his recent diagnosis of esophageal cancer, which has metastasized to his liver, Captain Craig was a very fit 46-year-old man. His prognosis is very poor. He has been denied WSIB on a presumptive case, despite five letters from doctors. The lengthy process of an appeal could take many precious months, and this family needs the help now.

In 1997, another hero, Bob Shaw, inhaled dangerous chemicals during the Plastimet fire that would result in esophageal cancer that would take his life. Bob's battle came to the attention of his local MPP, Andrea Horwath. Partisan differences were put aside, and the Bob Shaw Law was created that makes WSIB coverage for certain cancers presumptive.

Today we have another local hero, Captain Craig Bowman. He is not getting presumed coverage because he has only been a firefighter for 22½ years, not 25.

Once again, as legislators, we need to come together for families such as my cousin Captain Craig's. We can do better for front-line heroes, who should be spending time with their families and not fighting arbitrary rulings of the WSIB.

1020

THORNHILL SENIORS CLUB

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Recently, I had the great pleasure to visit Thornhill Seniors Club in my riding. I met with the president, Norm Goldstein.

The club was officially launched in June 2004. Since then, it has been a hub for seniors from all communities, offering them a safe place to enjoy. Seniors together organized and operated many sports, cultural and other activities for decades. The club takes pride in achieving historic proportions in Thornhill's history. The club speaks for Thornhill seniors, bringing people together, building bridges, brightening the day for many seniors. The club members say that TSC offers them a special place that they themselves can control and manage, a place which seniors call their own.

TSC has various drop-in programs, including water-colour classes, yoga programs, year-round travel programs and in-person bridge programs.

Our government offers resources, programs and services to Ontario's seniors that can help them stay safe, healthy and active. Our government not only helps seniors, but also their caregivers and the organizations that support them. By promoting wellness, social connection and education, these programs can help reduce social isolation and help seniors stay active, independent and engaged.

Madam Speaker, I wish Thornhill Seniors Club all the best.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm very humbled to always serve the members of Barrie-Innisfil, and I'm always proud to see the incredible volunteers we have across our region.

This past weekend, I was able to celebrate some of those volunteers at the town of Innisfil, where we paid tribute and thanks to Jennifer Richardson, who helps with Connecting Innisfil, and many individuals, like Helen Kindy, who helps with COPE Service Dogs; Anne Kell, who helps with countless initiatives like Pitch-In for Innisfil, which is an annual cleanup event we have, the Rotary Club, Friends of the Library, and Christmas4Kids.

We were also able to thank Dave Cockburn and Serge Singh, who help with Crime Stoppers.

We were able to thank Brian Jones from the Gilford United Church and his colleague Rev. Linda Butler, and so many more.

In Barrie, we're also very proud to have Barrie Families Unite that operates on 200 volunteers per week regularly—volunteers like Laurie Clarke, Linda Wait and Linda Sallans, who are always there, constantly helping the organization.

We also have the Red Cross, which counts on volunteers like Brian Miller, who is helping with many of their programs throughout Simcoe county, through the connector volunteer program.

If you're listening today and you're looking to volunteer, we have so many organizations across the region, whether it's the YMCA, whether it's Christmas4Kids, Habitat for Humanity, and so many more.

I encourage everyone to continue to volunteer—and for those who have, thank you so much.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I rise today on behalf of the youth in my riding of Don Valley West, and especially those in Thorncliffe Park, who tell me about the challenges they have in finding employment. Many of these kids and their families are immigrants and newcomers to Canada, and as such already face other barriers.

According to First Work, one in five Ontarians aged 24 to 29 are being classified as NEET—not in employment, education or training.

Investing more in student supports such as youth job connection helps train our youth to get their first job, sets them up for future success, and grows our economy.

The Youth Job Connection program allows employment service providers to reach out to students at risk of leaving school without a job or training lined up, funds incentives for companies to hire young people, and allows youth to take part in pre-employment training.

In fact, First Work, which was at Queen's Park just last week, requested in their 2023 pre-budget submission that the "government maintain or reintegrate youth-specific programming like Youth Job Connection ... to ensure the

province's young people are not left behind in Ontario's economic success."

For the youth in Thorncliffe Park and across Ontario who find it difficult to navigate the workforce and get the experience they need to succeed, funding such programs would get them the jump-start they need to thrive in Ontario, where their families have chosen to call home.

I'm asking the government, on behalf of youth in Don Valley West and across the province, to please reconsider cutting the Youth Job Connection program so we can give youth—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. The next members' statement.

CANADA CORD AWARD

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I would like to share with this House the accomplishments of some remarkable young ladies from my riding of Durham who were just recently recognized by the Girl Guides of Canada for their exemplary service. Speaker, 10 members of the 8th Bowmanville Pathfinders were presented with the Canada Cord award, which is the highest award a Pathfinder can earn. Girl Guides between the ages of 12 and 14 who are enrolled in Pathfinders and who complete the program requirements specializing in the areas of community service, volunteerism, leadership, camping skills and personal development are eligible for this prestigious award. The recipients of the 2023 Canada Cord award from the 8th Bowmanville Pathfinders are Alyson Baker, Charlotte Welsh, Chelsea Smith, Chloe Stone, Claire Kerswill, Evelyn Hosking, Julia Roth, Mel Ball, Ruth Breithaupt, and Ryleigh Hunter.

On behalf of all members of this House, I would like to congratulate these young ladies, their families and their guide leader, Julia Smith, on their remarkable accomplishments. We wish them all the best and every success in the future.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Last week, I had the pleasure of joining my colleagues in the region of Peel to announce a 38% increase to the tune of \$42.3 million into the region's homelessness prevention program, as part of our government's \$202-million additional investment into homelessness prevention and Indigenous housing. The additional funding for the region of Peel represents 20% of the overall additional investment. We are so grateful to the Ministry of Housing for recognizing the need in the region of Peel, as well for as the incredible work the region is doing in settling newcomers and helping those who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. This is truly a welcome investment that will make a tangible difference in people's lives.

I can't tell you how many times I had the sad duty, when caring for people experiencing homelessness in the emergency room, of having to discharge them into the street, frantically calling all available shelters and being

told that they are all full. These were some of the most heartbreaking moments in my nursing career.

That is why this investment will empower the region of Peel to support shelters like Embrave, Amarghat House, Our Place Peel and many others to continue doing incredible work and housing our most vulnerable: women fleeing domestic violence, youth at risk, those experiencing mental health challenges, and many others.

Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government which is taking the housing crisis seriously and helping our most vulnerable.

ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me really great pleasure to welcome the Ontario Disability Coalition to the front lawn today. They're here once again to rally the government to increase ODSP rates.

As we know, people living with disabilities in this province are living far below the poverty line. Rents have increased. The cost of living has increased. The monthly allowance for people who are disabled in this province has not increased nearly enough. A mere 5% increase to people who were already living below the poverty line continues to leave people in legislated poverty, which is not the province—we should be working hard to ensure that people have a healthy life and that they are able to live comfortably in the province of Ontario.

Once again, they're here to encourage the government to increase the ODSP rates, to double those rates, to allow people the ability to live comfortably in homes. Once someone is evicted from a home in this province, the chances of them being able to find rent within their monthly allowance is very slim.

I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak with them today. I hope the government members will also come out to the front lawn and speak to members who are living in legislated poverty in the province of Ontario.

EVENTS IN MARKHAM–UNIONVILLE

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm glad to speak on two important engagement events I had with constituents in Markham–Unionville this past weekend.

First, I had the pleasure of having Minister Lecce join MPP Daisy Wai and me at a round table on Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act. We spoke with key stakeholders in our ridings about the bill. They included students and parents from public schools and Chinese media. What I heard from stakeholders in Markham–Unionville is clear: They believe the education system should support students to succeed in life and work. It should also prepare young people for jobs of tomorrow and the evolving economy. These are exactly what the bill seeks to achieve, if not more—and I treasure this opportunity to hear from stakeholders, their views.

1030

After the round table, I hosted an open house of my community office to constituents in Markham–Unionville. More than 50 families and 70 individuals came. It was a wonderful afternoon. My team and I were able to meet families and friends in the community. We talked about issues that they care about, from education to health care, housing to the economy.

I'm blessed to have a tight-knit community in my riding. I am humbled and honoured to serve my constituents and stakeholders. I will continue to make Ontario a better place for them.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required. Therefore, the afternoon routine on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, shall commence at 1 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to inform the House that we have a former member with us in the House this morning: the member for Fort York in the 35th Parliament; the member for Fort York in the 36th Parliament; the member for Trinity–Spadina in the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th provincial Parliaments, Rosario Marchese. Welcome back.

The member for Peterborough–Kawartha, I believe, has a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: As you know, the OHL playoffs are well on their way, and last night, my Peterborough Petes defeated the Ottawa 67's. I have bets with three members here in the House.

I would seek unanimous consent for the member for Ottawa South to wear my white-and-maroon away jersey, the member for Ottawa Centre to wear my maroon-and-white home jersey, and the member for Carleton to wear my black-and-maroon third jersey in question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll take the black one.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Ottawa South, the member for Ottawa Centre, and the member for Carleton to wear Peterborough Petes jerseys this morning in the House. Agreed? Agreed.

Introduction of visitors.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure for me today to introduce my executive assistant Tim Wontorra, who is joining us in the House today. I'm not sure if it's his first

time, but it's certainly his first time being introduced by me.

Welcome to your House, Tim.

Mr. Chris Glover: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that everybody in the House give a warm welcome to Evelyn Murialdo and the Scadding Court Community Centre Latin seniors' group, who are attending question period this morning and then meeting with you, the Speaker, for lunch and going on a tour of Queen's Park.

Would you all please join me in giving a round of applause to the Scadding Court group?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour today to recognize page Frederick Funk—he's from Guelph—and to welcome his parents, Elisha and Justin Funk, who are in the west members' gallery, to Queen's Park.

Thank you for your service. Thank you for being such great parents to a wonderful page.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'm proud to introduce guests who will be joining from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of Canada. These are an incredible group of Muslims who live in our communities. Their headquarters are in Peace Village in Vaughan. I want to thank them for embracing their motto of "Love for All, Hatred for None."

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome some of the attendees who will be visiting us on the front lawn today: Dr. Sally Palmer from the Ontario Association of Social Workers, Social Action Committee; Sherry Caldwell, president of the Ontario Disability Coalition; Anthony Frisina from the Ontario Disability Coalition; and, of course, our friend Michau Van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition.

Mr. Graham McGregor: This morning, we're joined by guests from the Appraisal Institute of Canada–Ontario: President Kim Passmore, Tracey Davies, Ben Ellens, Dino Giuliani, Lora Wylie, Dan Brewer, Paul Duarte, Ed Saxe, Eric Tworo.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to welcome members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada to Queen's Park, whose motto is "Love for All, Hatred for None," and who are hosting a special Eid celebration here today at 5 p.m., in room 230. Thank you to their president, Lal Khan Malik, director Asif Khan, Ashfaq Ahmed, Naseem Shad, Nadeem Mahmood, and other friends for organizing this event. I encourage everyone to join.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It is an honour to recognize some students who are here with us today from Ontario Tech University's humanities society. Welcome to Alexandra Sanita, Tamara Talhouk, Kyli Jenkins, and Dryden Arseneau. The future is bright with these young people here with us today.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'd like to welcome the team, the students and the teachers from Prestige private school. They are now having a tour, and they will be joining us in question period.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome my friend from North Bay, Gordan Rennie.

Hon. David Piccini: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a good friend of mine who's here visiting Queen's Park for the first time: Jennifer McGill from Port Hope.

And I send a special welcome to Tim from Colborne.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'd like to introduce Raphael Moralles from the incredible riding of Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: In recognition of Sikh Heritage Month, the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council is celebrating Sikh Heritage Month at Queen's Park today in room 228, sponsored by myself and supported by MPPs Tangri, Gill, Sandhu and Sarkaria. We'd like everybody in the House to join. It's happening from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. today.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Speaker, concerns are piling up about the government's back-of-the-napkin plan to jam the Ontario Science Centre into the new, private, luxury spa and parking lot complex at Ontario Place. Last week, the Minister of Infrastructure told millions of radio listeners that she was just "verifying the numbers" and "triple checking" before releasing the business case for this decision. Today, her team told the Globe and Mail that she won't be releasing it after all.

To the Premier: What did the minister see in the numbers that led her to change her mind?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Our government is saving the science centre. We are giving it a new home at the Ontario Place redevelopment. It will be a new tenant there. It will be an attraction for families, for tourists, for everyone to enjoy.

The Premier was very clear this morning, when he was questioned by the media, that we will continue to work with the city of Toronto on both the Ontario Place redevelopment as well as the lands where the science centre sits, and we will do that.

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

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: That answer simply isn't good enough.

Taxpayers are already on the hook for millions of dollars for an elite, private spa that absolutely nobody asked for. The government is committing the province to a 95-year lease, and they're moving a cherished public institution and all of its jobs from its home community into a much smaller space.

Through you, Speaker: Couldn't the Premier at least reveal the business case for these decisions?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Do you know what's not good enough, in our opinion? To leave this site in disrepair—to leave it the way it is. It is crumbling. It is eroding. I'm speaking about Ontario Place. It is flooded. It is not enjoyed by the general public.

Our government has been clear, since 2019, that we have a vision for this site and that we want to bring it back to life. We want it to be a place that families can enjoy 365 days a year, that families can enjoy throughout the whole, entire day. And we will have that with the science centre, with Therme, with Live Nation, with a 43-acre public realm space that will be accessible by the Ontario Line, accessible to the public through all modes of transit.

Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough—leaving the site to deteriorate. We will bring it back to life.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Perhaps they won't release the business case because there is not one, just like there isn't a good case for housing on the science centre lands.

We heard from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority on this. The TRCA was not consulted, of course, so they've been forced to explain that these lands are not safe to build on. It's on a ravine.

The government is piling one bad idea onto another bad idea here in a half-baked scheme that is losing credibility by the day. Why would any reasonable person take their word for it that this plan is in the public interest?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the leader of the official opposition for her question.

I think everyone agrees in this House that we are in a housing supply crisis. It is this Premier, this minister and this caucus who recognize that and want to make sure that we get housing built in Ontario. After decades of disrespect and disarray by that government, it is finally this government who is making sure that we're seeing absolute housing starts—100,000 almost two years ago, and 96,000 last year. More than that, what's so important is, we're getting purpose-built rentals built—that's what is more important. We want to make sure everybody in this province has a roof over their head.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's a confusing answer to that question, can I just say, because I just finished explaining that the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority says you can't build there.

AMATEUR HOCKEY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, we learned of some troubling allegations that have come to light regarding the Greater Toronto Hockey League, allegations that suggest that the teams in the league—which is supposed to be, by the way, non-profit—are being bought and sold for millions. The owners are avoiding having to pay taxes on the whole thing. To make matters worse, wealthy parents are buying the ability to influence team rosters, dashing

the dreams of players as young as nine years old from playing the sport that they love.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier: Will this government investigate these very serious allegations and do its part to put an end to cash-for-access culture in amateur hockey?

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

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thanks for the question from the Leader for the Opposition.

I'd also—I don't know if he's here—like to thank Mr. Aliu, chairman of Hockey Diversity Alliance, for the work that he has done in building and supporting communities that haven't had an opportunity to participate in hockey, by funding. We, as a ministry, are thankful and happy to support what he is doing.

