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Assembly
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Tuesday
30 May 2023

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43^e législature

Mardi
30 mai 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 May 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 mai 2023

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good afternoon, everyone. I beg leave to present report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Your committee begs to recommend that Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Superior Corporate Services Limited, be not reported.

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

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFE NIGHT OUT ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 VISANT À FAVORISER
DES SORTIES SANS DANGER

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence and Control Act, 2019 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act respecting training on sexual violence and harassment / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur les permis d'alcool et la réglementation des alcools et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la formation sur la violence à caractère sexuel et le harcèlement.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for London West like to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Safe Night Out Act was first introduced in 2017 with the goal of making licensed premises safer for patrons and staff. The bill amends the Liquor Licence and Control Act to require the establishment of an evidence-based, trauma-informed sexual violence and harassment prevention training program and makes the training mandatory for servers and bartenders, security guards, supervisors and others involved in the sale or service of liquor. It also requires every licensee and

permit holder to have a posted sexual violence and harassment policy detailing how incidents will be dealt with and what community supports and resources are available.

To better protect servers, the bill also explicitly adds workplace sexual violence to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

HARVEST SEASON ROAD
SAFETY WEEK ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 SUR LA SEMAINE
DE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE
PENDANT LA SAISON DES RÉCOLTES

Mr. Flack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to proclaim Harvest Season Road Safety Week / Projet de loi 115, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sécurité routière pendant la saison des récoltes.

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 his bill?

Mr. Rob Flack: The beginning of fall begins the start of harvest season throughout rural Ontario with roads becoming busier with farm equipment. Traffic safety is paramount for pedestrians, motorists and farmers. To help prevent accidents and save lives, it is imperative to raise awareness of the fall harvest season for those travelling on Ontario's rural roads.

The week beginning on the third Monday of September in each year is proclaimed as Harvest Season Road Safety Week.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I just want to take an opportunity to welcome Mr. Jaskaran Singh, Rajwinder Singh from Raj Motors, along with Ravinder Singh, Lakhbir Singh, and Jasbir Singh from my birthplace, Patiala. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

AMYLOIDOSIS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is my honour to present in the House today a petition to recognize March as amyloidosis

month. This is very personal; my dad suffered from this incurable disease.

And I have to thank who's in the House here today from the Canadian Amyloidosis Support Network: Jennifer Enright and Jim McWhinnie, who is the president and executive director. Thank you so much for raising awareness and for the work that you do.

The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas amyloidosis is an incurable disease that affects Ontario residents and their loved ones;

"Whereas amyloidosis, including hereditary and non-hereditary forms of the disease, is caused by abnormal proteins, known as amyloids, that build up in the tissues and/or organs of the body and can cause organ failure and can be fatal;

"Whereas recognition of this disease is critical in order to ensure that more Ontarians are diagnosed early. Earlier diagnoses can ensure patients receive treatments in a timely manner and can contribute to a more positive outcome, better quality of life and longer quality of life. In addition, these benefits can reduce the burden on society in general;

"Whereas both national and local support groups for patients are working to ensure that more treatment options are available to patients in this province, that more publicly funded drugs are available to fight this disease in Ontario, and that adequate care is accessible to all Ontarians no matter where they live;

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

"To recognize March 2024 as Amyloidosis Awareness Month to raise awareness of this disease among our fellow Ontarians and to improve outcomes for both patients and their families and for newly diagnosed and as-yet-undiagnosed patients."

I support the work of this group. I will add my name to this important list of people who have signed this petition, and I will give it to Pierre to take to the table.

POLICE FUNDING

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

"Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

"The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

"The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the 'defund the police' position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy."

I support this petition. I'll affix my name and send it to the assembly through page Tara.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to introduce this petition on behalf of the good folks of Minden Matters. It has been signed by 24,685 people. That's really extraordinary. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board of directors has, without consultation with the affected stakeholders, announced the permanent closure of the emergency department located in the municipality of Minden Hills, Ontario, effective June 1, 2023;

1510

"We, the undersigned, petition that a moratorium of this decision be implemented by the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care immediately for a period of a minimum of one year to allow for consultations with all affected stakeholders to occur."

I couldn't be more proud to support this petition. I'm going to affix my signature and hand it over to page Silas to table with the Clerks.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to read this petition from We the Nuclear Free North and Protect Our Water.

"Whereas:

"Ontario Power Generation is the owner of more than 90% of high-level radioactive waste in Canada and is the major shareholder in the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO); ...

"The NWMO's nine-step site selection has been highly divisive in the communities the NWMO has investigated and continues to be divisive in the areas of the two remaining sites under investigation (a site in South Bruce in southwestern Ontario and a site between Ignace and Dryden in northwestern Ontario);

"The NWMO is seeking a site to construct a deep geological repository for which it has presented a series of concepts but has no actual design and for which there is no precedent; there is no approved or operating deep geological repository for nuclear fuel waste anywhere in the world, despite more than five decades of effort by the nuclear industry; ...

"The proposed transportation campaign to move nuclear fuel waste from reactor stations to a centralized location ... includes an estimated two to three road shipments per day for an estimated 50 years or more, which will result in significant expense and greenhouse gas emissions; this proposed transportation of the nuclear fuel waste presents significant dangers both to the environment and to the exposed public...;

"There is strong opposition to deep geological repositories in the areas under investigation, and this opposition has received significant international support...;

"There is a viable alternative in the form of making on-site storage more robust and adopting a program of rolling

stewardship for the long-term monitoring and management of radioactive waste at or near current locations;

“The proximity principle directs that radioactive waste should be managed as close to the point of generation as is technically feasible; the proximity principle has been embedded in the European Community Strategy for Waste Management since the 1990s and some jurisdictions, including Scotland and Wales, have a ‘proximity principle’ included in their radioactive waste policy;”

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

“Adopt the proximity principle with respect to the management of radioactive wastes and direct Ontario Power Generation to further their development of robust extended storage systems at or near the point of generation.”

I support this petition. I will sign it and ask page Cyndi to bring it to the table.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Ms. Laura Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for student achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and authorize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

I affix my name to this petition, and I give it to page Halle to bring to the table.

NUCLEAR WASTE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on the adoption of the proximity principle in the management of radioactive wastes:

“Whereas:

“Ontario Power Generation is the owner of more than 90% of high-level radioactive waste in Canada and...;

“The” Nuclear Waste Management Organization “was created by the nuclear fuel waste owners in Canada in 2002 and...;

“The NWMO’s nine-step site selection has been highly divisive in the communities the NWMO has investigated and continues to be divisive in the areas of the two remaining sites under investigation...;

“The NWMO is seeking a site to construct a deep geological repository for which ... there is no precedent;

there is no approved or operating deep geological repository for nuclear fuel waste anywhere in the world...;

“The NWMO includes in their nine-step process the ‘option’ of adding a temporary shallow repository ... without being subject to a full environmental assessment...;

“The proposed transportation campaign to move nuclear fuel waste ... includes an estimated two to three road shipments per day for an estimated 50 years or more, which will result in significant expense and greenhouse gas emissions; this proposed transportation of the nuclear fuel waste presents significant dangers both to the environment and to the exposed public, including drivers and bystanders exposed to gamma radiation...;

“The NWMO proposes to transfer the wastes into transportation containers at the reactor” sites “and then transfer the waste again at the selected DGR”, a technically difficult process that “presents a set of hazards for workers, potential impacts on human health, and the threat of contamination of air, ground and water with radioactive releases; ...

“There is a viable alternative in the form of making on-site storage more robust and adopting a program of rolling stewardship...;

“The proximity principle directs that radioactive waste should be managed as close to the point of generation as is technically feasible...;”

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

“Adopt the proximity principle with respect to the management of radioactive wastes and direct Ontario Power Generation to further their development of robust extended storage systems at or near the point of generation.”