I will also tell you, specifically, as a guy who has been involved in sport for a long time—I coached rep hockey and rep football—I take these allegations very seriously.

As a result, at this time, these allegations are being investigated by the GTHL. The GTHL executives have actioned an independent investigation with respect to ethical issues of influence and governance. And yes, they're taking it seriously, and I know they're taking it seriously because they have hired a retired justice from the Ontario Court of Appeal and a retired police detective to do the investigation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you, Speaker, I was just hoping for a yes. It is not good enough to have the GTHL investigate themselves; I'm sorry, with all due respect.

Akim Aliu, who the minister just mentioned, is with us here today in the members' gallery. He's a former NHL player with the Calgary Flames and chair of the Hockey Diversity Alliance. He came to this government, to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, months ago. Months ago, Akim showed the minister documents that formed the basis for these allegations, but nothing happened on the provincial end. He is hoping and he is demanding that this cash-for-access culture end and that kids are able to play based on their ability and their talent, not if their parents are able to buy them a spot on a team.

Back to the Premier: Will this government launch a public investigation into these allegations and close any loopholes that may allow numbered shell companies to buy and sell kids' hockey teams?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: The ministry does not have a direct relationship with member organizations as a provincial sport organization. It has no authority. The GTHL is a member of the Ontario Hockey Federation.

You asked about action. There is action being taken—and I use the word “independently” of the GTHL, which means that it is separate from the GTHL executives. Once that information comes back—you're right; if there is information that we need to follow up with the Ontario Hockey Federation on, we will do exactly that.

The members opposite might want to shake their heads at what we're doing, but there is a process that we will go

through, and, if necessary, we will act based on the information we get from the investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary. The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Hockey is important to me, as it's important to countless Ontarians across the province. It is part of our identity. I was the first female to play on my elementary hockey team. My daughter was the only female to play on the local boys' hockey team at a competitive level. And now I'm a hockey grandma. Just as hockey is part of our identity, so are our values of fairness, inclusion and accessibility. We know it is not right when even the most talented children cannot play because their parents cannot buy off a spot on the team.

To the Premier: Will you do what is right and make sure children are able to play based on their abilities and their talent?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: No, I wasn't applauding; I will applaud that statement, because, in all my years of coaching, I couldn't agree more—at all levels—that young people in amateur sport, all the way up to university need to be judged on their play and who they are to be part of a team. Nothing else is acceptable. If there are other things going on, as is being suggested, we will find that out through this investigation.

I will tell you, no one is more passionate about creating opportunity for young people in sport, because of what it does and how it helps young people through the process.

When we find this out, if in fact there is something to find out—you can shake your heads all you want. I know a little bit more about this space than you might, and I will tell you that we will act if necessary.

1050

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Glover: Global News just broke this story: Ontario Place for All has submitted seven freedom-of-information requests to the Ministry of Infrastructure. For each of these seven requests, this government has withheld the requested information. One request was for the lease agreement between the Ontario government and the private Austrian spa at Ontario Place. This agreement handcuffs this generation and future generations of Ontarians into spending an estimated 650 million taxpayer dollars and cost-sharing operational costs for the next 95 years.

Why won't this government release the lease agreement so that the people of Ontario can judge for ourselves whether this is a good deal?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, let me just take things back a bit. In 2019, we announced our vision for the site. We announced that we wanted to invest in the site to bring it back to life. In 2021, we went out to the public again and informed them of the tenants that we were

negotiating with. Then, just last week, the Premier and I and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport were out again to inform the public of the progress that we are making on the site.

But do you know what we've done? We have learned from the past mistakes of past governments. We will have tenants that are going to invest capital in the site to build a brand new, all-year-round stage. We will have Therme, which will build a wellness and sports rec facility and waterslides with 12 acres of public realm. Most importantly, we will have tenants that will actually be contributing to the annual maintenance and repairs of the site so that it doesn't fall into disrepair, like under their watch.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Since the minister didn't answer the question previously, I'll ask again.

At the announcement to move the Ontario Science Centre last week, the Minister of Infrastructure said the business case that showed it was more expensive to renovate the science centre than build a new one would be made public in due time. The minister then said that she would release the business case to the public once the numbers were verified and triple-checked.

The minister is now claiming that the business case is confidential and will not be released after all.

The people of Ontario deserve answers. Show us the business case. Why the secrecy?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member opposite. But please don't put words in my mouth. That is completely inaccurate and inappropriate.

What we are doing is making the site sustainable. We will have three wonderful tenants: Ontario Science Centre, Therme, and Live Nation. Live Nation and Therme will now be contributing to the site, to the maintenance repairs to keep the site clean, to keep the site beautiful. Why? Because we don't want it to fall into disrepair—like it was under the watch of the Liberal government. We want this site to be open for years and years and generations to come so that families have a wonderful place that they can enjoy with their families.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we heard from the public through the annual consultation process that has been taking place for several years. People want access to the site, and they want to enjoy it with their families.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones.

L'Ontario compte la plus grande communauté francophone du Canada à l'extérieur du Québec. Avec 600 000 francophones et 1,5 million de locuteurs de

langue française, l'accès à des services de qualité en français dans divers secteurs est d'une importance vitale.

Avec des initiatives comme le règlement sur l'offre active qui est récemment entré en vigueur, notre gouvernement a facilité l'accès des francophones aux services dans leur langue maternelle.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle dire à la Chambre comment la stratégie des services en français se déroule encore aujourd'hui?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour cette excellente question.

Contrairement au gouvernement fédéral, qui stagne avec son projet de modernisation, notre gouvernement, sous le leadership du premier ministre Ford, a su moderniser notre cadre législatif incluant la Loi sur les services en français.

C'est en novembre de 2021 que nous avons mis de l'avant la Stratégie ontarienne pour les services en français, une stratégie qui englobe :

—la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français, ce que nous avons fait;

—l'accroissement de la main-d'œuvre bilingue et francophone; et

—l'adoption de modèles de services intégrés et aussi efficaces.

C'est en travaillant en collaboration avec les ministères pertinents et aussi leurs agences que nous continuons d'identifier les besoins et aussi les possibilités d'expansion de points de service en français dans la province. Contrairement au gouvernement libéral précédent, qui n'a fait que parler, notre gouvernement agit pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

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

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Merci à la ministre pour sa réponse. Il est toujours encourageant d'entendre à quel point notre gouvernement est à l'écoute des intervenants franco-ontariens et met de l'avant des initiatives qui amélioreront l'accès à des services de qualité en français.

Bien que des progrès importants aient été réalisés, notre gouvernement doit assurer la continuité de ces travaux afin que la communauté francophone de l'Ontario dispose d'un environnement propice à son épanouissement.

La ministre peut-elle nous en dire plus sur ce qui a été fait pour faciliter la désignation des organismes?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Pour faciliter la désignation des organismes, nous avons modernisé le processus de désignation pour en alléger le fardeau administratif. À cet effet, le ministère des Affaires francophones a lancé une plateforme en ligne permettant un traitement plus rapide et aussi plus rigoureux des demandes en 2022. Depuis, nous travaillons avec d'autres ministères pour identifier les organismes intéressés à entreprendre le processus de désignation en ligne. Et le ministère ajoutera des fonctionnalités à la plateforme cette année, notamment en intégrant le processus d'évaluation triennale des organismes.

Les organisations qui choisissent d'obtenir une désignation en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français

s'engagent à protéger et à promouvoir des services en français de qualité. Nous savons que la désignation est un outil important pour la vitalité de la communauté francophone, et c'est pour ça que notre gouvernement continue à moderniser le processus.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier.

I was contacted this week by a resident of York region through a friend. The resident, an 80-year-old man, was just recently told that his prostate condition could no longer be controlled by drugs and that he needed surgery. He was offered two choices: He could wait for a year and a half to get surgery with his OHIP card through Mackenzie Health, or he could pay \$6,000 with his credit card and get his care within three weeks at a private clinic.

Can the Premier tell me how he can defend his health care policies when people have to pay to get OHIP-covered surgery done in any reasonable time frame?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite talks about the need for constituents to have access in a timely manner to surgeries and yet opposes the very legislation and proposals that we bring forward that will ensure, in fact, we have those community surgical centres.

Of course, the member has conveniently left out some of the details of the example that he gave.

I can assure you that organizations like Mackenzie Health that have accessed our surgical backlog recovery of almost a billion dollars—as a result of investments that our government has made since the beginning of 2019—have ensured that Ontario is, in fact, leading Canada in terms of the shortest amount of wait times. But we need to do more because we understand that there are people who are waiting too long to get necessary surgeries.

We will do that work. I hope the member opposite appreciates that that will make a difference for their constituent.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, to the Premier: The choice this man had was to use his credit card or to suffer—or to suffer.

When the Premier's decisions mean that people have to wait ages to get surgery to relieve suffering or to prevent death, then he has failed.

When will the Premier provide the funding for health care and health care workers so people are not suffering or forced to max out their credit cards to get treatment?

1100

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Done and done. We have a historic investment in terms of recruiting and training health care professionals in the province of Ontario. We have invested in capital builds, over 50 in the province of Ontario, to expand surgical operating rooms and make sure that we have that. Through Bill 60, we will continue to expand what already exists in the province of Ontario—surgical

units to ensure that people get access in their communities in a timely manner. This work is ongoing.

It is the member opposite and the party they represent who continue to want the status quo.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Minister of Mines.

Everyone across this province is eager to help advance Ontario's economic prosperity.

Northern Ontario is critical to the future of our province, and unfortunately, its tremendous potential was ignored for too many years under the previous Liberal government.

The rich supply of critical minerals found in the north is particularly important in our transition to clean energy technologies, especially in the production of electric vehicles' EV batteries. Building a robust supply chain means that we must be able to extract the minerals out of the ground with urgency in order for Ontarians to become an EV leader in the world.

Can the minister please explain how our government is strengthening Ontario's mining sector?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member for the excellent question.

Mr. Speaker, as an individual who was raised in the mine site village of Dome and Dome-Ex in South Porcupine, Ontario—our government not only recognizes the importance of the north, but we want it to prosper like the rest of the province. That's why our Critical Minerals Strategy is so important. It will connect the mineral-rich north with the manufacturing might of the south. This will create jobs and supply Ontario, Canada and the world with critical minerals needed for the EV revolution and the technologies of tomorrow. Our strategy is backed by strategic funding and programs like the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund and the Ontario Junior Exploration Program that will build the supply chain and find the mines of the future.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister for the answer.

We can see that the investments that are being made, like those at Umicore in Lennox and Addington and Volkswagen in their EV production plants in St. Thomas, clearly show that our government is focused on building a strong made-in-Ontario supply chain, but we need those critical minerals to accomplish this.

To capitalize on this generational opportunity, we must act with urgency and create the right economic conditions for investments in our province's mining and exploration industry. Critical minerals exploration is a key driver for creating good-paying jobs and building a strong, globally competitive economy. It's vital that our government continues to make these targeted investments in order to help our companies search for minerals to be used in automotive and battery manufacturing.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to expand exploration for these critical minerals here in Ontario?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you again for the excellent question.

Last week, I was honoured to join the Minister of Finance in Thunder Bay to announce the additional investment of \$6 million into the OJEP through budget 2023. That brings our total investment in the Ontario Junior Exploration Program to \$35 million.

Our efforts are working. Last year, Ontario regained the top spot for exploration spending, with over \$870 million invested. We're number one. These investments are creating jobs for northern and Indigenous communities so that they can be a vital part of the supply chain.

Our government, under Premier Ford's leadership, is building a supply chain for EVs, and it all starts with exploration.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier.

The Eglinton Crosstown LRT is two years late and \$1 billion over budget. This government has missed two deadlines for it to open.

To make matters worse, leaked emails note the government is now silencing Metrolinx, who prepared a video update on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. The Premier's office's staff would not allow that video update to be seen by the public.

A simple question to the Premier: What are you trying to hide?

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration that community members feel with respect to project delays on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. It's a project that we inherited from the Liberals, and from the beginning, unfortunately, they mismanaged the project.

Our government has been committed to doing transit differently. We brought forward legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, that the opposition unfortunately voted against.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows better than almost anyone in this House that there are risks associated with rushing a project. Transit riders deserve a lot better than the experiences of the Ottawa LRT.

That's why our focus has been—and I've been clear on this since the beginning. Our focus is making sure that the crosstown opens as soon as possible, but that when it does, it is safe and reliable for transit riders.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, the minister is right about one thing: People in Ottawa Centre have seen this movie before.

Back to the Premier: The problem for our city, in Toronto, here, is that the P3 consultants who designed our failing LRT are the same ones this government has under

contract for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and red flags are popping up everywhere. For example, CityNews Toronto documented buckets of broken-up chunks of the Sloane station platform at Eglinton and Bermondsey, with barricades all of a sudden up everywhere after this LRT station appeared poised to open.

Over the weekend, the Toronto Star reported, as I said before, that Metrolinx officials are frustrated with this Premier's staff silencing them when they're trying to give the public an update on the project.

Speaker, I agree with Councillor Colle and Councillor Matlow and others who said we need a public inquiry into this mess. That was something good enough for Ottawa. It should be good enough for the city of Toronto.

Will the government commit to a public inquiry of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT today? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, what I can commit to the people of Toronto is that they will get a system that is safe and reliable to use once it is ready to open.

With respect to the specific issue on the Sloane platform, repairs are being made on a section of concrete that was identified through Metrolinx's very strict quality control and inspection process, and there are no additional costs required to fix this platform.

What people of Toronto don't need are politicians forcing a system to open before it is ready. That is what happened in Ottawa when the mayor of Ottawa demanded that they shorten the testing period. And then what happened? Derailments. Transit riders were stranded and couldn't get to work and couldn't get home.

We will not rush a system to open before it is ready. Transit riders deserve better, and that's what they will get under this government.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, the Premier likes to say, "Under my watch, you'll only ever need your OHIP card, not your credit card." The Premier should tell that to Lisa, whose wait time for breast cancer surgery at the Ottawa Hospital was so long that she was forced to go to a private clinic to pay \$50,000 for the life-saving surgery she needed. And Lisa is not the only one. Wait times for breast cancer surgery at the Ottawa Hospital are so long that surgeons are advising their patients to consider private options. Dozens of women in Ottawa are having their life-saving surgeries delayed and then rescheduled. The uncertainty and the wait is agonizing.

How is any of this in any way acceptable to this Premier?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is frustrating when people have to wait for long periods of time for their critical surgeries,

which is exactly why we have brought forward the Your Health plan, Bill 60, which allows us to expand those community and surgical centres.

The example the member gave—there needs to be some context to it. And of course, that surgery, if it happens in the province of Ontario, is covered by your OHIP card.

1110

This is the same member from the city of Ottawa who is opposing the innovation that is happening at the Ottawa Hospital today. Through our surgical backlog fund, the hospital has been able to utilize an innovative model that ensures an OR room within the hospital is being used on the weekend, when it was sitting vacant before. What does that do? It means that those critical surgeries that must happen and will continue to happen have the ability to happen sooner because we are utilizing those operating rooms over the weekend.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'm hoping that in the supplementary, the Premier will be able to explain to Lisa how he could allow this to happen.

Do you know how many women at the General campus of the Ottawa Hospital are getting their life-saving breast cancer surgeries within the safe recommended rate? Is it 90%? Is it 75%? No. Is it 50%? No. Is it 25%? No. It's 13%. The situation for gynecological cancer surgeries is not much better; it's 30%.

All the while, the hospital is renting out ORs to a private company while these women watch that and wait.

Every four weeks these breast cancer surgeries are delayed, the risk of death increases 6% to 8%.

There's a reason that we started measuring wait times in 2007: so this wouldn't happen.

Back to the Premier: How did this Premier allow this to happen under his watch?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite should also talk about the wait times that are happening across Canada, because, in fact, Ontario leads Canada in the shortest wait times. Is that enough? Clearly not. We want to do more, which is why we are expanding immediately through the surgical backlog recovery.

Almost a billion dollars has been used by our public hospitals in the last three years to expand their operating room capacity. And it has worked, because, in fact, we are now down to wait times that are equivalent to pre-pandemic levels. That is a success that we have to point to and thank our hospital partners for. Is it enough? No.

We don't want the status quo, which is why, through Bill 60, we are expanding the community surgical and diagnostic centres. That will ensure that people have access to regularly scheduled surgeries in a timely manner closer to home. It is exactly what the people of Ottawa and Ontario need and deserve.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

It's important that Ontarians of all ages and abilities can participate in local programs across the province.

Because of our government's commitment to helping seniors and people with disabilities to stay safe, active and socially connected, we are hearing encouraging reports about successful projects through the Inclusive Community Grants Program. To name just a few examples, the city of Burlington received funding to install portable beach mats to make access easier to the waterfront for everyone, and the public library in Dryden received funds to make accessibility improvements.

Can the minister please share more about the Inclusive Community Grants Program and how this contributes to advancing accessibility for all of Ontario?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you to the hard-working MPP from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for the wonderful question.

We thank you and all the advocates of accessibility who are working hard to make Ontario more accessible.

Our government launched the inclusive community grants as a community-based approach to help the province become more inclusive for everyone. Since 2018, our government has funded over 60 projects to local organizations to make inclusive spaces and meet accessibility needs in their community. These grants are making libraries, parks and other public spaces all across Ontario accessible.

Thanks to the leadership of this Premier, we are building an accessible Ontario.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's encouraging to hear that our government is making meaningful investments to help improve the daily lives of individuals and families across our province, and we all know there's still more to do. In every community, there are opportunities and challenges when it comes to reducing barriers so that people across Ontario can live active, healthy lives.

Ensuring continuous improvement of accessibility and inclusion for everyone is an ongoing responsibility, and we all play a role in supporting the needs of our communities.

It's vital that our government continues to provide funding that supports local needs and empowers community organizations so that improvements can take place everywhere in Ontario.

Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is investing in accessibility projects in both rural and small urban communities?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Project by project, community by community, we are advancing accessibility.

I want to share with you that we have invested nearly \$50,000 in inclusive community grants to the Active Lifestyle Centre in Chatham-Kent-Leamington. This funding went to a refresher driving course for older adults. This has supported up to 1,500 older adults from 11 rural and smaller urban communities in Chatham-Kent access driving to stay active and connected.

It does not matter how big or small a community is; we can all work together to build a better Ontario that is inclusive for all.

Together, we are building a better Ontario.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier.

Windsor Salt workers from Unifor Locals 240 and 1959 have been on strike for over nine weeks as they continue to fight for job security and against the outsourcing of their jobs by a US hedge fund company, Stone Canyon Industries. These workers mine and produce the table salt, road salt, agricultural salt and more that we all benefit from. In fact, the salt used in the kitchen and on the dining room tables right here at Queen's Park is Windsor Salt.

Speaker, the Conservatives claim they're working for workers, so Windsor Salt workers want to know: What specifically has the Premier done to support them during this strike and stop the outsourcing of their jobs?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me just say that we do appreciate how important these workers are to the province of Ontario. In fact, all workers are important to the province of Ontario.

That's why, in the last election, the majority of the unionized workforce across this province supported Progressive Conservatives in the election, including in the member's own riding.

The Ministry of Labour has put forward a number of initiatives that improve the working conditions not only of workers—but more importantly, or equally as important is that the conditions that we're bringing in are as a result of some of the incredible work that we're seeing by this Premier and by this minister to bring jobs and economic activity back to the province of Ontario.

This province is thriving. We have thousands of jobs that are being created, thousands of jobs where we will turn to our unionized workforce, to workers across the province of Ontario to help us continue to build a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario. And that includes those workers the member has referenced in her question.

We encourage both the workers and their employer to reach an agreement at the table, and I'm sure the member would agree that's exactly where it should be done.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'll remind everybody that it was actually the Conservatives who scrapped anti-scab legislation.

And it's very clear what you feel about workers, with Bill 124 and Bill 28.

Scab labour is used by employers to undermine collective bargaining and drag out labour disputes.

The Conservatives have a track record of supporting the use of scab labour time and time again.

I was joined by Windsor Salt workers here at Queen's Park to reintroduce, for the 16th time since the Conservatives cut anti-scab labour, our anti-scab labour bill. The Conservatives wouldn't answer whether or not they will be supporting it. In fact, they wouldn't even look at the workers who were here.

So I'll try again: Will the Premier tell workers today whether or not his government will vote in favour of our anti-scab labour bill and support Windsor Salt workers? Yes or no?

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Hon. Paul Calandra: I truly find the NDP entertaining. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because this member gets up in her place, supported by the members around her, and suggests, "Oh, we want to bring anti-scab legislation back," but when they had the balance of power, when they could have said to the Liberals, "We demand that you bring back this legislation"—

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Why? Because they held the balance of power. They could have said, "Workers are a priority for the NDP." Instead, they said that stretch goals on auto insurance is all that they needed to continue the disaster that was the Liberal government, from 2011 to 2014.

You didn't make workers a priority in 2011, you didn't make them a priority in 2012, you didn't make them a priority in 2013, you didn't make them a priority in 2014—when you supported every single disastrous budget that group brought to the province of Ontario, that brought workers in this province to its knees.

And now, when you're down to 30 people, it's—

Interjections.

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

Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader will come to order. The member for Windsor West will come to order.

I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not across the floor of the House.

Start the clock.

The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: The Minister of Finance frequently talks about transparency, about how his crystal ball is a bit foggy and how "certainty is not part of the future. It is always uncertain." But now his government is saying they can predict the next 95 years with their new lease for Ontario Place.

In 95 years, we'll be gone, and a new generation of Ontarians will have to deal with the generational decisions of this government.

The province and the city of Toronto had a similar lease for the Ontario Science Centre, and now, halfway through, the province is insisting that it be destroyed because it's too old.

The minister knows a 95-year business case is not a sound one; maybe that's why they won't release it.

Can the Premier please tell us how his government now has the "crystal ball" confidence to approve his government signing a 95-year lease with a company that only set up shop in Canada two years ago?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: I cannot believe that member is asking this question right now.

They closed the doors to Ontario Place. They left it to go into disrepair, to be in a state where it is constantly flooded and, at times, not safe for people.

We have presented a vision to the public—we were out last week. The Premier was answering questions this morning.

The Leader of the Opposition said very clearly, "standard commercial lease."

Our partners, our tenants, are making serious investments to the site, building a brand new stage that will be enjoyed all year round, as opposed to just the summer period, a Therme water park and wellness facility, which will also have 12 acres of public realm space, and 43 acres of public realm space together, and contributing to the maintenance and upkeep of the site, which you failed to do.

Take responsibility for your actions.

Interjections.

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

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

Start the clock.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, the government's announcement to move the Ontario Science Centre was a shock to everyone except those in the deal room. It is anything but transparent. The government did not consult with the people of our community. They did not consult with the city of Toronto or the TRCA, who jointly own the land.

The science centre is an important cultural and educational hub in North York, serving thousands of local students with programming and employing many people in my riding of Don Valley West and neighbouring Don Valley East. Moving it to Ontario Place means moving jobs and programming out of our community. Our community will be lessened culturally and economically with the loss of the Ontario Science Centre. This decision, made in secret, shows the lack of regard this government has for the people of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park.

Can the Premier please explain how our community will benefit from this move and how much benefit will go to the developers who advised him to do this?

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

Hon. Neil Lumsden: This is a great opportunity for me to, after having a number of consultations with the chair and the CEO, remind everyone that if you haven't been there lately, the science centre is open for business. There

are a lot of great things going on there—school visits and opportunities for people to revisit, if they haven't.

There's usually a lot of conversation around a thing that people don't understand because they haven't really examined it.

But let me tell you this: When we talk about a potential world-class stage down at Ontario Place, it's unbelievable. And then, all the conversations I've had with people across our province in tourism—

Interjections.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: So the one thing that really bothers me about this, when I hear the conversation back and forth and ongoing while I'm still speaking, is the fact that it sounds like members in the NDP are against tourism. Really? All those people across our province who make a living, who provide income—are against tourism development. I'm just shocked.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. Roads, highways and other critical transportation infrastructure are vital to ensuring that our economy remains strong and productive.

Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's transportation networks were neglected. In fact, Highway 33, known as the Loyalist Parkway, which spans across the southeastern portion of my riding and connects at Main Street in the village of Bath, would greatly benefit from improvements. But this is just one example. There are plenty of roads and bridges in municipalities all across the province that are desperately in need of upgrades.

Our government must continue to prioritize investments in transportation infrastructure that will keep our communities moving safely and efficiently every day.

Can the associate minister please explain how our government is supporting local communities, local municipalities to revitalize their transportation infrastructure?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm excited to answer that question because it's a great one from a member who does great work in his riding.

I'm glad to inform that member that, in fact, two weeks ago, our government announced \$30 million in Connecting Links funding to support municipal road and bridge repairs in 21 municipalities across the province. That means that we're dedicating just over \$317,000 to help revamp Main Street in Bath village, in that great member's riding, so folks can get around and connect to Highway 33 with ease.

Our Connecting Links Program provides funding for up to 90% of eligible project costs to enhance municipal roads and bridges that run through communities and connect to provincial highways. With this funding, we'll make sure it makes it easier to connect people to jobs, support movement of goods and services, and to generate economic growth—and to take the House leader down to celebrate the Leafs cup win when that happens later this year.

Speaker, just like Leafs fans after last night's win, Ontarians are buzzing because, unlike the NDP and the Liberals, this government is getting transportation done.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister. It's terrific to hear how the government's investments will restore vital transportation arteries in communities across Ontario; specifically, in the village of Bath.

But there's still more work to do when it comes to expanding our transportation networks. We know that clogged roads and gridlocked highways impact individuals, families and businesses, resulting in delays and inconveniences that waste time and money. Road congestion prevents transportation trucks from moving our goods efficiently, especially on the 401 in eastern Ontario, costing more than \$11 billion annually to Ontario's economy.

Ontarians are counting on this government to continue to implement projects that will connect more people to jobs, housing and economic opportunities all across the province.

Can the associate minister please elaborate on how our government will deliver on the promised plan for these transportation infrastructure improvements?

Hon. Stan Cho: I'd love to elaborate, because this province is booming and the population is growing by hundreds of thousands of people a year. That means the time to invest in our transportation infrastructure is now. Despite the heckling of the NDP for some reason, we're going to do exactly that—\$27.9 billion over the next 10 years to expand highways and revitalize our transportation infrastructure.

From the twinning of the QEW Garden City Skyway bridge to expanding the 401 from Pickering eastwards, and of course the widening of Highways 11, 17 and 3, our government is building transportation throughout the province. A lot is getting built over the next decade, with so much happening both now and in the coming years. In fact, in the next fiscal year alone, we are investing \$3.2 billion to expand and repair provincial highways and bridges. Then, over the next four years, the Ontario highways program will focus on more than 600 expansion and rehabilitation projects.

1130

Through all of this work, we are not only building this province for the people of today, for those moving here in the future—that includes Habs fans, like the member who asked that question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

MPP Jamie West: My question is to the Premier.

ACTRA artists are gig workers. Almost a year ago, the ad agencies who hire these artists demanded a 60% cut to rates, they demanded an end to retirement contributions, and they demanded to end their benefits. Then, instead of bargaining, the ad agencies locked out ACTRA members and hired scab replacement workers.

My question is, will the Premier commit to passing the NDP's Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act, which would prevent the use of replacement workers and protect the bargaining rights of workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, look at the NDP. They didn't care about ACTRA workers when they had the balance of power.

Let me just explain for the NDP, let me explain for members opposite what "the balance of power" means. It means you can decide whether a government is in power or is not in power.

You had the ability between 2011—to put the Liberal government out of its misery and bring back hope and prosperity to the province of Ontario.

More importantly, they had the power to bring back this legislation, when they could have guaranteed that it passed. But they didn't do it.

Now, when the people of the province of Ontario have reduced them to a small rump in the Legislative Assembly, they bring forward legislation that they say is a priority—but it's just not a priority when they had the opportunity to pass it.

Instead, what we're doing is, we're giving the workers of this province the opportunity to succeed. And do you know what that has resulted in? Six hundred thousand jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question.

MPP Jamie West: There's not a worker here who believes what he's saying.

I'll tell you what happened, because I was sitting right there. When I was on strike and scabs were crossing my picket line, the Liberal Party counted the number of Conservative members—and my Liberal MPP hid in the backroom while the Conservatives voted down anti-scab.

If they really believe in anti-scab, they could pass it today or table their own.

For more than 60 years, ACTRA performers have made commercials through the National Commercial Agreement.

Instead of bargaining, advertising agencies have locked out the workers. A lot of the government's advertising is done by ad agencies like FCB and Leo Burnett, and they are using scab replacement workers for crown corporation ads—like the OLG and Metrolinx master band. ACTRA's members have been locked out for nearly a year. For nearly a year, they've been turning their backs on these workers.

Will the Premier commit today that the government of Ontario and the crown corporations that are accountable to it will not use replacement scab workers in any Ontario government-funded ads? Will you have these workers' backs? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: What the member fails to say is that when the NDP then had the opportunity to support a motion of non-confidence that the Progressive Conservative opposition brought forward, they voted in favour, to keep the Liberal government in power. If the member was so angry, if the NDP were so passionate about that vote, then why didn't you take them down? You could have saved the people of this province billions of dollars. Instead, you supported them and—

Interjections.

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

The government House leader will come to order. The member for Sudbury will come order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is warned. The member for Sudbury is warned.

Once again, I think for the fourth time, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock.

The next question.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. David Smith: My question is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

This week, most students in post-secondary education programs will be close to finishing their academic year before the start of their summer break. While completing another academic year—and for some, their degrees—is a call for celebration, we know that the exam session can be a stressful time for students and can impact their mental health. That is why it is so important for students to have mental health resources on campus that are accessible and available to them whenever they need it the most.

Speaker—

Interjections.

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

I'm just going to remind members that after they've been warned, if I have to speak to them again, they will be named. That applies to everybody.

Start the clock.

I apologize to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. David Smith: Can the minister please explain how our government is continuing to make mental health supports available for our university and college students across the province?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the great member from Scarborough Centre for raising this important issue.

As minister and as a mother of three university-aged daughters, I personally understand how important it is to support post-secondary students' mental health and create the right conditions to help young people succeed in their post-secondary journey.

I'm proud to say that since day one, our government has taken action to support a healthy Ontario—and that includes in our 2023 budget, where we outlined our continued investment of \$26.5 million in mental health

supports for post-secondary students across the province. That ensures more social workers, psychologists and support staff on our campuses and virtually to support our students when they need it most. Because we know that the post-secondary education journey can sometimes be tough, our students deserve to have the resources they need to navigate those challenges and ultimately thrive and excel.