I support this petition, I will affix my signature and give it to Silas.

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to give a shout-out to all the police officers and enforcers protecting us across Ontario. I would like to send my condolences to the family of Steven Tourangeau, the OPP officer we lost yesterday. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

“The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

“The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the ‘defund the police’ position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.”

I strongly support this petition, I will sign it and give it to page Milan.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mark Dracup from the Rockcliffe restaurant and hotel, Ian Myers from Myers Chimney, Dennis Pennie from Minden Auto Care and Mathew Renda for bringing this petition to Queen's Park.

"Whereas the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board of directors has, without consultation with the affected stakeholders, announced the permanent closure of the emergency department located in the municipality of Minden Hills, Ontario, effective June 1, 2023; and

"Whereas the business owners of Haliburton county believe that the above closure will have significant negative effects on the population stability level, growth and tourism throughout the entire geographic region; and

"Whereas the location and stability of the Minden emergency department was a major factor in the decision-making process when we chose to establish our business in Haliburton county; and

"Whereas we are projecting business levels to decrease by as much as 40% over the next three years;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: "that a moratorium of this decision be implemented by the Ministries of Health ... immediately for a period of a minimum of one year to allow for consultations with the Haliburton country business owners as well as all affected stakeholders to occur."

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

1520

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas police provide protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our society; and

"The provincial government has launched the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and

"The 2023-24 budget commits an additional \$13.4 million to this strategy;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reject the 'defund the police' position, and continue funding police, seizing illegal guns, suppressing gangs, and supporting victims of violence through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy."

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Shlokh, who will then deliver it appropriately.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on Adoption of the Proximity Principle in the Management of Radioactive Wastes.

"Whereas:

"Ontario Power Generation is the owner of more than 90% of high-level radioactive waste in Canada and is the

major shareholder in the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO); ...

"The NWMO is seeking a site to construct a deep geological repository for which it has presented a series of concepts but has no actual design and for which there is no precedent; there is no approved or operating deep geological repository for nuclear fuel waste anywhere in the world, despite more than five decades of effort by the nuclear industry; ...

"There is strong opposition to deep geological repositories in the areas under investigation, and this opposition has received significant international support from both citizens and scientists;

"There is a viable alternative in the form of making on-site storage more robust and adopting a program of rolling stewardship for the long-term monitoring and management of radioactive waste at or near current locations;

"The proximity principle directs that radioactive waste should be managed as close to the point of generation as is technically feasible...;"

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

"Adopt the proximity principle with respect to the management of radioactive wastes and direct Ontario Power Generation to further their development of robust extended storage systems at or near the point of generation."

I support this, affix my signature, and give it to page Pierre.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 112, An Act to provide for the dissolution of The Regional Municipality of Peel;

That the order of the House referring the bill to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy be discharged and the bill shall be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Williams has moved government notice of motion number 15. Would she care to lead off the debate? I recognize the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Our government introduced the Hazel McCallion Act, which would, if passed, begin the process to dissolve the regional municipality of Peel and make the municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon independent. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, this bill is about supporting housing, moving to greater efficiency, and preparing Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon for growth in the years ahead, all while respecting taxpayers and ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality services to the residents of these municipalities.

Speaker, to set the stage for my remarks, I'd like to highlight the principles behind the proposed dissolution of Peel region and the creation of three single-tier municipalities. I think these principles make clear what our government wants to achieve and hopes for the future of this thriving region and fast-growing region.

(1) We respect and support the effective administration of local government.

(2) We recognize that municipalities should be empowered with the tools needed to plan for population growth, including the tools needed to build more housing options, and, importantly, they should work together fairly and in good partnership with neighbouring municipalities.

(3) We understand that safe communities and the delivery of effective front-line services are key pillars of local government, including preserving front-line workers, which we find are so valuable to all municipalities in the region of Peel;

(4) We appreciate the importance of value-for-money and high-quality services, delivered in an efficient manner for taxpayers; and

(5) We acknowledge that, particularly where there are shared assets and services, municipalities should be treated in an equitable and fair manner, whereby all residents, regardless of where they live, are respected and have access to excellent services.

Madam Speaker, we think our bill reflects these principles that I just outlined and includes elements to help achieve our objectives. Ontario is committed to working with our municipal partners to ensure they have the tools and autonomy they need to deliver on our shared commitment to the people of Ontario, including addressing the housing supply issue and crisis.

The region of Peel includes some of the largest and fastest-growing municipalities in Canada, and they are poised for significant growth in the next decade. According to Statistics Canada, at the time of the last census in 2021, Mississauga had a population of almost 720,000 people, Brampton had a population of more than 650,000 people, and Caledon had a population of just over 76,500 people.

Let's fast-forward to what we're looking at in our future. By 2051, Mississauga is expected to grow to nearly 995,000 people, Brampton is expected to be home to approximately 985,000 people, and Caledon, 300,000 people. Those numbers are remarkable, and especially for Caledon, which is expected to almost quadruple in population.

As single-tier municipalities, these municipalities would be well placed to reduce duplication in local government and address their unique housing, infrastructure and service delivery needs. This is something I'm very passionate about, being a former councillor and seeing how plans are divided up and decided based on regional governance. That might not always be in line with what the local government wants to achieve, and so there is tension there.

Governance that is fair, that has equal representation, is key to ensure the development of each municipality. Until two years ago, the regional council structure for Peel

consisted of 11 councillors plus the mayor, so a total of 12 Mississauga seats; six councillors plus the mayor, with a total of seven Brampton seats; and four councillors plus the mayor, with a total of five Caledon seats. Because the development of Mississauga was done first, it made sense that Mississauga had more seats at the regional council, but as Brampton begins to grow, and grow in representation, we know that change is needed.

1530

Former Brampton councillors in the past have lobbied the province to try and see this change, but we didn't see change until two years ago, when members of the regional council brought forward a plan to move two councillors from Caledon to put them into Brampton, and this caused a lot of discourse. This was really a frustrating time for many, and it created a lot of tension. Even councillors from Caledon walked out when that motion was put on the floor.

As a former councillor, ensuring that you have buy-in from all around that council table in order to move plans forward can be challenging, so this is a good reason why disentangling some of the governance structure and putting the power back into single-tier municipalities is essential so that Brampton can plan for Brampton, Caledon can plan for Caledon and Mississauga can plan for Mississauga.

The municipalities that make up the region of Peel currently have 1.5 million residents and are expected to grow to over two million by 2021. These municipalities have collectively agreed to housing pledges totalling 246,000 new homes by 2031: Mississauga, 120,000; Brampton, 113,000; and Caledon, 13,000. Our legislation, if passed, would provide stability and fairness throughout the dissolution process, prioritize respect for taxpayers and value for money and ensure front-line services and workers can continue without disruption.

The province's plan would help ensure the continuation of high-quality services for taxpayers while improving the efficiency of local governments as they prepare for growth for the future, including by making good on their municipal housing pledges, which we know we need desperately in all three municipalities. Disentangling the region will alleviate the challenges faced with multiple tiers to address things like zoning, infrastructure and other matters that slow down the development of much-needed housing. Sometimes you'll have proposals go through a council in Brampton and it gets approved, but once it goes to the regional table, it gets turned down, and that really slows down the opportunity for much-needed housing and infrastructure developments in our municipalities.

Should the proposed Hazel McCallion Act pass, we intend to bring a second bill before this House to complete the dissolution process and bring the proposed changes into effect in January 2025. Our government will take the time to get things right.

The province would establish a transition board of up to five people to facilitate this change in local government and, if needed, oversee the financial affairs of Peel and its lower-tier municipalities to help ensure prudent financial stewardship until dissolution.