Speaker, our government understands that improving mental health supports for our post-secondary students to succeed will create a stronger and healthier Ontario.

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

Mr. David Smith: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer. It's great to hear that more funding is being provided for mental health support workers on our campuses.

However, we know that there are still many students who require timely help throughout the summer, and unfortunately they cannot always access the help they need—especially those who have returned to their home community after an academic year concludes.

The reality is that mental health supports are needed both on- and off-campus and that these supports are needed beyond the regular school year. Young people across our province need access to resources that understand their unique needs and will support them in their personal mental health journey.

Can the minister please elaborate on what mental health services are in place to support students year-round?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for their concern over the mental health supports of Ontario's post-secondary students.

We have been investing in programs that support students wherever and whenever they need help, because we want them to know that they are not alone and that no one should ever suffer in silence. This includes supporting initiatives like Good2Talk, a mental health helpline solely for post-secondary students, that is available 24/7/365, through phone, text or even live chat.

We also support a new virtual mental health app called Get A-Head, which is available to students at all publicly assisted institutions across Ontario and that they can access whenever they feel like they need help or someone to talk to.

And these supports are on top of those offered on campuses at our colleges, universities and Indigenous institutes.

Speaker, through these investments, we will continue to bolster mental health supports at institutions to support students throughout their post-secondary journey and set them up for success.

To all the students out there, including my own daughters, with exams coming up and beyond: Always prioritize your physical and emotional well-being.

I send all students best wishes on their upcoming exams.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My constituent Angela recently received a 20% rent hike, totalling over \$400 a month, which is something that she and her fiancé did not budget for and simply cannot afford.

Yesterday, this government voted down a motion from the NDP to bring real rent control to all buildings.

What is the Premier going to do to protect Angela and her neighbours from this unaffordable, yet legal, rent hike?

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for her question, because it does allow us to highlight some of the work that our government is doing, especially through Bill 97.

Speaker, as we've heard many times before, two years ago, we had record housing starts. By doing that, we are building more housing for everybody, right across this province. The best part about that is that purpose-built rental is being built.

But do you know what? I'm not going to take any lessons from the NDP. I'd just like to remind everyone once again that in 1992, when the people of Ontario entrusted them to be the majority government, they had rent control at 6%. Inflation was only at about 1.4%. How do they justify that? That is their record, and that is what they did. They say no every time this government puts something forward. They say no to requiring landlords to make efforts to negotiate a repayment agreement with the tenant before the Landlord and Tenant Board, to make it easier so that nobody has to get evicted—

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Under this government, rents are now increasing in Ontario by 20%, 30%, 40% and 50%. These are stories I hear every day, every week. There are over 30,000 tenants who now are in rent arrears, over 32,000 backlog cases at the Landlord and Tenant Board, over 85,000 Toronto households who are on the wait-list for social housing.

A one-bedroom apartment in the city of Toronto now costs over \$3,000 a month, a historic high, under this government.

If not real rent control, what exactly is the Premier going to do to stop rent gouging in Ontario?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Speaker, once again, I just want to highlight some of the things that we are doing for renters in this province. Once again, as they continue to say no over and over again, it is this Premier, this minister and this government who are standing shoulder to shoulder with tenants across Ontario as we take decisive action to strengthen tenant protections and remedies. That's why Ontario rental housing starts have gone up once again, with records in the beginning of this year.

That's why Ontario is the number one jurisdiction for people to come to live. This is the choice of people from across the world. This is the choice from all great businesses—to come here and to start a business, to grow a

business. The Minister of Economic Development is bringing amazing companies here. We need the housing for the people who are going to work there. We're building the infrastructure, the communities, the hospitals, and we're reducing red tape to make sure it all gets done.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning breast cancer surgery wait times. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

There being no further business this morning, this House—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the member from Peterborough for this generous donation of a sweater, and I look forward to the rematch next year, when I will return it to him.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for St. Catharines has a point of order.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Unfortunately, when we were introducing our guests this morning, my guest wasn't in, so I want to introduce him now, for the record. The chair of the Hockey Diversity Alliance, Akim Aliu, was here this morning.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I wish to take the opportunity to introduce one of my staff members. Mr. Chris Dopking has joined us in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to introduce to this House our two amazing Deputy Solicitor Generals, Karen Ellis and Mario Di Tommaso, together with leadership from the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I'm also delighted to introduce members from the minister's office of the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to at this time introduce Mr. Creed Atkinson, chief of staff to the Minister of the Solicitor General. He's also joined by his support staff as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'd like to introduce Jennifer Kagan and her husband, Philip Viater, who are here to observe the introduction of a bill.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's my pleasure to introduce two amazing community builders in beautiful Beaches—East York, Nathaniel Fox-Pappas and Dylan McNeil. It's their first time in this gorgeous chamber, and I wholeheartedly welcome them here at their home.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

STRENGTHENING SAFETY AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA MODERNISATION DE LA JUSTICE

Mr. Kerzner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare / *Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives au système judiciaire, à la prévention et à la protection contre l'incendie ainsi qu'au bien-être des animaux.*

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 Solicitor General care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: It's a privilege to rise in the House today to introduce Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. We know that a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario. That's why, if passed, this bill will help us continue to build safer communities by modernizing community safety and justice legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this moves us closer to bringing the Community Safety and Policing Act into force, establishing a modern and robust policing legislative framework that advances transparency and accountability in law enforcement and supporting everyone that keeps Ontario safe. I look forward to discussing the many aspects of this proposed legislation in the House in the weeks to come.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT (VAPING IS NOT FOR KIDS), 2023 LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE (LE VAPOTAGE N'EST PAS POUR LES ENFANTS)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 with respect to activities related to vapour products /

Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en ce qui concerne des activités liées aux produits de vapotage.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely, Speaker. The bill is called Vaping is not for Kids. It does six things. First, it prohibits the promotion of vapour products—no more promotion. Second, it bumps the age from 19 to 21 for people to buy vapour products. Third, it limits the flavour of the vaping products to tobacco only. Fourth, it makes sure that vaping products can only be sold in specialty vape stores. There are special provisions for small rural communities and northern communities. Fifth, it mandates taxing on vapour products. The tax revenue generated would help with the sixth part, which is to do public education about vaping. And the sixth one is to ask Ontario Health to prepare an annual report to the minister respecting youth vaping that sets out information and recommendations to assist the minister in developing policies to reduce the immensely high amount of youth in Ontario who vape.

PETITIONS

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

M. Guy Bourgouin: Vous le savez: l'hiver n'est pas fini. Je veux remercier Gerald Rousseau pour la pétition intitulée « Pour améliorer l'entretien hivernal des routes du Nord.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Considérant que les routes 11 et 17 jouent un rôle essentiel dans le développement et la prospérité du nord de l'Ontario;

« Considérant que l'ancien gouvernement libéral a initié la privatisation de l'entretien des routes, et que le gouvernement conservateur actuel n'a pas su améliorer les conditions routières hivernales au nord de l'Ontario;

« Considérant que sur les routes du Nord, les taux de blessures et de décès par habitant sont le double de ces mêmes taux correspondant aux routes du sud de la province;

« Considérant que la classification utilisée actuellement par le ministère des Transports pour l'entretien hivernal des routes a un impact négatif sur la sécurité des personnes qui empruntent les routes du Nord;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de mettre en oeuvre les mesures suivantes :

« —classifier toutes les autoroutes série 400, l'autoroute Queen Elizabeth, ainsi que les routes 11 et 17, comme des routes de catégorie 1;

« —exiger que la chaussée des routes de catégorie 1 soit complètement dégagée dans les huit heures suivant une chute de neige. »

Je supporte cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je vais la donner à Christopher pour qu'il l'amène à la table des greffiers.

HEALTH CARE

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

“Health Care: Not for Sale....”

“Whereas Ontarians get health care based on their needs, not their ability to pay;

“Whereas the Ford government wants to privatize our health care system;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals and will download costs to patients;”

1510

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to immediately stop all plans to privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 to help recruit, retain, return and respect health care workers with better pay and better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario;

“—incentivizing health care professionals to choose to live and work in northern Ontario.”

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

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition titled “Vulnerable Persons Alert.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

“Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

“Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and Mississauga and several others have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

“Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a ‘Draven Alert’ and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for ‘Love’s Law’, for vulnerable people who go missing;

“Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing vulnerable people locally and regionally;

“Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

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

“Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Liam to bring to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer from McMaster University for circulating these petitions across the province. It’s a petition to raise social assistance rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: only \$733 for individuals on OW and (soon) \$1,227 for ODSP;

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

“Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates continue struggling to live during a period of alarming inflation”—I can only imagine;

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I hope we can end legislated poverty. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Leonard to bring to the table.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Marcel Lamarche from Azilda in my riding for this petition.

“Let’s Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant.

“Whereas people in the north are not getting the same access to health care because of the high cost of travel and accommodations;

“Whereas by refusing to raise the Northern Health Travel Grant (NHTG) rates, the Ford government is putting a massive burden on northern Ontarians who are sick;

“Whereas the price of gas costs more in northern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly “to establish a committee with a mandate to fix and improve the NHTG;

“This NHTG advisory committee would bring together health care providers in the north, as well as recipients of

the NHTG to make recommendations to the Minister of Health that would improve access to health care in northern Ontario through adequate reimbursement of travel costs.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to Lazo to bring to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to raise social assistance rates. I would like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer and people who were on the front lawn today to sign this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,227 for ODSP;

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

“Whereas the recent small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Akshitha to bring to the Clerk.

OPP DETACHMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Jamie Restoule from Dokis First Nation in my riding for these petitions.

“Keep the Noëlville OPP Detachment Open....

“Whereas insufficient communications 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, Killamey 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 as follows:

“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, will affix my name to it and ask Liam to bring it to the Clerk.

FERRY SERVICE

MPP Jamie West: This is a petition for the Wolfe Island and Glenora ferry workers.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Wolfe Island ferry and Glenora ferry have had serious service disruptions due to a staffing crisis created by the Ontario government; and

“Whereas residents and visitors to Wolfe Island have been trapped on the island for up to 12 hours with no way to leave, even for emergencies or work; and

“Whereas Glenora ferry has had a reduced schedule during this year’s busy tourism season, creating hours of lineups and delays for passengers; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) ferry workers are drastically underpaid in comparison to the rest of the marine industry, causing recruitment and retention issues; and

“Whereas instead of paying competitive wages and hiring more permanent staff, MTO has contracted out the work to Reliance Offshore, an out-of-province, private temporary staffing agency, which charges up to twice as much hourly as ministry staff earn; and

“Whereas contracting out the work is a waste of our public funds on a stopgap solution that doesn’t provide long-term stability to our ferry system;

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

“(1) Fix our ferries—stop the service disruptions and reductions caused by ministry understaffing.

“(2) Repeal Bill 124, which has imposed a three-year wage cut on already underpaid ferry workers during high inflation, and pay them fair, competitive wages”; and finally,

“(3) End the outrageously expensive contracts with private temporary staffing agencies and hire permanent Ministry of Transportation ferry workers to work and live in our communities instead.”

I support this petition, as do many people. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Maya for the table.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joanne Lalonde from Azilda in my riding for these petitions.

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury....

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario;

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family;

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physiotherapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

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

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Christine Fay from Highway 144 in my riding for these petitions.

1520

“Make Highway 144 at Marina Road Safe....”

“Whereas residents of Levack, Onaping and Cartier, as well as individuals who travel Highway 144, are concerned about the safety of a stretch of Highway 144 in the vicinity of Marina Road and would like to prevent further accidents and fatalities; and

“Whereas three more accidents occurred in summer 2021 resulting in severe injuries, diesel ... spilling into the waterways, the closure of Highway 144 for several hours delaying traffic and stranding residents”—and, unfortunately, two more accidents have happened since she signed the petition;

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has completed a review of this stretch of Highway 144, has made some improvements and has committed to re-evaluate and ensure the highway is safe;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “that the Ministry of Transportation review Highway 144 at Marina Road immediately and commit to making it safe, as soon as possible....”

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

TAXATION

Mr. Billy Pang: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal government is increasing the escalated carbon tax by 14% on April 1, 2023;

“Whereas a carbon tax cost increase will put more pressure on consumers who are already struggling with inflation;

“Whereas we call on the federal government to stop the carbon tax, which is a tax hike that Ontarians and Canadians cannot afford;

“Whereas the government of Ontario is helping to reduce the cost of living by keeping taxes low, freezing and eliminating licence plate renewal fees and scrapping the requirements to have licence plate stickers for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles, and building on these measures in Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023. The government continues to help Ontarians with the cost of living;

“Whereas we call on the Ontario government to urge the federal government to halt the carbon tax increase that will raise the cost of everything;

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

“To support the passage of Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023.”

I support this petition. I affix my name and pass it to page Christopher.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REDUCING INEFFICIENCIES ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENTS), 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES INEFFICACITÉS (MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR LES INFRASTRUCTURES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I'm happy to rise for third reading of Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. I would like to start off by acknowledging how much progress our province has made. In the face of a global pandemic, economic uncertainty and labour challenges, our government has persevered. We have delivered better jobs for Ontario workers and their families. We have seen thousands more people trained for rewarding careers in the skilled trades through government investments and initiatives, which have helped create meaningful pathways for students to access learning. We have provided cost savings for businesses through actions such as lowering payroll costs, providing relief from electricity prices and taxes, and cutting red tape. We have delivered more public transit across the entire province, and we have embarked on one of the most ambitious infrastructure plans in the world to expand hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools, roads, bridges, highways and much, much more.

Mr. Speaker, our government is getting shovels in the ground to build the projects that matter most to the people across Ontario. This includes critical health care projects like support for a new, state-of-the-art acute-care hospital in Windsor and Essex county to replace aging infrastructure, adding more hospital beds and expanding services in the region; and expanding Scarborough Health Network's Birchmount site with a new in-patient tower and expanded emergency department to reduce wait times, improve patient flow and update aging infrastructure.

It also includes exciting transit projects, like the historic Ontario Line. Madam Speaker, the Ontario Line would provide rapid transit connecting more than 40 other travel options, including GO train lines, existing TTC subway and streetcar lines and the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit. We are continuing to transform the GO Transit rail network into a modern, reliable and fully integrated

rapid-transit network, including electrifying core segments to bring two-way, all-day services.

Madam Speaker, this means commuters will be able to get where they need to go much more seamlessly and faster.

I'm happy to say that residents across Ontario are already reaping the benefits of our investments in GO Transit. For example, major upgrades like additional tracks, new platforms, parking spots and pedestrian walkways were recently completed at the Unionville GO station. Major construction at Rutherford GO station has also been completed with a new 7,000-square-foot station building to provide more seamless connections for Vaughan residents.

We're also investing in planning and construction of highway expansion and rehabilitation projects across the province. This includes Highway 413, a new 400-series highway and a transit corridor across Halton, Peel and York regions to keep people and goods moving while reducing congestion. And we are continuing the next phase of construction for the new Highway 17 between Kitchener and Guelph. This will provide relief to the gridlocked Highway 401 and connect the fast-growing urban centres of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph.

Madam Speaker, we're also seizing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build vibrant, mixed-use communities across transit stations across the greater Golden Horseshoe. These transit-oriented communities, also known as TOCs, will improve transit access and bring more housing, jobs, retail and public amenities within a short distance of transit.