The board would provide recommendations to help Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon prepare to become single-tier municipalities on January 1, 2025, when the proposed changes, if passed, would come into effect. We will take the time to get this right. We will ensure that we are taking a well-thought-out process in this plan. It's not willy-nilly. It's not just throwing people in there. We are making sure that the people who are there have the skills to make sure this is a smooth transition.

A transition board would be established to advise the minister to ensure the change from regional to single-tier government is seamless and effective. This includes making recommendations to the minister to resolve complex transition matters and help ensure sound financial stewardship during this period.

To get this done, we are looking to bring together a group of people with deep expertise and credibility in municipal operations, in finance, service delivery, housing, labour relations, among others. The board can only be appointed if and after the legislation passes, and if passed, we will want to make the appointments quickly to bring them online as quickly as possible, and this is important for us to make sure we're doing this right.

The transition board would be dissolved on January 31, 2025, or at a later date prescribed by the minister. The cost of the transition board would be the responsibility of Peel and its lower-tier municipalities, and this reflects past practices when it comes to municipal restructuring in Ontario.

The board's work will help to facilitate this change in local government and help prepare Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to become single-tier municipalities, and all of these processes will be developed, will be transparent and will be clear so that all residents and those involved know what the plan is—no surprises.

The transition board's recommendations would inform subsequent legislation that, if passed, would address any outstanding restructuring matters and would enable an orderly transition by January 1, 2025. We look forward to hearing and are prepared to carefully consider the recommendations of the transition board.

The board's work is expected to touch on a range of matters, including labour relations and contractual obligations in the respective municipalities. As such, the government does not intend to make the board's findings public. The government intends to keep key partners updated as it works through this process.

And our government expects local services to continue with no impact on residents. Again, our government expects local services to continue with no impact on residents, and the transition board will advise the province on how services should be addressed when dissolution takes place on January 1, 2025.

In the coming weeks, the province will also name facilitators, and those facilitators will continue to be relevant to the needs of communities or whether the lower-tier municipalities are mature enough to pursue dissolution. We are going to ensure that we're working towards a clear plan, and we are in the process of assembling the resources to support the work of facilitators as we move forward.

So details regarding the facilitators and the timing of their appointments are currently under development and further information will be provided once the process is complete. These details will be announced in the coming weeks.

Madam Speaker, these reviews will help determine whether and how two-tier government is able to efficiently address the challenges faced by Ontarians today, particularly when it comes to building homes and what steps will need be to taken in order to ensure two-tier government is provided, improved and made efficient.

Ensuring continuity and efficiency at the local level to deliver on shared provincial-municipal priorities, particularly as we are on track to build the 1.5 million homes desperately needed—this is a part of Ontario's continued action to address our housing crisis.

Madam Speaker, when I mentioned duplicate layers of planning authority earlier, that may have been unclear for those members in the House who may not have come from a municipal background, but it is truly a challenge knowing that you have a great proposal or a plan that is going to help supportive housing or having supportive housing development charges waived at a municipal council level but not waived at a regional council level. These are the things that we have to weed through and have to face when we have a regional governance structure, and only when all members of that council are on the same page can we at times have a combined agreement that things like development charges should be removed. But, thank goodness for Bill 23, we are not having development charges on supportive housing.

I'm just going to go into some of the Municipal Act and give a brief overview of the three types of municipalities in Ontario as defined by the Municipal Act, 2001. There are three types: single-tier, upper-tier and lower-tier, and in Ontario there is no other type of municipality. As things currently stand, the region of Peel is an upper-tier municipality; Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are lower-tier municipalities. These three municipalities operate together in a two-tier system. The Municipal Act sets out the responsibilities and powers of each type of municipality: Peel as the upper-tier municipality and Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon as the lower, as I just said. Another way of looking at it is: Which level of municipality delivers what services?

1540

I want to point out for some of the members that the official name of a municipality may include a term such as township, village, town or city, and you are likely familiar with such terms as county or region, often used in the names of upper-tier municipalities. However, such terms usually do not determine the legal powers and responsibilities of a municipality. So, to be clear, Mississauga and Brampton may call themselves cities, but they have no more responsibilities in a two-tier system than does Caledon, which refers to itself as a town.

Under the Municipal Act, the roles and responsibilities for the three types of municipalities are standardized and clarified. An upper-tier municipality is usually responsible for arterial roads, policing, sewer and water systems, waste

disposal, and health and social services. Lower-tier municipalities are usually responsible for services such as local roads, fire protection, recreation and local land use planning. I want to add that municipalities in an upper-tier/lower-tier system can work together to agree upon and change which tier is responsible for certain services and can migrate that responsibility between tiers. Lower-tier municipalities collect taxes for their own purposes and for the associated upper tier and for school boards. All of these municipalities—single-tier, upper-tier and lower-tier—have municipal councils.

So far, I've described the system as it works in the upper-tier/lower-tier municipal structure, but let's look at single-tier municipalities. An example of a single-tier municipality is the city that we are in, the city of Toronto. A single-tier municipality is responsible for all local services. That means roads, transit, policing, fire protection, sewer, water systems, garbage collection and waste disposal, land use planning, health and social services, and recreation. These municipalities collect taxes for their own purposes and for school boards. That is the status that our bill, if passed, would give the city of Mississauga, the city of Brampton and the town of Caledon. The region of Peel would no longer exist.

But most importantly, this proposed legislation is also supported by a number of residents that I've spoken to, because they see the challenges that we have. They see that there is opportunity for us to have one standardized process; one council to delegate to, to speak to; less confusion about which roads are regional roads, which roads are city roads; a more streamlined approach so that our residents are served better. And also, thinking about the future planning of the city of Brampton, the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon, having the ability for your council to sit down and project and make official plans that map out how their vision is for their city—these are vital areas for us to be really putting our energy into, supporting municipal councils to make these decisions.

The time is ripe for these large municipalities and fast-growing communities to have the tools and the autonomy they need to support growth and build homes in the years to come. Our government's intent is to help Mississauga, Caledon and Brampton to prepare for their futures as thriving and successful communities. I'm proud to be a member of the government that is ready to partner with these municipalities and help support them as they go through this change.

I know change is scary. Change can be unsettling. But when you have a clear plan, and when you have the well-thought-out process that our government is putting forward, it decreases that worry and that concern, because we know that we are creating a plan that is going to be supportive of what the needs are in all these municipalities.

I'm proud to be a member of the government that is going to support them and all municipalities in Ontario as we work to build the homes that are so desperately needed in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and today to speak on the time allocation motion. But before I do, I would just like to beg your indulgence and the House's indulgence. Today is our 37th anniversary. My wife has suffered for 37 years.

For those of you who haven't met Ria, I can tell you just a couple of things. For a brief period, I was finance critic for the NDP, and I came home and I told her that I was the finance critic. She did the books on the farm. All she did was laugh—not a comment. Then I came home one day and I said, "I'm whip for the NDP." And she goes, "Well, what's a whip supposed to be?"—because she didn't really follow us. I said, "I'm supposed to organize that people are in the right place at the right time." And she just walked away again, laughing. Now I'm House leader and I've never bothered trying to explain that because she wouldn't believe it anyway. She is the love of my life, and I'm really happy that I got—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for your indulgence.

Today, we're debating a time allocation motion. For those of you, if anyone's watching, basically what a time allocation motion does, it takes a part of the normal passage—the normal way a bill passes in the House, it takes a part out. The government can choose and put forward this motion. We are generally opposed to time allocation. We are opposed to this one too, for a specific reason.