That's not all, Madam Speaker. We are redeveloping Ontario Place into a world-class, year-round destination with family-friendly entertainment, parkland, waterfront access and more. Just last week, Premier Ford, Minister Surma and Minister Lumsden announced we are relocating the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place. Exciting, science-based educational programs will be delivered in a new, modern, state-of-the-art facility and will also be expanded into the Cinesphere and Pods. Madam Speaker, we are building a science centre for a new generation.

We are also nearing an agreement with Live Nation to build a brand-new concert venue that will welcome fans year-round. Building on close to 30 years of memories, the new amphitheatre will welcome 20,000 fans to an all-season venue, increasing its capacity while also protecting its amphitheatre lawns.

That is not all, Madam Speaker. Our government has also shared exciting recommended design concepts for the future public spaces, including on the east island and the expanded shoreline of the west island. Across the site, approximately 43 acres of enhanced public parkland and public space is proposed. This is seven acres larger than Trinity Bellwoods Park and all free and accessible to visitors to enjoy.

We are making progress in bringing more to Ontario Place. Repair work has already started on the iconic Cinesphere, Pod complex and bridges. This spring, we expect to begin construction to bring the site services up

to modern standards, including the water, sewer, gas and electrical systems.

1530

Madam Speaker, these are just some examples of more than 4,000 projects happening in Ontario. We are getting shovels in the ground and consistently making strategic infrastructure investments that will make a difference to families and businesses across our province, because, Madam Speaker, by 2041 Ontario's population is expected to grow by approximately 30%. And our infrastructure needs are anticipated to grow with the population increase. We are moving ahead on our plan to build, and we will not stop.

Our government has always been open and transparent with the people of Ontario. We know that these are challenging times, but by working harder, smarter and more efficiently, we are continuing to build on our previous commitments. We are consistently exploring ways to improve the quality of life for people across Ontario, and in every corner of our province, our government is getting the job done. Our government is ensuring people and their families are being cared for and that our communities are supported for decades to come. We are tackling the current economic environment so we can continue to deliver on our promise to build Ontario.

Madam Speaker, that is why today I am proud to share more about our government's next steps in our plan, Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. If passed, Bill 69 would amend the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011, nine other acts and the Environmental Assessment Act, EAA.

This bill contains two initiatives that are part of this plan. The first proposed initiative, if passed, would help our government better maintain and manage real estate. We are doing this by establishing a framework to remove or modify the real estate authority of 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the ability to oversee and manage real estate property previously under the control of the prescribed entities. The second initiative, if passed, would help bring much-needed efficiency to the Environmental Assessment Act, all while ensuring continued environmental oversight. This initiative will allow the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, on a project-specific basis, to issue an order waiving or altering the 30-day waiting period following completion of a class environmental assessment, or class EA, process.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to briefly explain why these two initiatives are significant to the people of Ontario. Our government knows that the people of Ontario want and deserve a responsible, efficient government. That's why we have been looking at ways to help increase efficiencies while saving taxpayer dollars and boosting the economy. Through evidence-based research, we have found that the benefits of a centralized real estate model is one way to do that. Madam Speaker, our government is in a unique position to bring this innovative approach to life.

Currently, a holistic approach is needed for decision-making and managing of Ontario's real estate, which is

one of the largest real estate portfolios in Canada. Provincial oversight, as a result, is distributed among five ministries and among 54 entities. Each of these entities have their own process and own protocols relating to real estate management. The research is clear, Madam Speaker: Numerous third-party reviews, academic journals and news articles have echoed the benefits of a centralized real estate model. Each of these reports have found that the centralized model can bring numerous benefits, such as reduced spending, more savings, a more effective life cycle management process and overall alignment with enterprise-wide objectives. This is why a holistic approach for real estate decision-making is necessary.

This is also why, Madam Speaker, we are bringing forward Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. If passed, Bill 69 would establish an initial framework to remove or modify the real estate authority of 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the control of real estate property previously under the control of the prescribed entities. Madam Speaker, by creating a framework to centralize the real estate authority of these 14 entities as a first step, these entities can focus and invest more on their individual mandates while continuing to provide services that people across Ontario need and deserve.

Madam Speaker, our government's proposed measures would also move towards ensuring that real estate is used effectively by having all real estate matters overseen by a single authority. This means that multiple entities would no longer need to handle real estate tasks and processes. This would lead to several other benefits like less redundancies and duplication of efforts and fewer levels of review and approvals. In addition, our government would be in a better position to reduce red tape and to create more efficient processes. This would be the first step in allowing government to increase operating and fiscal efficiency.

The second initiative, as I mentioned, will help some critical construction projects get built faster without compromising environmental standards and protections through the amended Environmental Assessment Act.

Madam Speaker, the government is modernizing its almost 50-year-old environmental assessment process that is too slow, too costly and too burdensome. This has the potential to help projects get built faster so the people of Ontario can access the infrastructure they need and deserve. We have made it clear: Our government is taking action. We are taking another meaningful step towards reducing inefficiencies and improving oversight through the introduction of this bill. If passed, this bill has the potential to bring numerous benefits to our province. It would cut red tape by removing and modernizing outdated regulations, save taxpayers money and enhance fiscal management, resulting in cost savings that could potentially be spent on the priorities that matter most to the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, not just that: This bill and these measures will definitely boost the economy. That is why we are continuing to take necessary steps to unlock our province's economic potential and deliver better jobs and

provide cost savings for families and businesses across Ontario. We'll get shovels in the ground to build highways, hospitals, transit and other key projects that will boost our economy and improve our day-to-day lives. We made a promise to continue to do everything possible to strive, build and forge ahead with a focus on protecting Ontario's long-term growth, economy and its people, and our government is delivering.

As the government and people across the province navigate the post-pandemic world, it is our responsibility to ensure that we are laying a strong foundation for a resilient economy. This means creating good jobs, lower taxes, a competitive business environment, a skilled workforce, safe and strong communities, high-quality health care and convenient transit options. But we must look for additional ways to improve the quality of life for people across this province. And we know that we need to do more to keep the progress we have already made and build Ontario for the future.

Part of building Ontario for the future includes Bill 69's measures that, if passed, would help address issues of regulatory burdens and red tape while also helping to save time and, of course, save taxpayers money. The changes introduced through Bill 69, if passed, present a new approach to reducing inefficiencies. It would help our government cut red tape, save taxpayers money and streamline processes so we can continue to practise good governance on behalf of the people of Ontario.

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This bill, with the changes we are proposing, is important to the future of our province. It's about strong leadership by constantly looking at ways we can take the burden off taxpayers while we fulfill our mandate to build up our province. It is key to strengthening communities and to ensure prosperity today and prosperity for years in the future, Madam Speaker. And our government is confident that this bill, if passed, would boost the economy and economic development opportunities across the province.

The people of Ontario deserve a responsible, efficient government. Together with initiatives from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, this bill, if passed, would do just that. Madam Speaker, the changes that our government is bringing forward would help build Ontario's economy and prosperity. I hope the members on both sides support this bill, save taxpayers money, reduce red tape and help boost our economy.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Schedule 1, which you're proposing in this bill, will allow the environment minister to waive the 30-day waiting period that is currently required following the environmental assessment. We also know that the Ontario courts have twice found the Ford government violating the Environmental Bill of Rights. So I ask you: Why should we trust you when it comes to the environment?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Madam Speaker, the EA

process is not being compromised. The proposed legislative amendments are minor and will not have any impact on the existing class EAs and/or environmental protection. The EA process requires proponents to assess potential environmental impacts, identify mitigation measures and consult with Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders before the project can proceed. Again, this is not being jeopardized.

Madam Speaker, to be clear, the environmental assessment standards will remain in place.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park for his thoughtful and careful remarks in regard to Bill 69. The Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, is indeed, as the member’s thoughtful remarks indicate, about being fiscally prudent, saving taxpayer dollars, cutting red tape and practising good governance. The proposed legislation is indeed another step toward modernizing government process and oversight.

I want to ask the member, then, through you, Speaker: How is this government, with this proposed legislation, keeping the environment top of mind while reducing inefficiencies?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member for that question. As I mentioned in my remarks, Madam Speaker, the EA process is something that’s not being compromised. In fact, I just want to highlight that the whole process requires the province to go through certain steps.

Assess potential environmental impacts: That still remains in place.

Identify mitigation measures: That still remains in place.

Consult the public, Indigenous communities and stakeholders: That still remains in place.

And the public consultation from the get-go, throughout the whole consultation: That still remains in place.

Madam Speaker, after the total completion of the EA process, on a case-by-case basis, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks would have authority to waive a 30-day period if all the environmental process has been completed.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I have some submissions from stakeholders who presented at committee. The Escarpment Corridor Alliance says, “Therefore, we urge the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to preserve the 30-day waiting period for class environmental assessment projects.

“The 30-day waiting period for class environmental assessment projects is essential because it prevents short-term and monetary incentives from impacting decisions which may result in ... consequences.”

Mississaugas of Scugog Island: “We urge the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to preserve the 30-day waiting period for” EA “projects.

“The 30-day waiting period for” the EA “projects helps mitigate the pressure of short-term and monetary incentives from impacting decisions with long-term consequences....” This is a repeat.

And then here, we have the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: “We are opposed to these proposed amendments that would provide the ability to eliminate, waive or alter the 30-day period....”

The Auditor General has come out heavily against this as well. Why does the member think that waiving the 30-day waiting period is a good idea for the people of Ontario and our future?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. As I mentioned in the earlier remarks, we will continue to consult with Indigenous communities. The EA process requires proponents to assess the potential environmental impacts, identify mitigation measures and consult with Indigenous communities and public stakeholders before the project can proceed, and this is not changing. Indigenous consultation will continue, and in fact, Indigenous communities would continue to have the ability to request a section 16 order, which is a ministerial order requiring a higher level of environmental assessment or imposing additional conditions on a project before the proponent may proceed.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: There are apparently 14 different agencies to help governments optimize space. They allow our government to achieve their principles. How will the centralization of this real estate help our priorities as a government?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: That was a great question. Centralizing the real estate oversight of these 14 different agencies will help the government to optimize office space and reduce red tape. As we all know, Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios in Canada and has been working towards establishing a more holistic approach to manage its real estate. This is not just to save taxpayers money strategically; it will also invest these savings back into market inflation and back into capital repair and rehabilitation. So this bill not just streamlines the process to manage real estate, to cut red tape, but also invests that money back into the economy.

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

MPP Jamie West: One of the things that I don’t understand, and I mean this in a genuine way, is that the bill seems to be solving a complaint the AG had made about Infrastructure Ontario not taking good care of their properties, but the solution to this is to have more properties under the care of Infrastructure Ontario. I fully don’t understand this. Sometimes, with questions, we throw out something that’s a left hook, but I do not understand how a government agency that isn’t doing a good job is rewarded by seeing if it can do a better job with more responsibility. Can the member explain why this is a good solution?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Our government got re-elected on a mandate to build Ontario. We are building hospitals, bridges, transit options, accessible transit across the GTA, including transit-oriented communities, and this bill will help reduce red tape. As I mentioned, this legislation, if passed, would remove and modify real estate authority for the 14 entities, and it will help taxpayers' dollars. We can put these savings back into inflation, back into the economy, back into rehabilitation and repair. That's exactly what the Minister of Infrastructure is doing to repair and redevelop Ontario Place.

We will continue to build Ontario, and we'll continue to put tax dollars back into people's pockets.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have time for another question.

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Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Can the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park please explain how formalizing the ability—if this legislation is passed, what it might mean for standard projects that occur across the province? I'm thinking specifically of projects that would create new municipal road or stormwater infrastructure. Obviously we have a plan to build 1.5 million homes, and as we've said often, it's about creating the environment for that to occur, which means reducing red tape and regulation. This Bill 69 and the proposals contained therein, what would it mean to standard projects that occur across the province in this regard?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park with 45 seconds.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thanks to the member from Durham for that question. When it comes to contractors or builders, it's not just about a 30-day period. Sometimes when they have to wait—after the environmental consultation has been fully completed, with all the checklists, they have to wait for 30 days. It's not just 30 days; it could be a season that they had to wait. Whether they're building a municipal road or they're building any other project across this province, once they complete the consultation, we really want them to get things done by building things faster.

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

MPP Jamie West: I'm looking forward to talking about government Bill 69. Before I do, though, I want to wish Laura Belanger a happy 105th birthday. And I want to send my regrets to Laura because I was supposed to go present her with a scroll on Friday in Sudbury, but I had a cold, so we sent her a handwritten note to let her know. But I did want to celebrate her birthday and recognize her here. I can't show the photo because that would be a prop, and we're not allowed to at Queen's Park, but if you go to Sudbury.com and look at Heidi Ulrichsen's article on her, there's a great photo of her. There is no way she's over 80. Wow—just amazing. So congratulations again. Happy birthday, Laura Belanger.

We're talking about Bill 69, Speaker. It has two schedules, and I'm going to talk primarily about the first one. If I have time, I'll get to the second one.

But I want to preface this by talking about the importance of environmental assessments. That's something that's near and dear to me in Sudbury. Sudbury, when they did the first moon landing, is where they trained astronauts, and the rumour at the time was that the reason they trained the astronauts there was because it looked like a moonscape. The environmental damage in Sudbury was so bad that there were barely any trees surviving. The rocks were scarred black as if it was the moon. In fact, growing up as a child, I thought that rocks naturally turn black when they're exposed to the air; that if you were to rub some soil off them, they would turn black, the same way that a pop can would start to rust if exposed to the environment. I had no idea that it was because of the pollution and the acid rain that had literally scarred the earth. NASA didn't train there because it looked like the moon; it was because they thought the rocks would be similar in structure. But you can see why most people literally around the world thought Sudbury was the training ground because of the environmental damage and it looked like a moonscape that no one could survive on.

If you fast forward to today—and this is a 50-year journey—the greening of Sudbury has absolutely changed that landscape. So I feel that people in Sudbury, having lived through that, from a time growing up, where I would watch my grandmother spit out SO₂, because it makes phlegm in your mouth, on the ground—it became a normal environment for people to breathe in so much SO₂, it caused phlegm that you had to spit it out in order to breathe. When you fast-forward to where there's green space, there's nature trails and there's wildlife coming back to the community, we understand the importance of environmental assessments and protecting the environment.

Now, the Conservatives do not have a great track record when it comes to the environment. They don't. Sometimes in opposition it seems like we're just pointing fingers and poking, but literally over the last four years, the last term, Speaker, their environmental policy was that they had a bill to encourage people to pick up litter one day a year. I've talked in the past about being involved with Beavers, Scouts and Cubs. When I was a little kid, which was a long time ago—I had hair back then—we used to go out and pick up litter one day a year. We are far beyond that when it comes to the environmental issue of the day. Much more needs to be done and it needs to be done immediately.

So, whenever we see legislation where the environment is minimized, where it's circumvented and where it's bypassed, we get concerned about that as New Democrats. Frankly, it's because the Conservative government doesn't have a good track record on it, and this has been shown over and over again.

If you look at what happened in the greenbelt—now, I think most people are aware, but just if anyone is watching this or reading Hansard, in the greenbelt, there are developers who bought some land that essentially was useless because you can't develop in the greenbelt. And from what I understand, they took out loans with very high interest rates. So imagine if you took out a loan on your

credit card. I don't know if it was that high, but it wasn't a subprime loan. And then, magically, by amazing coincidence, that land now is open for development. That feels like just an amazing coincidence. Man, are they really, really lucky. They're lucky enough to go to the Premier's daughter's wedding. They're lucky to build on this land.