The bill that the time allocation motion covers is Bill 112, An Act to provide for the dissolution of The Regional Municipality of Peel. We voted against second reading this morning. But not actually—and I think I'm comfortable to say this: not because we're absolutely opposed to the dissolution process. Quite frankly, I think the jury is still out whether it's a good idea or not. There are people on both sides. It's because it is a huge undertaking. We've got two what are cities and one what is a town—now they're under a regional municipality, and the government is proposing to split them up. I am sure that there are advantages for that to happen, and there are also disadvantages.

I know very little about the region of Peel; let's be upfront. The little I know about the region of Peel is that for one term, I was on the board of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and their head office was on Argentia Road in Streetsville. So that little part of Peel, I know. But it is going to be a major, major undertaking.

I listened very closely to the last speaker, and she made some good points. But some of those points don't really withstand scrutiny. And why I say that is because what the time allocation motion specifically does in this case is take the committee process out of the bill. And committee is where you actually—before a bill gets final passage, you should take the bill to committee. And especially in this case, you could hold the committee's hearings in the region of Peel, and get input on what the potential pitfalls and benefits are. Actually, I think in the long run, it would make the people of Peel, regardless if they're in favour or not, feel much more included in the process.

1550

So when the previous speaker said that the government is going to take the time to get things right, I'm not sure that that is the same as taking one of the big parts of public participation out of the structure of how this is going to proceed. Again, this is a major, major undertaking, and we're not saying that the committee process—believe it or not, we are not trying to stall this legislation. But we want to be sure that the government and all legislators—but mostly the people of Mississauga, of Brampton, of Caledon—have as much access as possible to determine how their future is going to play out.

The government has indicated that there is going to be a transition board. I fully understand that. There are going to be some big decisions that are going to have to be made, and there are going to be some big disputes that are going to have to be solved. We know that going in. If you look at some of the news reports, although the three mayors are supportive, and I trust their knowledge of their municipalities, you can see in the news reports that there are already differing views on how the spoils should be split. That's a super-legitimate concern.

So the more time that we take or the government takes to allow the people of the regional municipality of Peel to put their input in, the better decisions you're going to make. This government doesn't have the greatest track record on taking people into account.

Mr. Will Bouma: Come on.

Mr. John Vanthof: It doesn't, and I'm going to use an example that has just happened. I know this example. When the government proposed—and this bill hasn't passed yet either—Bill 97, on severances on farms, if that had gone to the farm organizations first, it would have been much better for everyone. The government, I think, is now making the right decision—I'll give credit where credit is due—but it took all the agricultural organizations to put everything in to do that. That could have been done much easier.

You would think that severances on farms would be a fairly simple issue; it's not. So can you imagine: You take a region that has got two-million-plus people—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Or 1.5 million people. Can you imagine the things that are going to come up where you're going, "Whoa, I wish somebody had thought of that sooner"? So every opportunity that we have to put this proposal in front of the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon—every opportunity—we need to do it.

But this one, this time allocation motion, actually takes one of the opportunities away, and that doesn't bode well for the future of this proposal, because if the first step of the government is to propose the bill—and that's their right—but if their first real step is to say, "We're not going to let the people who are going to be impacted speak at this stage," that's not right.

I've spoken on time allocation motions for a few years, and this one really frustrates me, because in previous—this was with the previous Liberal government. They did

time allocation motions, and it was usually about things that were happening far, far away. I would always rail: "Why don't you hold committee meetings where this is actually happening? Why don't you go to northern Ontario, if it's a northern Ontario bill?" And they never did. They held the hearings in Toronto.

Here we've got a bill that is impacting a major part of the population of the GTA, and it wouldn't be that hard to find a venue or a couple of venues and say, "Let's hold a committee meeting in Streetsville." I'm sure there are pretty big places in Caledon and Mississauga—maybe not so much in Caledon; Caledon is pretty rural. Caledon might have some big issues. The people of Caledon, I think, should have a bigger voice in this, because when I keep hearing the government talk about housing—we keep hearing that this bill is going to create more housing. I'm a bit worried that a lot of that housing might be on farmland in Caledon. But that's something that we have to find out.

But when the first thing that the government does is that the government doesn't need to talk to the people, the government knows better, even if they believe that—and on some things, you're right; it would be good if you could prove that, because if you held public meetings, committee hearings, I'm sure that we would all learn something. We have all been on committee hearings throughout the province, and every time I've been at a committee hearing, I always walk out and think, "Do you know what? I didn't know that." There are lots of things—believe me, there are lots of things that I don't know, but that is the purpose of committee. The committee process is one of the most important processes of the bill.

So when the bill collapsed last night, I'm not sure that that was really a problem, because who really needs to talk regarding this bill are the people who live in the region of Peel. Every time you give them an opportunity to speak, we're all going to learn something, and we'll make the legislation better.

This time allocation motion is going to pass; I'm under no illusion. But really, if you think about it, if you really think about it, what have you got to lose by holding a few committee hearings in the areas that are impacted? What have you got to lose? You have a lot to lose by not listening to the people. As I said, I'm sure there are advantages to single-tier municipalities. There are probably advantages to upper-tier. In our area, we have a single-tier municipality, and there are times when we wish we had an upper tier to actually take care of the issues that the single tiers can't handle. We have a small regional airport in Armstrong township—

Interruption.

Mr. John Vanthof: Whew. One of my fans just fell asleep.

Interjection: Let's make sure they're still alive.

Mr. John Vanthof: I think we're okay.

Interjection: The building is falling apart.

Mr. John Vanthof: See? We need to act on this quick.

Anyway, in the district of Timiskaming, much like the region of Peel—it was created in 1974 by the Bill Davis government; it was the county of Peel before. But in the district of Timiskaming, we have a small airport—actually, two airports in the district of Timiskaming, but one is the majority of the air ambulance. But it belongs to the township of Armstrong. The township of Armstrong maybe has 1,000 people. They can't handle that airport. That airport should actually be run by the district, but we don't have that mechanism.

1600

So there is an advantage. It would be an advantage for us. Not everybody in Timiskaming agrees that we should have a regional municipality, but there are advantages to it. But there are also advantages to single-tier.

Again, we're not opposed to the intent of the bill, provided it's going to be done right. What we're opposed to is the government, at the first opportunity—they announce their intent to dissolve the region of Peel. It might be great; it might be bad; it might be a wash. There are going to be winners and losers. There are always winners and losers—always, always, always. There's going to be. But the first opportunity they take is, "We're going to take out the committee process in this bill." That's, right away, step one: removing the ability for people to speak to the bill. It's going to be a harder jump to make now, saying, "Oh, we're going to be fully transparent and fully accountable," when the first thing you do is take out the committee process.

You know what? If you put the committee process back in, if you actually voted against this time allocation motion, it would be messier. Having a few committee meetings in the region of Peel, you might learn a few things you didn't want to know. But that's not a bad thing. That's not a bad thing.

We're not opposed to looking at any bill, but particularly this one, that could have benefits for the people it impacts. But we desperately, we dearly want the government to actually give the people who are going to be impacted by this legislation the chance to make comments before it's so far down the road that those comments will be ignored. Because the chance for the public to make comments before the transition board is appointed, the chance for anyone to say, "Hey, you know what? What about this?"—it could save millions of dollars. It could save everyone a lot of grief.

I say this on behalf of the opposition, from the bottom of my heart: If the government believes this is the right way to go, which obviously they believe because they're putting the bill forward, then let's make sure that you do the best job you can for the people of Peel. Taking out the committee process in the first stage—I understand there's another bill coming, but taking out the ability for people from the region of Peel to comment on this first bill, I don't understand why the government is doing it. I really don't. I don't understand what's going to be gained from it. I don't understand how you can make the legislation better by taking out public participation, especially when you know for sure that this is going to be an enormous job. It's

going to be a tough job to do this. I think everyone here knows. I remember when amalgamations happened. The region of Peel was amalgamated long before the Harris government pushed amalgamation. I remember how difficult amalgamations were, how strenuous, the rifts they caused. Dissolution, I think, is going to be that times 10. So the more that you can look and the more you can identify the problems before you have to deal with them in a crisis situation, the better off you are.