What I'm being told, again and again, is, well, this is being developed because we have to build housing. I think we can build housing in a lot of places without carving up the green space. And saying that we're expanding the greenbelt doesn't make any sense to me either, because it isn't just land; it's wetland, it's marshland. It's important areas that help clean and cleanse the water that is essential to our environment.

Also, the ministry zoning orders, they were rammed through in the past, and that was rammed through despite local communities' opposition. And so, there was a lot of discussion during debate about listening to others and the consultation. But time and time again, we don't really see consultation. Last week, I had to phone many constituents in my riding about the budget because there was 24 hours for them to register. On the provincial budget, people had 24 hours, and they only knew they had 24 hours because MPPs from this side of the House—New Democrats—phoned them and told them.

The history, since I've been here—it's almost five years now—is that the Conservative government, under Doug Ford, they always know what's best. This is a father-knows-best government. They cannot wait to tell people in Ontario what is the right thing to do, and it doesn't matter how many times they make mistakes. It doesn't matter how many times they lose court cases. It doesn't matter how much money they spend in tax dollars fighting court cases that they lose.

I've been watching *Futurama* with my son and Zapp Brannigan has a line—it's got all kinds of funny lines. One of the lines, Zapp Brannigan—he's not an army leader, but a leader of an army. He says he's willing to send "wave after wave of ... men" to their deaths in pursuit of his cause, and I think of the government's perspective, when it comes to spending taxpayers' dollars on losing legal battles, in that same way. They don't care how much money of the taxpayers they waste on these losing tax battles, on these losing cases, because it's not their money and they don't care about being fiscally responsible with taxpayer money when it comes to this sort of thing.

More recently, we're finding out that they're spending \$650 million of public money to give away—to give away—a massive chunk of Ontario Place to a for-profit company based in Austria. And I forget the lease agreement, but it's more than 90 years—95?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's 94 years.

MPP Jamie West: Ninety-four years, and we're being told this is a standard lease agreement. I have a lease for my apartment; it is not for 94 years. I know sometimes there are leases that are given away, but they're generally for non-profit organizations. So a non-profit organization—sometimes a larger company with deeper pockets wants to help them make ends meet, wants to cover their

rent, and they will sign a lease for a penny, basically so the not-for-profit doesn't have to worry about that sort of rent. But that's not the case. This is a for-profit entity that we're going to hand \$650 million over to. It's not a company in Ontario. They have a location in Ontario, but this will help some people in Austria get very, very wealthy.

The other part of this is if we go back in time to the previous time the Conservative government was in government, it was under Mike Harris when they took Highway 407 that all of us had paid for, as taxpayers, and they sold that off as a really good idea. Now, very few people actually take the 407 anymore because it's so cost-prohibitive. But what we did as taxpayers is we paid for this land, we paid for the highway and the development, we paid for the infrastructure; and the Conservative government, under Mike Harris, sold it off to private entities that are not in Canada. They charge some of the highest rates—I know that my colleague looked it up before. We weren't sure if it was around the world, but we know it's definitely the highest rates in North America for people to access a toll highway.

This is what the Conservative government does really, really well: They take public infrastructure that we own and they give it to their wealthy friends for a song, and their wealthy friends get wealthier, wealthier and wealthier, but the public keeps paying more, more and more.

And people are watching this—if you're able to watch this, because a lot of people can't afford Internet. A lot of people can't afford bread; they can't afford rent. I heard this weekend that nine out of 10 parents are subsidizing their adult children when it comes to food and shelter—nine out of 10. I knew it was a lot of people. I used to say everyone knows somebody; the reason everyone knows somebody is because it's nine out of 10. Only four to five dentists agree you should chew Wrigley's gum. Nine out of 10 parents have to pay for their kids to eat or have shelter. This is what's going on.

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The government of the day, they love to blame the previous administration. I'm right with you. For 15 years, Liberals did a terrible job, 100%. But for half a decade, you've been in power, and things keep getting worse for people, to the point where they don't have food, they don't have shelter.

Let's look at schedule 1: the Environmental Assessment Act. The first thing that stands out to me is it allows the environment minister to waive a 30-day waiting period at the end of the consultation period. Yesterday, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about an abandoned mine in his area they were going to use for waste fill and that, at the end of it, there was a comment because everyone in that area knew there was a well in that area. They were concerned about the waste water, the spillage going into the well and affecting drinking water. Literally everyone knew this. The government didn't know, but everyone who lived there knew. If they had waived that consultation period, they would have poisoned drinking water for that community.

I shared a similar story from going to Nunavut. I can't remember the exact structure, but the Europeans were

looking for the Northwest Passage, and they were lost at sea in the north around Nunavut. Two ships went down, and more than 100 people lost their lives. More people lost their lives looking for these ships. They found one of them; they couldn't find the second one for almost 200 years.

One day, when they decided to consult with the Inuit people in Nunavut and ask them if they had any idea where the ship could be, they said, "Yes, it's probably here by this island, because this island, translated from Inuktitut, means, 'There is a ship here.'" The ship was almost perfectly preserved in the ice. It wasn't scattered and there were pieces; there was a whole ship there. But because of the arrogance of the people around there, who felt that they didn't need to consult, for nearly 200 years, they couldn't find this ship. People died from being lost or from hypothermia while searching for a ship where, if they had just listened to the people who lived there, they would have found that there was a ship beside an island called "There is a ship here." I know it's a funny story, but it's a good reminder of why consultation is important.

When you waive the 30-day waiting period—quite frankly, if we had changed the wording to this, "that the minister is going to waive it if everyone who consulted said there was no issue," if there was some way to do that, I'm all in favour of that. I don't want to necessarily drag out anything. But there are concerns when you don't have a consultation period.

I have concerns, as I said earlier, when we have amendments, when we have community consultations—or deputations, as we call them here, Speaker—when we only give 24 hours for people to respond, when we—last summer or the summer before, I can't remember; I apologize. When we're talking about farming and we ask farmers to come and speak to us in the middle of harvesting season, maybe we don't get all the best information that we need.

Consultation is important and effective. The worst mistake we can make, any of us as MPPs, really, quite frankly, is to think that we know more than the people of Ontario, because we don't. We all come from diverse backgrounds. We all know a little bit of our own areas, but we are not experts.

I was reminded of this. The first year I was elected, I went to a fundraiser at Science North. As a point of pride for myself, my first volunteer job was at Science North when it opened. I remember going to Sears with my mom to get black pants and everything and working as a volunteer, and it was a big deal for me. So growing up, my kids all went to Science North. I have three kids, four years apart, so it's basically a lifetime of going to Science North. My oldest son now brings his goddaughter to Science North.

So when I sat down with them and they said, "Do you know what Science North did?" I said, "Oh, yeah," and I told them my whole history with Science North. I went through the whole range of it. They started talking to me and, I bet you, Speaker, I knew 10% of what they did—10% for an institution that I'm always involved with that's in the centre of my city.

That's why consultation is important. It's a great reminder that we don't know everything, even though we think we do. There is a big danger of what you don't know that you don't know. I'm talking a lot about this because I want the government to listen to this, that consultation is important.

The other thing that the government really has to understand is that this isn't consultation. That's not consultation. They believe it is. I saw this with the mining bill. They presented the mining bill, and the day they presented it, they brought it to First Nations communities. They said, "Here's the bill, here's what we're doing." It's not consultation. It's not. There's actually a legal definition of consultation, and you need the time to consult, to review, to provide feedback and to get responses. They believe consultation is showing. I don't know if they're stuck in a time warp from the late 1960s, but that no longer exists when it comes to consultation. Consultation really is a meaningful dialogue where you present, you hear feedback, you answer questions and you work in between. It doesn't mean you're always going to 100% agree, but you are going to listen. What we're seeing now and what we've seen for the last decade from the Conservative government is not consultation but dictation: "This is what we're doing. This is what we're doing."

We see it right now in our municipalities when it comes to conservation authorities, where they're slowly moving conservation authorities out of their role and saying municipalities can pay for this. A lot of municipalities don't have the resources or skills to pay for this, and municipalities don't get to say no. They don't get to say no to this.

Really, schedule 1, in a nutshell, is going to make it easier for the Conservative government to ignore public input, and it's already really hard for the public to provide input. It's hard because there's very short notice for people to respond. It's hard because, when we do deputations, for example, it is always time-limited, time-allocated. It's always a very short amount of time: "We're going to get this over with as quick as we can. We're going to do amendments as quick as we can. We're going to ram it through as quick as we can."

We really should be listening to the public. That's who elected us, and sometimes we're going to hear—on this side of the House and on that side of the House, we're going to hear stuff that we don't want to hear, that does not align with what we thought, what we believed in, what we thought was the case, but we need to hear it because that's how we make the decisions.

Now, the courts—it sounds sometimes like, as New Democrats, we're just saying the Conservatives got it wrong, but, literally, they got it wrong twice. There are two good examples here where the courts found that the Conservative government violated the Environmental Bill of Rights two times.

The Environmental Bill of Rights guarantees the public's right to be notified and consulted on matters affecting the environment and also the right to have their comments considered prior to the government's decisions.

That's that consultation point where I was saying that you just don't tell, you have to listen and respond as well. That was your Environmental Bill of Rights. It took a while, actually, for the public to get this Environmental Bill of Rights to come forward. It's an important right that we have. Like all of our rights and freedoms, this is one of the ones that should be a core value. I'll tell you, if you guys are not paying attention already—sorry, Speaker. If they're not paying attention already, this is a major issue for any voter who is under 30 years old. It's a major issue for a lot of voters, but if you talk to young voters, environment is at the top of their list.

The Auditor General had warned the Conservative government they violated the environmental rights again by passing Bill 109 at third reading while public consultations were still under way. They passed it in the middle of consultations. That is how little they care about what the public has to say. It is a formality. They might as well not even show up at the consultations; they might as well just pass it. That's what this bill is saying: "We can pretend to wait for 30 days to review it, but we don't even want to pretend. We just want to go and get it done, because, honestly, the people of Ontario are not as smart as we are. The Conservative government is much smarter, so we don't need to listen to you, as Conservatives. What we need to do is get this done. We're going to get it done no matter what you think is right or wrong." They've been doing this all the way through.

I'll remind you, Speaker, they've been getting it done, and more and more people are in poverty. They've been getting it done, and more and more people are unable to afford rent. They've been getting it done, and more and more people working full-time are going to food banks—getting it done; people can't afford food. That plan, for five years, half a decade, is failing Ontario, and as much as they want to crow and say, "Why don't you support it and why don't you do this"—your plan is failing, that's why. It is not working, because, every single time, you vote it through anyways and life gets harder for the people of Ontario.

They violated it the first time. Then, in 2020, the Conservative government severely weakened the Environmental Assessment Act with amendments that they slipped into Bill 197. That was an omnibus bill. The bill was supposed to be about COVID-19, but it was about weakening the Environmental Assessment Act. I don't think anyone during COVID was thinking about the Environmental Assessment Act and wasn't expecting us all to be sitting around talking about it in a COVID bill, weakening the Environmental Assessment Act. They jammed that through the Legislature. They didn't have consultations because they didn't go to committee and they denied the public an opportunity to provide comments.

There are a whole list of issues—I'm going to run out of time. There's a whole list that the Narwhal has that I was going to read. I had them all here. I can't—it's a prop if I hold it up, but I was going to read them here. There are all kinds of examples where the Conservative government literally proved time and time again that they don't care

about the environment, they don't care about assessments and they don't care about consultations. What that says, when you don't care about the environment, you don't care about assessments, you don't care about consultations, is that you do not care about the people of Ontario. You simply don't care about them. They are not important to you. We've seen this time and again.

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They can stand there and they can talk about the election results as much as they want; there were very few people who came out to vote. But the reality is, they're not listening to those people at all. They're not listening to them. If you're a deep-pocketed developer, absolutely you've got their ear. You've got front-row seats to their kid's wedding. But if you're an average person struggling to make ends meet, they do not care. They don't.

I was speaking to injured workers earlier today. They asked why we couldn't fix WSIB. Speaker, it's because they don't care. ODSP protest outside the front office: New Democrats were there. No one from the Conservatives was there. You know why, Speaker? They don't care. They are bragging that a 5% increase is going to help—which doesn't help anyone on OW, who's even lower. But when you have the government providing money that is so low that people can't afford shelter through OW and ODSP, what they're telling those people is, "You are worthless to us." The Conservatives are saying, "We do not care about you. You are worthless to us. We don't care if you can afford food or shelter. We do not care about you." They do not care the same way they don't care about these consultations.

I have about 30 seconds on the clock, Speaker, so I'm going to end it there.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I was listening to this speech, but I wasn't sure if it touched on actual Bill 69. We have been building infrastructure all across Ontario: schools, hospitals, transit. We are getting things done. But we also want to make sure that we do it in a way that we're cutting red tape so we can get things done more efficiently.

One thing that worries me about the opposition, through you, Madam Speaker, is that we need to be fiscally responsible. The opposition doesn't realize that we should be fiscally responsible. I think it is our responsibility to make sure that we're not wasting our taxpayers' dollars. So my question to the member opposite is, why does the opposition want to waste taxpayers' dollars?

MPP Jamie West: I feel like during the debate, I was very clear about fiscal responsibility. The reference point that I used was when the Conservative government sold off Highway 407. We had paid, as public taxpayers across Ontario, to build Highway 407 to make transportation more effective for the people of Ontario. The Conservative government sold it for a song—literally pennies on the dollar. They sold it and gave it away to rich developers. It's not even provincially owned as a private contract anymore, so the people who own it don't even spend money in Ontario. They're all outside the country now. That isn't fiscally responsible.

I hear time and time again about fiscal responsibility, but I don't hear anything about an investment in people who can't afford to make ends meet. I don't hear any sort of investment in housing that is affordable for anybody. They talk about the number of housing starts again and again and the number of development that has started for housing. There is no rent control on anything built after 2018. Of course developers are going to build housing, because it is an endless, bottomless bucket of wealth for them handed on a silver platter by the Conservative government.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I truly enjoyed listening to the member from Sudbury today in his debate. What he was very clearly pointing out was schedule 1 and the 30-day waiver of the environmental assessment. We have seen time and time again this government faltering when it comes to the environment and not really caring about what our future looks like, and I think that there was a clear tale of the direction that they were going to take on April 1, 2019, when they fired the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Maybe that's what the member was talking about when they talked about fiscal responsibility, making sure they cut out that office that was actually in charge of ensuring that we had a safe, growing province here in the province of Ontario. Would the member like to comment on that?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain. It's important to recognize that the environment isn't some abstract thing. It isn't just we go outside and it's nice today or it's warm tomorrow and rainy the next day. It is causing a ton of damage to our infrastructure through high temperatures or flooding. I remember a couple of years ago being trapped downtown in Toronto because the bridges to the highway had flooded in an instant rainstorm. This is what happens when you ignore the environment—when you ignore data.

Sophia Mathur, who I talk about in Sudbury many, many times, is an environmental champion. She is the first person outside of Europe to have a Fridays for Future climate strike. Sophia has been saying for years now to just listen to the experts, and they are not listening to the experts. They're ignoring the experts and pretending that there is not an environmental crisis.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I listened to the member's speech quite intently. One thing I wanted to ask about: This government was elected on a mandate to clean up the mess after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, and under that previous government, hydro rates soared, people were out of work and taxes soared as well.