I implore the government, encourage the government, to vote against this time allocation motion, specifically the members from the region of Peel, so that their constituents can have the maximum benefit of what this Legislature has, and that is to provide a committee process so they can actually comment on these bills, specifically Bill 112, before it gets any farther. I implore the government to do that, specifically the members of Peel.

With that, I'd like to cede the floor.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I'm very delighted to stand to talk about this motion. The fact that the motion is expediting the process is emphasizing how important our government sees the importance of the bill, the importance of starting the process. I totally agree with my colleague from the other side of the House in regard to how difficult the process is going to be and how complex the process is. Yes, I understand that. That's why we see that we should maybe start right away and not waste more time.

It's important also to emphasize that this is a bill that was put in place because of the people of Mississauga. The people of Mississauga asked us for that. For a long time, Hazel McCallion, our late mayor, had been advocating for this. Hazel was a very unique leader. Since I immigrated to Canada 28 years ago—I landed in Mississauga, at Pearson airport, and then to the heart of Mississauga. Basically, since I landed, I was in Mississauga for 28 years. I've seen Mississauga growing. I've lived the growth of Mississauga since there were lots of farms around, and the building and how exponentially Mississauga has grown with the leadership of Hazel McCallion.

I always say that in every big corporation, every big project, every big idea, there is one person who is the visionary, who has the vision for that, has the belief that it can be done and continues persistently going after the idea until it happens. We look at Microsoft, Bill Gates; Tesla, Elon Musk; many other corporations have the same thing. And Mississauga's success, the Mississauga that we see today is because of Hazel McCallion. When we were Erindale, Cooksville, Streetsville, Lisgar—smaller communities—she had the vision of building the Mississauga we see today, and she worked since she first got elected in 1978.

For 36 years, until 2014, she had been working hard to get this vision to be reality. She was always talking about vision. Maybe only she saw that vision. Maybe 20 years ago, 30 years ago, when people spoke about Mississauga, about the megacity or the metropolitan, they wouldn't believe that this would happen.

In very simple words, when I immigrated 28 years ago and I sent to my friends, saying, “This is my address,” they said, “We thought you were living in Toronto. Where is this Mississauga?” Nobody knew where Mississauga was on the map. Now a lot of people know Mississauga, because Mississauga became the third-biggest city in Canada.

1610

The fact that we are dissolving Peel region—it was not fair: the third-biggest city in Canada and fourth-biggest city in Canada in one unit, with all the differences in goals and visions. It’s very difficult to manage that. I think this is a great move to dissolve Peel region and give Mississauga, as a municipality, the ability and the tools to be successful, the tools to continue being successful, to drive the growth.

We see Mississauga again changing from a standard big city to a metropolitan city, with 139 towers coming up. We have many towers. Last year, we had The Arc—or the year before last The Arc came out. Now we have the highest residential building coming to Mississauga. We have the Square One District. So there are a lot of projects coming to Mississauga. There are a lot of businesses coming to Mississauga.

We are receiving 500,000 new immigrants to Canada every year for the next three years. That’s a million and a half people coming to Canada. I would, myself, envision that Mississauga might get at least 400,000 to 500,000 of those. With that kind of a goal, we need, really, the ability of the municipality to be able to meet that goal.

Housing: We have been mandating some of the municipalities—the new legislation for housing, trying to tackle the housing crisis, giving every municipality some goals. With accountability comes authority. I think it’s fair to say that we need to give them the tools to be able to meet those mandates we are giving them.

I think, last year, Mississauga only got 2,100 new units, when we are targeting 120,000 in the next 10 years. There is a big gap in there. Without having the capability to execute, to move fast, to take some decisions here and there, I think it’s very difficult. Two-tier government is difficult to move things. I’m sure that Hazel, as we are speaking now about Mississauga, is overseeing us. I hope that this is her wish coming true.

Talking about the vision for a master plan, I think Mississauga now has to start looking to a new master plan, where we have a high-density metropolitan city with all the transportation and utilities. All the services need to be looked over again to scale to the right level to cover and support this growth. I think this decision of dissolving Peel region will help give Mississauga’s municipal management the ability to take those hard decisions.

When we look into other aspects of the dissolving, again, as my colleague said, something about every side having its own cons and pros and supporters and agonists, it’s not going to be bulletproof. We know it’s going to be a hard divorce. But I think Brampton deserves to have their own decisions and Mississauga deserves to have their own decisions. As a Mississauga resident, I wish Mississauga

all the best. For me, for many years, Canada was Mississauga. I didn’t see other than Mississauga for maybe three years, the early years of my residency in Canada. So for me, Mississauga is Canada.

When I look back to those days, I was fascinated by the vision Hazel had for how we were going to grow the city. I had the honour to work beside her on the mayor’s advisory board, where we sat and discussed what we would like to see coming to Mississauga, what we’d like to see happening in Mississauga. One item which I can’t even forget, because, for me, it was very impressive—we were sitting once in one of those meetings and she posed the question: “We need to think how we can make the immigrants arriving in Canada at the airport, coming to see Canada for the first time”—especially in Mississauga, because the airport is in Mississauga; it makes sense that some of those people would stay in Mississauga—“How can you make those people feel at home? How can we help them to integrate? How can we make things easier? What do you guys think?” The advisory board had many people from different cultures, different parts of the spectrum of Mississauga, and everybody came with an idea. She was taking notes and following up on how we could deploy some of those ideas to make the people feel at home as soon as they arrive.

I think this is one of the unique facilities Mississauga gives. Despite the fact that new immigrants might be facing issues and some people would be happy, some people would be less happy, some people would be upset, and some people would say it was a mistake, but all of them, 100% of the people, when you ask them, would say, “The big difference I felt when I came to Mississauga, for whatever reason, I felt that this is my home.” And that’s actually a lot of thought from Hazel McCallion and the team on the advisory board. Many people put a lot of deep thought into this. I think we need to continue with this when we give Mississauga some of the tools to continue planning their personality, the Mississauga personality, the Mississauga culture, the Mississauga unique environment.

We have, I think, 151 different nationalities in Mississauga, and you still can feel that everybody is in harmony in the city. You don’t feel those differences. On the contrary, with Celebration Square, with the festivities we do in Mississauga every year, you feel that every culture has the opportunity to showcase their culture. They’re proud of their culture.

Last weekend, there was Carassauga. It was amazing. I think I visited 12 pavilions, meaning 12 countries. Within four to six hours, you’ve visited 12 countries, ate their food, listened to their music, looked through their arts, checked some of the goods, some of the delights, some of the artwork—unique art and stuff. Everybody is happy to see the other cultures and discover or, I would say, enjoy the other cultures, and trying to, at the same time, showcase their cultures.

I think this is unique. Again, that was a visionary festival. Hazel McCallion supported that festival 38 years ago. I came 28 years ago, so I lost 10 years of Carassauga, but

I still see—what I saw last weekend was an amazing celebration of Hazel's vision for Mississauga. It's amazing. Every time we run into some of those activities, we feel—

Interjection.

1620

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yes. We miss you, Hazel. You will stay in there as an angel spirit from Mississauga. I was very, very lucky to work beside her. I learned a lot. She inspired me a lot. She was a real hurricane.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: As part of the House team, part of my responsibilities is to speak to time allocation motions. I can honestly say that in the time that the Conservatives have been in power, particularly in the last couple of years, I don't recall many time allocation motions that have been before us. When the Liberals were in power, they were in front of us pretty much every single bill.

I say that for the fact that I find it interesting that this is the bill that has been chosen to be time-allocated. And I find it concerning. We had to make the decision to not support Bill 112 due to the fact that it was time-allocated. You heard from our House leader, the member who spoke from the NDP before me, that this is a huge undertaking, dissolving an entire region, the region of Peel, where I believe there are over a million people—I don't have the—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: One point five.

Miss Monique Taylor: How many?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: One point five.

Miss Monique Taylor: So 1.5 million people are affected by this decision that was tabled the last Thursday of our sitting. It was second reading yesterday. Today, we're in a time allocation motion to speak to it. Tomorrow, I'm sure, will be third reading. And by the end of this week, this bill will already be passed that affects 1.5 million people in the entire region of Peel. That is a huge undertaking.

The time allocation motion removes the committee process. The committee process is where a bill should be made better, where people from the community could consult to be able to bring forward their thoughts and ideas to the government to be able to make changes and amendments to that bill to then come back for third reading as, hopefully, a better bill.

We know that the government, particularly this government, has not accepted any amendments. I don't know if they've accepted any of our amendments in the five years that they've been there. If they have, they've been very minor, because we've definitely put a lot of amendments forward to make their legislation better. But it's like "Father knows best" around here, and that would be the Conservative government, because they just are not open to change or to recommendations to make their legislation better.

But this time, they're cutting that portion out. That's why I raise the fact that we really haven't seen time allocation motions hardly at all. We have been through the committee process; we have been through the full process.

And now to find it on this very, very serious bill is concerning. So we feel it's necessary to stand up for the people of Peel.

We have watched in Hamilton—I'll speak for that. Back in 1999, I believe, we were amalgamated. Premier Harris, the Conservative Premier at that time, said that there would be a huge reduction in taxes for the people of the Hamilton area. I believe 30% is what an article I found talked about, that there would be this big reduction in taxes and the people of Hamilton were going to love it.

Yet when it actually happened, there was a 50% increase to taxes. We're still hearing the fights from the smaller areas when it comes to area rating and who's paying for what services and how all of that's working. That fight continues still to this day, where people are unhappy with the changes made from a higher level of government to municipalities. Like our House leader said, we have no objection to this. I can honestly say I do not know much about Peel; I don't claim to know much about Peel, but the mayors have said quite a bit. That's where I find it concerning. Yes, the mayor of Mississauga wants this. Their report and their studies show that Mississauga will benefit—\$1 billion—from this process. But the mayor of Brampton? He says that they will suffer—about \$1 billion—from this. That is a huge price tag.

I'm just going to pull out a couple of pieces, because it's a long article, but there are some serious things, in theory, that will affect Brampton. I think it's really unfortunate that all the members from Brampton who have talked about this have not discussed any of the concerns that mayor the has brought forward and that the team of staff and people at city hall in Brampton have brought forward, real facts and figures. They haven't mentioned any of it, and that's concerning. The people of Brampton deserve to hear the truth. They deserve to be heard. They deserve to not fall into the face of higher taxes at the end of the day to do better for Mississauga. That's not okay.

What's he saying? "These costs are real—and they are enormous.

"For example, the two water and waste treatment plants that service Peel are located in Mississauga. What Mayor Crombie won't acknowledge is that Brampton helped to pay for these essential facilities and the dissolution of Peel means Brampton will lose them as they have reached capacity—which also means a service agreement between the municipalities is not an option.

"Having to rebuild our water and waste water system from scratch is going to be both expensive and urgent—our research estimates at least \$4 billion."

Now, this is not just to Peel; this is only to Brampton. So those are some pretty high risks for the people of Brampton to have to face in property tax increases.

I'm sure he has a lot more to say here: The "four Peel Regional Police facilities ... are located in Mississauga. Policing costs across the region have been calculated using an assessment-based formula, meaning that every household in Peel pays the same amount.

"Mayor Crombie claims that they subsidize our policing costs, but this is simply incorrect. Data supplied by Peel Regional Police shows that Mississauga makes

greater use of policing services, including more calls for service, due to their larger population.”

So there are problems, and these are the things that could have been worked out in a committee process.

I know that the bill talks about a transition team of five members, I believe, but we don't know who they are. The minister is going to be able to appoint these folks. We've seen government appointments before. We know that government appointments get the government to the endgame that they're looking for. That's not helpful to the people of Brampton, not at all. They have quite a few members here in this House, and yet not one of them has mentioned this stuff—because I've been here the entire time that Bill 112 has been debated and talked about, and I haven't heard any of that.

And then there's the quote from the mayor of Caledon, Mayor Annette Groves. This is a very small piece of Peel. They're like 5% of Peel. “Caledon mayor” Annette Groves “says she didn't want to leave Peel Region” and described Caledon as the “child” of the Peel “divorce,” given its small size. Despite arguably facing more financial risks than either Mississauga or Brampton, Groves said, “We are confident that we will be taken care of throughout this process.”

I'm glad she's confident. I, on the other hand, am not so much, nor have I seen that in the bill. Nothing is in there in Bill 112 to say that Caledon is going to be taken care of. Caledon deserves to be taken care of. They feel like the child in the divorce of Peel? That's a horrible position to put that very small township in just for the benefit of Mississauga.

1630

How this is all happening so quickly, Speaker, is quite concerning. I'm not going to surmise, I'm not going to guess what's happening, but I'm sure the people of those regions are. They are wondering why this is happening and why this is happening so quickly—and not just in the regular process, but to be fast-tracked. Fast-tracking this huge, huge endeavour doesn't make sense.

It's going to come at a cost. It's going to come at a cost to the people of Brampton and to the people of Caledon. Unfortunately, their members are not in this House sticking up for them. That is concerning. That's why we're voting against this Bill 112. That's why we're talking about it during the time allocation process, because the people of Brampton and the people of Caledon deserve a voice. They deserve somebody to stand up for them, because it's not their members who have been elected to represent them. They represent the people of that riding, not the speech writers of the Ford government. That's what it's come down to, and that's really unfortunate. It's very, very unfortunate.

I'm sure there are other things in here that I wanted to talk about. Let's also talk about the over 4,000 CUPE members who have no idea what all of this is going to mean for their jobs and their livelihoods, the things that try to keep the roof over their heads and food on their tables and pay their child care costs. They're in complete limbo, seeing this be fast-tracked and not having any idea what's going to happen to their jobs. They're very clearly asking

to be sitting at the transition table. I think they need to be at that table. They need to be part of these conversations. They are the same people who have been treating these waste water programs, who have been fixing the roads, doing all of the services that are going to be broken apart in Peel and carved off to each municipality. Those are the workers who do the jobs, day in and day out. They are asking to be at the table. We hope that when the minister does the appointments of all of the transition team, they include the voice of the workers, the people who actually do the work in the city of Peel.

Bill 112—before it even got to this process, we'd heard loud and clear about the lack of consultation. You know, debate, arguments, different sides, consultation: You're able to talk it out. All of those things are to make a good decision. By hearing all the different sides and different pieces, you should be able to funnel it out in the end and come out with the best decision that affects everyone. We're not seeing any of that. The people of Peel are not seeing this.

The people of Mississauga will probably be happy because they're going to get the windfall from this, but everybody else is taking the fall. Brampton has been very clear about the costs that they're seeing just off the top: \$1 billion, then the \$4 billion, and water and waste water and the police costs. I mean, to rebuild this entire thing that has been built up pretty much in Mississauga is going to be a huge cost for Brampton. I don't know how a small township like Caledon is going to be able to cover that cost.

By cutting out the committee process, those voices have been lost. All of that could have been talked about in the committee process. That's the purpose of the committee process. Instead, we're seeing it truncated and we're seeing it pushed through as quickly as it possibly can happen. By tomorrow, this entire bill will be passed and the government will be off creating a transition team of people who are going to give them the outcome that they're looking for at the end of the day.