Bill 69 is all about good government, cutting red tape etc., so why does the opposition want to add more red tape when we're trying to cut it?

MPP Jamie West: I thank the member opposite for his question. We are here today with a bill that we're talking about that is a red tape bill, and there is a lot of red tape

that we could be dealing with that would make life more affordable for people.

We had the people from cystic fibrosis here a couple of months ago, talking about Trikafta. This medication will save lives. The problem with it is that if you have any sort of medical coverage at all, you have to pay out of pocket for it and try to get reimbursed. If you don't have medical coverage, it's covered by the provincial government. And so, people are choosing to remove their personal medical coverage in order to have it covered for their children. That's red tape we can cut.

The other one—and we brought this forward as an opposition day motion—is take-home cancer medication. If you're in the hospital and you have cancer medication in the hospital, it's covered by the government. If you take it home, you have to pay in advance and then get reimbursement for it. That's red tape that would make life easier for people.

This idea of taking a bunch of failed Infrastructure Ontario projects and bundling them under Infrastructure Ontario: That is red tape that no one can see the point of.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, Conservatives have passed several pieces of legislation that have elements that weaken the environment: Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act; Bill 109, More Homes for Everyone Act. It's more, more, more. And now they have a piece of legislation, Bill 69, that is affecting the environment more, in the sense that they're weakening the environment even more.

Is this what you've been hearing, that people feel that this is a normal way of passing legislation—weakening the environment, steamrolling through the environment? What are you hearing? Is this normal for people? Is this what they're expecting from this government?

MPP Jamie West: You know, honestly, the expression that comes to mind right now is “planning by whack-a-mole.” It is just jumping from one thing to the next, randomly, with no clear plan for the future.

We know that housing is the number one issue. We know that in Toronto now it's three grand for rent, the highest it has ever been. We know that where I live, you're lucky if you can find a one-bedroom or a bachelor for \$1,000, and you are lucky to find that. For people who make less than \$1,000 a month, it's unaffordable.

When you're helping developers build McMansions, it's not going to help people who are first-time homebuyers. It's not going to help people who are struggling to pay rent. It's not. It simply is not. When you're investing in developers to build new, purpose-built rental units that are built after 2018 and the Conservative government has removed rent control, it is going to be \$3,000 or more for those units. It is not going to help anybody.

There is no plan. It's just, “Do whatever you want, and then say the opposite.”

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My question for the member for Sudbury is this: Since 2018, in just five short years,

this PC government has been focused on building Ontario. We have built schools, when the previous Liberal-NDP coalition closed schools down. We are building hospitals, when the previous Liberal-NDP coalition brought our health care system to its knees. We are building transit, with four new transit lines in the GTA, despite the fact that the NDP votes no.

Bill 69, if passed, will help predictable infrastructure projects and let us build infrastructure faster, without compromising the environmental assessment process. The members opposite seem intent against building the infrastructure that the people of Ontario need, deserve and expect. Why doesn't the opposition, why doesn't the NDP, want to join us in building Ontario?

MPP Jamie West: My compliments to whoever wrote that speech for him.

Listen, the stock line from the Conservative government is "the Liberal-NDP coalition," and God forbid, I sure as heck hope I'm not gamed for propping you guys up for your bad ideas—their bad ideas, Speaker.

1620

Listen, the Conservatives and Liberals have more in common than we do. The Liberals are out of power. You know why? They sold Hydro One. You know what the Conservatives love to do? Sell off private infrastructure to reward their wealthy friends. I already talked about Highway 407. The only reason they're mad at the Liberals is that the Liberals were able to sell it under theirs because the Conservatives weren't able to.

You talk about us not supporting you and voting against stuff. We vote against it because it's a bad idea or there's a poison pill or because there's an amendment that you won't pass that makes absolute sense. It's deliberate, the way they write the bill, Speaker, and they deliberately do it so they can argue things like this. The reality, though, is that for the people of Ontario, life is getting harder and worse for them, and if their plan was working over the last five years, the last half decade, the plan would be demonstrated to the people of Ontario, and they're not seeing it.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I stand proud and ready to support Bill 69. I am proud of the plan to reduce inefficiencies and reduce red tape because, as we have said time and time again in this House, it is important for governments to lead, to build Ontario by creating an environment for growth and prosperity, and that means getting out of the way when it's appropriate to do so.

Now, I've listened carefully to the members opposite. The environmental assessment process is not being compromised. The proposed legislative amendments are minor and they will not have any impact on the existing class environmental assessments or environmental protection. This government stands committed to protecting the environment while building Ontario. The EA process requires proponents to assess potential environmental impacts, identify mitigation measures and consult with Indigenous communities in accordance with the duty to do

so and the charter provision for doing so, that being section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The public and stakeholders can have confidence because consultation can and will occur with Indigenous communities, all members of the public and relevant stakeholders before any project can proceed. So the NDP is not characterizing this bill fairly or appropriately, I respectfully submit, Speaker.

Ontarians expect our government to practise good governance. That is what we propose to do. That is the track record of this government. That is why we were elected with a strong majority with our pledge to do so in 2018 and that is why we were re-elected with an even greater mandate in 2022. We were re-elected with a pledge, a promise and a commitment to work for the people.

This legislation proposes to cut red tape further by streamlining the oversight of 14 agencies. This will reduce the waiting period in the environmental assessment process and it will save taxpayer dollars and reduce inefficiencies that the people expect us to deliver.

Specifically with respect to the 14 agencies pertaining to real estate: Centralizing the real estate oversight of these 14 different agencies will help the government optimize office space and reduce red tape. Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios in Canada, and we have been working toward establishing a more holistic approach to managing this real estate. This legislation, if passed, would help remove or modify the real estate authority of 14 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the ability to oversee and manage real estate previously under the control of the entities.

With that, Speaker, I conclude my submission for this afternoon, and I do plan to very, very proudly vote to support Bill 69.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Durham. He talked about environmental protections not being weakened and he said it very loudly, as if loudly makes it true.

One of the things he said is that Indigenous consultations will happen, but what we saw with the mining bill is that they didn't happen and that they haven't been happening. And then when we tried to pass an amendment to ensure that environmental free, prior and informed consent consultations happened, it was voted down. So I'm wondering, to the member opposite, if it's going to happen with this bill, why isn't it happening before this bill?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The question, to me, with the greatest respect, just sounds like more rhetoric. We keep presenting our case, and we keep building on the legislation that has been passed by this House to do more, and we are making a difference. We're seeing the growth; we're seeing the prosperity. As we've said time and time again, money that funds core public services does not grow on trees. So we listen to the NDP, we answer their questions, and yet they seem to turn against listening to reason and logic in regard to this bill and many others.

I ask the NDP to consider, are you in favour of funding core public services in health care, education, social services and public infrastructure without going further into debt? Are you not in favour of cutting red tape to create the environment for growth and prosperity for all? Because if you're not, then I understand it, but then you truly are the party of—

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just want to thank the member from Durham for his speech. It was short but to the point. The member in front of me, he gets it. We all ran to get things done for Ontario, and this legislation is just another step in fulfilling our promise to Ontarians about good government, good fiscal responsibility and a plan to build.

As I mentioned earlier to the member for Sudbury, we talked about fiscal responsibility and fiscal responsibility as we're building key infrastructure like schools, hospitals, transit, renovating Ontario Place—which is so exciting, to see that Ontario Place is going to be rebuilt. I drive by it every day, and I see the rust on all the buildings, so that's something that's very important to our community and all of Ontario as a whole.

My question for our member here in front of me is, can you tell me a little about how this legislation will help cut red tape and make things more efficient for government?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank my colleague for the question.

We have to start with this proposition. This government was elected and then re-elected on the mandate to clean up the mess after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. Under that previous government, 15 years—and for one of those terms of the Liberal government within the 15 years, they were supported by the NDP. During that time, we had hydro rates skyrocketing, taxes soaring, taxpayer dollars mismanaged.

Bill 69, in contrast, like so many other bills laid before this House by this government, is about good governance. It's about cutting red tape and streamlining oversight. So I don't understand how it cannot be supported unanimously, but the member's question calls for this simple answer: We're getting it done, because we believe in targeted measures to bring about growth and prosperity and—

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This morning, in response to questions about the failure of government to share information with the public about the Eglinton Crosstown line, the minister argued basically that haste makes waste. Yet in this bill, in Bill 69, the government can't wait to override due process, especially in regard to environmental assessments. Now, we know that the government has repeatedly cut short debate and discussion on environmental issues.

So my question is—really, 30 days is a blink in time. What is the problem with leaving that open for public input?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, I don't know how to say it. I'll say it again. Please listen carefully, because we

do listen to you: The environmental assessment is not being compromised. The proposed amendments are minor and will not have any impact on the existing class EAs or environmental protection. We—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That's time.

We're going to move to further debate. Further debate? Further debate?

Miss Surma has moved third reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure.

1630

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Carried on division.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Orders of the day?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Yes, on a point of order?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

JOSHUA'S LAW (LIFEJACKETS FOR LIFE), 2023

LOI JOSHUA DE 2023 SUR LE PORT OBLIGATOIRE DU GILET DE SAUVETAGE PAR LES ENFANTS

Ms. Ghamari moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to enact Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), 2023 / Projet de loi 93, Loi édictant la Loi Joshua de 2023 sur le port obligatoire du gilet de sauvetage par les enfants.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her remarks.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I rise today to speak about my private member's bill, Bill 93, Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life) Act.

I would like to start off by thanking my friend and colleague, the former MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Norm Miller, who tabled this legislation in the previous session.

Applause.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: As you can tell, Madam Speaker, Mr. Miller is here in the Legislature today. I would like to thank him for joining us as we debate this very important piece of legislation.

I'm going to begin by speaking about my constituent Cara McNulty, who is far too familiar with the type of tragedy that Joshua's Law aims to prevent. Her 11-year-old son, Joshua, whom this bill is dedicated to, tragically passed away in September of 2018 when the boat he was on with his father, brother and two other children capsized near Rockport, Ontario. Joshua was wearing a life jacket during the day, but at that moment, he was not. Since then, Cara has been advocating for governments at all levels to make wearing a life jacket mandatory for children in small vessels through her initiative, Life Jackets for Life.

To quote Cara McNulty, "We're thrilled to hear about this bill. Any progress on mandatory wear legislation is a step in the right direction." I'd like to thank Cara for her tireless advocacy and for her support of this legislation.

I'm so honoured to continue working on the efforts that MPP Miller started in the previous session. When I tell friends, constituents and even some of my colleagues here in the Legislature about this bill, many are shocked that it's not already the law for children to wear life jackets or personal flotation devices, also known as PFDs, on small personal vessels. They have a hard time believing that we're not already doing all that we can to protect children from these preventable tragedies.

Accidents are the leading cause of death for children in Canada, and not wearing a life jacket is the number one risk factor for drowning while boating. In 2021, Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada found that 80% of people who died in boating-related accidents between 2008 and 2017 were not wearing a life jacket, and another 5% were not wearing one properly.

According to the 2018 Canadian Drowning Report by Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada, 67% of children aged five to 14 who died from drowning were not wearing a personal flotation device. Behind each of these statistics is a life lost, and that leaves a family broken and a community broken.

Greg Wilkinson, a former board member of Safe Quiet Lakes, said, "The fact that 87% of drownings in Ontario involve people who were not wearing a life jacket tells us all we need to know."

Pamela Fuselli, the president and CEO of Parachute Canada, said, "Evidence shows that legislation, and the enforcement of legislation, is an effective approach to prevention." Parachute's *The Cost of Injury in Canada 2021* report showed that drowning was the third-leading cause of death in children aged 14 and younger.

The Ottawa Drowning Prevention Coalition says online that "drowning is one of the leading causes of injury-related incidents for Canadian children under the age of five."

Matt Cox, president of the Ottawa Police Association said in a statement, "The introduction of Bill 93, Joshua's Law, which requires children under the age of 12 to wear

a personal flotation device or a life jacket while boating or using recreational water equipment is long overdue...."

"The city of Ottawa like many places in Ontario" has "many waterways, and we truly hope Bill 93 will prevent any boating tragedies this summer. Life jackets save lives.

"We as the policing community are committed to finding ways to keep the city of Ottawa safe. The Ottawa Police Association will support any level of government to attain this goal."

I'd now like to talk about the bill itself, Madam Speaker, and explain some of the details and describe how this bill will protect Ontario's children from accidental drowning while boating.

If passed, Bill 93 would make it mandatory for any child aged 12 years or younger to wear a life jacket or a PFD while on a pleasure boat nine metres in length or less that is under way or while being towed behind a boat: for example, water-skiing, wakeboarding or tubing. A "pleasure boat" is defined as any vessel used or designated to be used in navigating water, propelled by any kind of power, including human power, sail or motorized power, that is used exclusively for pleasure.

The federal rules that lay out what safety equipment is required on boats are based on the length of the boat, and there are different requirements for boats of six metres, six to nine metres and nine to 12 metres etc. This legislation applies to boats nine metres or less because this would cover most runabouts and water-skiing/wakeboarding boats.

Under Bill 93, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure that their child is wearing a PFD or a life jacket. If the child is under the supervision of another person 18 years of age or older who is not their parent, then that person is responsible for ensuring the child wears a life jacket. Failing to ensure that child is wearing a life jacket or a PFD would result in a fine of no more than \$200 on conviction.

This responsibility is consistent with other provincial safety legislation. For example, the law surrounding the use of seat belts in cars make it the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all passengers under the age of 16 are wearing seat belts, and the law requiring young cyclists to wear a bike helmet put the responsibility on the child's parent. The proposed bill allows for an exception for children in an enclosed cabin where there is no danger of falling overboard.

This legislation also includes a clause to give the government, through the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the ability to create exemptions. This is because life jackets can interfere with some activities. Life jackets and PFDs have come a long way, but for athletes involved in competitive paddling or rowing, life jackets could get in the way. So, if the bill passes, I would encourage the government to work with groups like Row Ontario to create an exemption for young athletes involved in formal, supervised training or competition.

I mentioned the federal rules around boat safety. Some people might question whether this bill is within provincial jurisdiction. To that I would say that protecting

the health and safety of our children is the responsibility of all levels of government.

I would also like to point out the city of Calgary's water safety bylaw which requires any person in a vessel or other device used as a means of water transportation to wear a life jacket while they are within the boundaries of the city. When this bylaw was challenged to say that waterways fell under federal jurisdiction, Judge Judith Shriar ruled the bylaw was constitutional.

Looking beyond our borders, this legislation is extremely similar to laws that have been enacted by our neighbours in the United States. All 50 states have laws mandating life jacket use for children, and at least 30 of these states specifically require children aged 12 and under to wear a life jacket while in small recreational vessels.

In Ontario, this law could be put into place with no additional cost to boaters. That's because it's already required under the small vessel regulations that boat operators ensure there is an appropriately sized life jacket or personal flotation device for every passenger. No law-abiding boater should have to go out and purchase additional life jackets. The only difference is that instead of being stored somewhere on the boat, the child's life jacket is already on their body, and that could make all the difference in the world.

1640

In an emergency, there's not always time to grab a life jacket and put it on properly. This is especially true of children. As the president and CEO of Canada Safety Council said, "Too frequently, we see people drown without intending on even dipping their toe in the water, and these types of tragedies are entirely avoidable."