Caledon is also an interesting part of this entire bill, since the 413—which, as we all know so well, is running through farmland and carving up our greenbelt—runs right through Caledon. That is going to cause huge sprawl in the town of Caledon and huge growth. It is going to need all of those valuable services, on their own. It's going to need the waste water. It's going to need the police services. It's going to need a whole bunch of stuff that it was able to just fend off and just feed off of Peel. It will no longer have that ability and will have to be able to stand alone with the huge growth that's coming there. I'm sure there are many people in Caledon who are already unhappy about the fact that they're getting the 413 and that they're carving up the greenbelt and that they're taking away farmland. And now they're getting stuck with this too. That's going to cause huge problems for their families, huge problems for their farms, huge tax increases to their base. They're definitely the child that is getting left behind in this divorce, I would say.

During debate yesterday, we heard that the whole reason for this whole thing was because of housing. Everything that happens on that side right now, it's all because

it's fixing housing. Well, we're in the worst housing crisis we've ever been in, and they've been there for five years pumping these housing bills through. Nothing is correcting their mess. It's actually making it worse.

But the interesting part of Bill 112 is that it doesn't even say "housing." I looked through the bill yesterday to try to find the housing aspect. When I did my debate yesterday, I had questions come from the government side, and I continued to throw back at them: "Please tell me where it says 'housing.' Please tell me where in this legislation it is going to make housing better for the people of Peel." It's actually not, because if you think about it, the region of Peel would have housing services and management and all that economic development—or residential, all of the development side anyway. So if you break it up, now you have to carve up all of those offices that are going to have to stand alone. Now they're going to have to be able to, like I said, fend for themselves and be able to pick up these pieces that the region previously had done. That's not going to make it better. It's actually going to cause more chaos. And there's nothing in here that says that it's going to create housing.

I'm really, honestly, hopeful that the next round of the government's debate time will tell me the specifics and the facts of how this makes housing. We probably could have asked that question in the committee process, but as you see, we're here without the committee process and without any ability to ask these so necessary questions that I know the people of Peel are going to want to know about. There is no way that the people of Peel are not concerned when they're seeing this process happening, and when they find out—because this is a bubble; many folks don't even have any idea what happens here. But when they find out that they weren't even able to have a say at all? There's going to be quite a few people who figure it out: "Well, I would have gone to committee. I would have talked about this," or "I own businesses here," or "I'm part of this," or "I'm the employee of this." And yet they're being stifled by this government and pushed out of any process for any type of input. "Father knows best," I think, is going to make a mess of this one, and that's not okay.

For 1.5 million people, their homes, their taxes, their fire services, their police services, their water, their waste water—every municipal piece that allows our communities to function is going to be affected by this divorce. And the child, Caledon, is really going to be the one that takes it the most. It's really unfortunate. I would love to see the government pull this back. I know they're not going to, but there's always hope—if it wasn't for hope, Speaker, if it wasn't for hope.

But they have to do something. They've had to have heard our pleas on this. They have had to have heard some of the quotes that I've put forward today by the mayors, just facts that I've been able to pull up to be able to speak to this today.

1640

There's an opportunity; it's not too late. The legislation has not passed. Do the right thing: Take this bill into Peel. Take it right into Peel; take committee there. Let the

people of Peel have their say. Let them hear the pros and cons of what's going to happen. Let them at least participate in something that is going to affect them so absolutely and drastically. Tax increases to their homes is one of my biggest concerns, when the cost of living is already out of control and people are already struggling.

I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon in this House with respect to the government's notice of motion number 15, the time allocation on Bill 112, the Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution), 2023. This proposed legislation would begin the process of dissolving the region of Peel, if passed, to ensure that local municipalities, those being Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, have the autonomy they need to deliver on local priorities—and yes, that includes our shared goal of building 1.5 million homes over the next decade.

Speaker, this legislation honours the legacy of Mississauga's longest-serving mayor, the late Hazel McCallion. Hazel McCallion was instrumental to that city's remarkable growth over her 36 years of service as mayor.

As the matriarch of Mississauga, Mayor McCallion was a long-time advocate for greater autonomy for her city. Because Mayor McCallion experienced first-hand what excessive bureaucracy, duplication and job-killing red tape can do to hinder the growth of municipalities across Ontario, she was well-positioned, over so many terms with clear mandates, term after term, to speak for greater autonomy for Mississauga.

I echo the comments of others in this House who have said that Mayor McCallion was an advocate for autonomy for her city because she was always looking to the future. And this legislation is following that by looking to the future.

I want to assure the House that this proposed legislation, if passed, will give to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon the continuity and the efficiency at the local level to deliver on shared provincial-municipal priorities, allowing and empowering those municipalities to address local needs for their residents.

Through the proposed legislation before us, our government's plan would help ensure the continuation of the high-quality and necessary services the citizens of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have come to expect, all the while improving on the efficiency of local governments as these municipalities prepare for future growth by working with provincial and municipal partners on achieving municipal housing targets. This is an essential component of the bill. The region of Peel includes some of the largest and fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario, all of which are poised for increased population growth over the next 10 years. If this proposed legislation is passed, Speaker, the cities of Mississauga and Brampton and the town of Caledon will become separate, single-tier municipalities by January 1, 2025.

Some are asking: why the urgency to rush to pass this legislation? Some have even suggested that there has been no consultation. Rest assured, Speaker, this request for greater autonomy has been made and echoed by many, many municipal leaders in Peel over the last five, 10 and even 20 years, and that includes the late Mayor McCallion. The long-standing request for greater autonomy, for more efficiency, for respect for the growth that is the future of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, is being recognized by this proposed legislation. Municipal leaders and partners have produced countless reports and studies demonstrating that larger cities like Mississauga and Brampton have the capacity to deliver municipal services without the added bureaucracy of regional government.

So while His Majesty's loyal opposition claims that there has been no consultation, there has, in fact, been much consultation in the form of input and requests from municipalities and municipal leaders seeking the tools and the resources to deliver services more efficiently and at a lower cost. And indeed, we have a representative democracy in this House, where all of the ridings for Peel region are being represented by members of the government, who support or will support this bill. That is parliamentary democracy. That is representative democracy in action, Speaker.

Opposition members, when questioned as to what their position is or would be, could not, at times, give clear answers. For example, when the member for Brampton North simply asked in this House if members would vote yes, no or would they abstain, there was a muddled response, a noncommittal response. I believe the reason for the opposition's dithering around this question—more talk, more study, somehow there's no mandate, somehow there's been no consultation. I don't know who they've been listening to, but I believe the reason for this dithering, for this reluctance, is because this proposed bill and these proposed measures go against everything they stand for.

The previous Liberal government, which of course was propped up for three of 15 years by the NDP—they simply believe that bigger government, multiple layers of bureaucracy—

Interjections.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: They also believe talking over people when they're speaking is helpful, but they believe in multiple levels of bureaucracy. They believe that, somehow, more government is better government. Well, we believe less government is better government. We believe that the citizens can be represented by efficient government, where one layer is removed and duplication is avoided and eliminated. But this belief, shared by the Liberals and NDP over the years, has been disastrous for the people of Ontario, and would be disastrous if it were allowed to continue through the continuation of two-tier government in Peel.

So while the opposition is committed to more studies, more government and more talk, our government is committed to action, less red tape, less duplication, less bureaucracy, and to common sense, getting it done, with shared provincial-municipal priorities and respecting the growth that has already occurred and will occur in the future in Mississauga and Brampton, in particular.