If you're in a boat and accidentally fall into the water, there's not always time to locate the life jacket you have on board and put it on. Between 2008 and 2017, 34% of people known to have not been wearing a PFD when they drowned had a life jacket or a PFD present on the boat, but they were unable to put it on at the time of the incident.

Parents, guardians and all adults are responsible for protecting the health and safety of children. This bill, if passed, would clarify that ensuring children in their care wear a life jacket or a PFD while on a small pleasure boat is a part of that responsibility. This bill won't prevent all drownings, but I see this as a common-sense law that would reduce the chances of children drowning in boating accidents.

Every child we lose because they were not wearing a life jacket is a tragic and preventable loss of life. It permanently scars parents, families and communities, and it has a terrible impact on our first responders. That is why I'm asking my fellow members to protect the children of Ontario from avoidable harm by supporting Bill 93, Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life).

Once again, I would like to thank the former member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, MPP Norm Miller, for working so hard on this legislation, for working so hard to introduce this legislation in 2021. It's an honour to re-introduce this bill on his behalf. It is my hope that not only does this legislation pass second reading but that it passes third reading and becomes law in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to welcome my good friend Norm Miller back to Queen's Park. Let me tell you that we miss you. You were here for over 20 years. You were here for the whole time that I was here—his riding is just below my riding—and it was a pleasure working with you. I hope you're enjoying your time in retirement from politics, but I know that you've stayed really, really busy.

It was a pleasure to talk about this bill when Norm first brought it forward, and it is just as much a pleasure to talk about this bill this time. This is something that we wholeheartedly support.

I was just talking to my colleague, who said, "I'm surprised this is not the law already." You can go anywhere, on any docks, on any waterfront, and ask Ontarians, and most of us think that this is already the law, but it is not.

We are legislators. We have a chance to change this today. This is a change that I guarantee you will save lives.

The member went through a lot of statistics, but the statistics really tell the story of real people who lost loved ones, who lost their lives, simply because they were not wearing a life jacket.

I want to quote—"there were 54 boating fatalities in Ontario. According to the OPP, life jackets could have been the difference in 42 of those drownings." Let this sink in a bit: 54 boating fatalities; 42 could have been prevented had people been wearing a life jacket. They were either not wearing a life jacket or not wearing them properly.

My colleague Gilles Bisson was here when we first debated that bill. He shared with us the story of his father. Gilles's family has had a camp—what the people in the south call a cottage, we up north call a camp. It's beautiful, on a beautiful body of water. The lake he's on has tons of fish. So, like many northerners, after supper, you go for a boat ride and you go for a fish, and you go fishing. His dad was 600 feet from the dock in the boat that he had been in for years and years and years. He fell off the boat while he was catching a big one and drowned.

In the case of Gilles Bisson's father, he had a life jacket but a 40-year-old life jacket that had been bought for kids, not for adults, and that basically was way past its best-before date. So not only is it important for all of us when we're in a boat to wear a life jacket, it is important to make sure that they're not extremely old and they are fit for our size and weight, which was not the case for Gilles Bisson's father.

We've also seen, and this is directly linked to the COVID pandemic—every child who goes to school in Ontario has to take swimming lessons, and a child needs to learn how to swim. But with COVID and with the school closures and the online learning, a lot of kids missed those swimming lessons. We're talking about three years of kids. We know many more of them now do not know how to swim. They are telling us, the Lifesaving Society report—preliminary research says that there has been a 13% increase in drownings amongst children since 2020. That's because of less children knowing how to swim.

We should make sure that not only do we pass this bill and make it mandatory for every child under the age of 12 to wear a life jacket when they're in a boat, but that we go back and look at those three cohorts of children who did not have a chance to take swimming lessons through the school, make sure it doesn't matter if they age out of that particular school year. Let's make sure that they have an opportunity to learn how to swim, because learning how to swim is also a good way to prevent drowning.

But back to the bill: Like everybody else here, I always thought that it was the law. When I was in university, I worked in a big national park, teaching people how to canoe. We would have people from all over the world, mainly Americans coming to Canada, to the national park, and we would teach them how to canoe. I didn't know at the time; I thought it was the law, but it was in the regulations of the national park that everybody, the minute they came onto the dock, no matter their age, had to wear a life jacket. So for my entire life, I have been saying to everybody who gets in a boat, "No, no, it's the law. You have to wear a life jacket."

Like 18% of the people in Nickel Belt, I live on a lake. We have many boats, and we have many docks, and nobody comes onto the docks without wearing a life jacket. It's as simple as that. If you intend to go into the boat, you put your life jacket on. I have three kids and seven grandkids. If the grandkids are not old enough to know how to swim, in the summer, I don't let them get out of the car without putting a life jacket on them. They keep their life jacket on for the entire day, because we live on a lake, and you never know when a two-year-old or a three-year-old is going to take off at the end of this dock and jump in, which pretty much all of them have done at one point or another because they saw a turtle go by and they wanted to touch it, and in they go, etc.

1650

So this is kind of the law in my backyard, but I thought, when I told this to everyone, I was telling the truth. Now since Norm brought this bill forward, I realized that it is not the law that people have to wear a life jacket when they're in a boat, but I certainly hope that we use today's opportunity to change this.

I also like the fact that there are provisions in there for people who row. I don't know if you knew I'm a competitive rower. When you are rowing, there's not much room for life jackets, but we have special life jackets that we tie around our waist with a little string and when you flip, which happens lots with rowers, all you have to do is pull it and it goes on. The only exceptions that I would say to this is when you are racing, you want as little weight as you can in your boat, even if it's a boat with two, four, eight people. But when you're racing, there's always a safety boat that follows you. So as long as there's a safety boat that follows you and the conversation has been had with Row Ontario, I would be comfortable with letting competitive rowers or kayakers or canoeists go without a life jacket if there is a rescue boat that follows them. But if there isn't, there is such a good variety of life jackets that exist right now that, as I said, even for rowers, we have

life jackets—same thing with canoes, same thing with kayaks—that are very light. I use them at home. There is no reason not to wear a life jacket.

For this particular bill, it would be for people 12 years of age and under, but I can tell you that the fact that we will make sure that every child wears a life jacket will have an impact on their siblings and on their parents. It is a whole lot easier to convince a cranky five-, six-, seven-year-old to wear a life jacket when you are wearing one yourself. So for every parent who has been there before, trying to convince their kid to wear a helmet to go for a bike ride, it is a whole lot easier, if Grandma puts her helmet on, to convince your grandchild to put his helmet on to go for a bike ride. The same thing will happen with the life jackets. And the more people wearing life jackets, the more lives will be saved.

I appreciate the member sharing all of the statistics. Drownings are real. The percentage of people, young people, people under the age of 12, who drown every year could be brought down immensely if, today, we pass second reading. But like the member said, I hope that this bill will see third reading and will become enacted in Ontario. Pretty much every state in the United States has laws, either for 12-year-olds—some are 14-year-old and down. It exists in many, many other jurisdictions, and it works. It saves lives.

We have an opportunity here today to save the lives of children. I cannot see how somebody could be voting that down. I know that Norm had done a ton of work before bringing this bill forward. He also had a few interns who worked on this bill. The body of evidence is strong. Let's pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll move to further debate.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's my pleasure to represent the residents of Barrie–Innisfil in support of Bill 93, Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), presented by the MPP for Carleton, and I want to thank her for reintroducing this bill. I want to thank MPP Norm Miller, who I learned quite a lot from, since we represent a similar region of the province. He well knows that I'm surrounded by Lake Simcoe, the jewel of our region, but with Lake Simcoe comes responsibilities like water safety. I want to thank both those members.

The fact that this bill will save lives on the water—as many people get out to the boats on Lake Simcoe for the great summer season and take their kids out, they can have the peace of mind that their children will be saved by this law that requires children under 12 to wear life jackets. So I wholeheartedly support this private member's bill on behalf of the residents of Barrie–Innisfil, because it will save lives.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Billy Pang: Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking MPP Ghamari for identifying this gap in the legislation. Many of us are aware that Canada requires appropriately sized life jackets or personal flotation devices to be in the boat. However, there is in fact no law

requiring children or anyone else to wear those life jackets or flotation devices.

What's more, we do not even require children to wear a life jacket while water-skiing or tubing. This is an existing gap in our legislation that we need to close to better protect children's safety on water. Parents, guardians and other persons supervising children playing have an important role to keep children safe while on provincial waters. As a parent and a member of my community, I am in full support of this bill.

This bill is an important and timely one, especially when summer is just around the corner. This bill will ensure that children are safe on our provincial waters. It will also raise awareness of water safety and prevent drownings. For the physical safety of Ontario's children, I look forward to the passing of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: It has been said a couple times here today already that it's hard to believe that this actually isn't a law that's in existence right now in Ontario. When we take a look at some of the statistics—my friend from Carleton mentioned a number of them—there's one that stands out to me, and that's from the Lifesaving Society: 87% of drownings from boating occur because someone wasn't wearing a life jacket. That 87% is a big number, a big percentage that's really easy to change.

If you take a look at what has happened with some other safety devices that we use in Ontario—bicycle helmets were not something that, as a kid growing up, people ever wore, and we had a lot of brain injuries from it. One of the things that changed is that now when you go biking, everyone is wearing a helmet and no one complains about wearing a helmet. That's because we started with kids and we showed kids how wearing a bicycle helmet would make a big difference. Now, as adults, they wear bicycle helmets and think nothing of it.

That 87% of people who drowned in a boating accident, who weren't wearing their life jackets—if we start with kids and normalize wearing your life jacket, rather than having it tucked up under the front of your runabout, we'll get to a point where it's not uncommon, then, for adults to be wearing a life jacket, and that 87% number will drop significantly as a result of it.

This is a bill that we need to pass. This is a bill that will make a big difference in a lot of people's lives, because I would hazard to guess that anyone who lives near the water knows of a family who has lost a family member because of a preventable drowning accident like that. My hope is that everyone here today will pass this on voice, and we'll go straight to committee and then turn it into a law at third reading.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Summer will soon be upon us, and so is the time to enjoy Ontario's great outdoors, and that includes having fun with our family on the water. Ontario has so many great rivers, so many great lakes, and I know I'm going to be out there this summer

on a boat on a lake. We have such beautiful settings to enjoy the water in this great province.

1700

The bill we are speaking to this evening will ensure that Ontarians enjoy this activity in a safe manner, specifically young children who are out with their families. Many of the statistics have already been stated. What I think is important is, not wearing a life jacket is the number one risk for drowning while boating.

That being said, Speaker, I love boating. I have to admit that I was also surprised, just like the member from Nickel Belt, and others have said it here—I was extremely surprised when I heard it wasn't mandatory. I was very fortunate growing up by a lake in the summer. I remember my mom and dad, who could not swim, always had their life jackets on. The four of us kids hopped in the boat. We called it the Batmobile. Everybody wore their life jacket. It was mandatory for us to wear our life jackets. That carries through to now my generation, my child and all my nieces and nephews. It's mandatory. You must wear your life jacket. So I was shocked when I found out it wasn't mandatory. This is just good common sense.

I would like to thank the member from Carleton for bringing forth this private member's bill. I would also like to thank her for carrying this forward from the previous member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller. Thank you.

As a government, we are taking the common-sense steps to lower the risk of drowning and ensure our children can safely enjoy water sports while on any type of pleasure boat as well as while being towed by that said pleasure boat. This bill makes sure that every parent or guardian knows this is mandatory.

We all agree that this life-saving requirement is a necessity. Let's have fun out on the water in the safest manner.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in support of Joshua's Law. As an MPP with a significant body of water bordering my riding, it is imperative that we consider water safety. With the weather getting warmer in Burlington, water sports and activities become a popular way to beat the heat and get outdoors. Children especially love the water in the summer, but accidents are the leading cause of death for children in Canada, and not wearing a life jacket is the number one reason drowning can occur while boating.

We can teach our children how to swim and the importance of water safety. We know life jackets and proper use of a flotation device can reduce the number of children who drown each year. The statistics from Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada are staggering: 67% of children between 5 and 14 who have died from drowning were not wearing a life jacket or a flotation device.

Ontario law requires children to wear seat belts while in vehicles and helmets while riding a bike. These are safety precautions to ensure children stay safe. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for water sports and

recreation. Although boats are required by law to have flotation devices or life jackets on board, it is not a requirement for children, or anyone else for that matter, to wear them. Furthermore, it is not a requirement in Ontario for children to wear a flotation device or life vest while water-skiing, tubing or being towed behind a boat.

Joshua's Law would protect children and prevent tragedies like Joshua's from happening. Wearing a life jacket or a personal flotation device can save and protect countless lives.

I am grateful to have been able to speak to this private member's bill, and I fully support my colleague on this important piece of legislation. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak to Joshua's Law.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakubuski: It is a pleasure for me to stand and speak on behalf of Bill 93, in support of Bill 93. I want to thank the member from Carleton for bringing this forward. I know she's done this not only because she believes in it passionately herself, but she also believes in our old friend Norm Miller, who is here in the gallery today.

I had the pleasure of being in this House when then-MPP Miller brought this bill forward, and it's a bill we can all easily stand behind because it is such absolutely—you don't have to think about it. Why would we not want to do everything we can to protect our children or grandchildren or any young person when they're in a watercraft?

It was the kind of bill that you would expect Norm to bring forward originally, because that's the kind of person he is. In his over 20 years in this House, he was always looking, "How can I use my voice as an MPP to do better things and do positive things for people in the general population?" He saw an opportunity and he saw something where it was lacking, and that was, why are we not actually doing something to ensure that our children are actually wearing that personal flotation device when they're in a boat?

So I want to thank, again, my colleague from Carleton and welcome my friend Norm Miller here once again, and thank him for his original idea of bringing this forward so we can make Ontario not only the best place to live, work and raise a family, but the safest place for our children.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Carleton has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd just like to start off by thanking my legislative assistant, Daniel Jolic. Today is his last day, and he has been working with me on this PMB and making sure everything is organized. So thank you, Daniel, and I wish you all the best in your law school journey. I know you're going to do us proud.

I'd like to take a moment to thank all the members who spoke about this legislation today, including the members for Nickel Belt, Barrie–Innisfil, Markham–Unionville, Peterborough–Kawartha, Newmarket–Aurora, Burlington and, of course, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you very much for your support. Thank you very much for the kind words.

The message that I'm getting from everyone when I've heard you speak is that it's almost a shock that this isn't law. It's almost like a surprise, and that was my initial gut reaction too, when I first heard about this legislation. And that's why it's always kind of stuck with me, and why I'm pleased to bring this forward. This is something that Cara McNulty, my constituent, has spoken about with me several times after it was first introduced, so I'm pleased to reintroduce it.

Finally, Madam Speaker, last but not least, I would like to once again thank the former MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Norm Miller, for his tireless advocacy on this behalf, for the hours of work that he has put in, for his dedication to not just making Ontario the best place in the world but, as the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, the safest place in the world. And I want to thank the member for working hard to protect Ontario's children.

It's an honour for me to speak to this, and I want to thank everyone for their support. It's such a common-sense bill and I look forward to seeing this become law.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Ghamari has moved second reading of Bill 93, An Act to enact Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), 2023. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House unless—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior? Agreed. The bill is then referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, we now have a late show.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Apparently not. All right.

There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1710.

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