So it is critical, Speaker, that we move quickly on our housing supply crisis. Our Ontario PC government is committed to providing stability and fairness throughout the dissolution process. Through consultation and working with our municipal partners, we are prioritizing the needs of taxpayers, understanding value for money, adhering to collective agreements for municipal workers and ensuring that front-line services and workers can continue without disruption. We understand, Speaker, that safe and prosperous communities, coupled with the delivery of effective front-line services, are the key pillars to local government. That is why we expect local services to continue uninterrupted with no impact to residents.

If the proposed legislation before us is passed, our government intends to appoint a transition board for Peel region to guide these municipalities through the process. This will ensure a stable outcome that respects taxpayers while positioning these municipalities for future growth, all over the next year and a half, targeting January 1, 2025. This transition board would have up to five members, appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to analyze and provide recommendations to the province on matters such as labour relations, review of regional bylaws, and review of regional and lower-tier finances, ensuring fairness for all. The transition board's recommendations would also identify and address any outstanding restructuring matters and enable an orderly transition to January 1, 2025—again, if this bill is passed. And I intend to vote for it.

It wasn't lost on anyone that the mayors of the two largest municipalities in Peel region were present here and are supportive of going forward with this measure. They, too, along with the government members from Peel region, represent the residents of the two large municipalities in Peel region, and I note the mayor of Caledon was here, as well as the Peel region chair. So we have consultation, we have general consensus, and the transition board will work with these leaders to move forward with a plan for transition—orderly transition, successful transition—over the next 18 months.

1650

This bill, by preventing duplication at the upper and lower municipal levels and giving our municipal partners the tools and the autonomy they need to address local housing needs, can empower them to meet the housing goals of Peel region residents and meet their expectations, as all Peel region residents and Ontarians expect. This is a crucial step towards ensuring that the province is ready for the growth to come.

And so Peel region officials, having long requested this move, endorsed by not only current Mississauga mayor Bonnie Crombie, current Brampton mayor Patrick Brown and current Caledon mayor Annette Groves—we can be assured that Peel residents are being respected, are being consulted through their leaders. We know that Premier Doug Ford and our team have been listening and continue to listen to the advice of Peel's municipal leaders in this regard.

Our government is delivering on its promises once again. Our priority is about people. And just as with all

communities across Ontario, our government is ready to facilitate measures that ensure that Peel region, the soon-to-be-independent municipalities within it, and all Ontario communities continue to be among the best places in the world to live, to work, to learn, to play, and to raise a family.

The best is yet to come, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm honoured to rise here today to speak to this bill, which really is a Herculean bill before us. It's a bill that will change the future of 1.5 million people in the province of Ontario, and it will put the three municipalities in the region of Peel—the city of Brampton, the city of Mississauga and Caledon—in turmoil. The decisions that this bill will enact have significant consequences to the people—the real people living and working in these communities. And yet here we are talking about time allocation.

This is a bill that deserves our attention and our time. It deserves that we in this House stand up for the real people who will be impacted by this and ask the kinds of questions and take the kind of time to reflect and do our job as legislators to make sure what is being passed in this House is good legislation, is legislation that is in the best interests of the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Peel. Unfortunately, instead of discussing the bill, what we have before us is a time allocation bill. For people who don't understand this—and why would you, because you shouldn't have to, because you should expect that you have a good government that would follow the Westminster parliamentary tradition and make sure that these bills are adequately considered before us.

Let me explain what a time allocation bill means. What that means is, the government has decided that this bill does not require debate. They have decided that the seven and a half hours of debate that we had is enough; that that's enough time to consider the future of 1.5 million people and the billions and billions of dollars of assets and the services that they rely on; that that's all the time it takes. This motion also says that this bill doesn't even have to go to committee. So not only are we not having wholesome debate here—questions and answers to put to one another to come up with better legislation—this government is skipping committee. And so for you folks to understand, if you even are aware of what's happening—because this was just dropped last Thursday, and really, for all intents and purposes, this bill could be passed within under a week. For those of you who were aware of this and had concerns about how your taxpayer dollars are being directed, how your services that you rely on will be changing, you might want to come to committee. You might want to come to committee to tell the government how this impacts you. You might want to come to committee to explain to the government that you are concerned about Peel Regional Police services and how that's going to be dealt with, and that you're concerned about some of the current problems they are already facing, and maybe propose changes and ask the government what they're thinking. That's a right that every citizen should have. We shouldn't have to have legislation

that says that people should be consulted on changes that will impact them significantly.

So not only is this government not going to have a committee where people can come here to Queen's Park to talk to the government—really, for a bill of this magnitude, you would think that they would take the opportunity to go to the region of Peel so that the citizens of Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon have an opportunity to have their say. But no, this is not happening. We are debating a time allocation bill that cuts all of that short. Really, it shortchanges the people of the region of Peel from having their say. This is an unbelievable thing that's happening in this Legislature.

We have seen evidence of why people in Ontario should be significantly concerned when this government tries to do anything that not only rushes things through the House but does anything that impacts municipalities, because there has been nothing that this government has done when it comes to municipalities that has actually saved anybody any money. All of these decisions that this government makes when it comes to the municipal order of government—their meddling in the municipal order of government—are costing the people who live in the 444 municipalities across the province of Ontario. They're costing them in increased taxes and cuts to services. It's happening right now.

In Hamilton, like cities across Ontario, we are facing emergencies when it comes to homelessness, mental health, opioid addiction and overdose and poisoning—all across the province. Municipalities are taking unprecedented action to write to this government asking for help. The city of Hamilton issued a letter to Minister Jones and Minister Tibollo saying that they passed a motion declaring homelessness, mental health and opioid overdoses an emergency and that they were writing to request that the provincial government act on measures that would aid in these crises. The letter reads in part: "As this complex issue transcends municipal boundaries, the province is best situated to act decisively in order to meet these goals through their capacity, resources and leadership. Hamilton cannot accomplish this undertaking alone, and provincial leadership is needed to ensure success." This is signed by the mayor of Hamilton, Andrea Horwath. This is just one of the many letters that this government is receiving from mayors and municipalities across the province that are struggling with homelessness, struggling with opioid addiction, struggling with the affordability crisis in the province.

So there's absolutely no reason why the people of the region of Peel should have any confidence that this government will act on their behalf, because so far, they have shown to have turned their back when they're in significant need, which they are now.

As has been said, this is a huge and unprecedented task that is before us. It has been said many times before and the analogy has been used that this is going to be a messy divorce.

The mayor of Brampton, who seems to be the lone voice in the province speaking up for the real people of the city of Brampton—not the Conservative MPPs who represent Brampton—was adamant in saying, "We need to

be made whole for Peel region infrastructure.” Those are the kinds of strong words that we have not heard in this House. We have not heard any of the MPPs for Brampton stand up and say that we need to have ironclad assurances that when this dissolution happens, the people of Brampton will be made whole.

Municipalities have been asking this government to make them whole for COVID, to make them whole for the changes in Bill 23 that took away their development charges, and this government, to date, has failed to make them whole.

So if you’re not standing up for your communities when it comes to development charges and the costs that are landing on municipal taxpayers, then, clearly, you’re not prepared to stand up for the people of Brampton and the region of Peel in general.

1700

The words of Patrick Brown, I think, need to be said in this House. They’re strong words. We need to understand that someone is speaking on behalf of the people. Even though they don’t have an opportunity to go to committee, don’t have an opportunity to engage in debate, this is what we’re hearing from the mayor at least. The mayor, in many respects, is saying, “The fact is that Mississauga holds billions of dollars worth of infrastructure that is needed by all three communities and I intend to make sure that the value of our previous investments and replacement costs are taken into account. Everyone knows you can’t have taxation without representation. Well, I say no dissolution without compensation.”

These are the kinds of strong words we should have expected to hear in this House, but we’re not. The mayor went on to say, “We know our worth—and I am prepared to make sure that we get back everything we have invested into Peel over the years. Fairness for Brampton isn’t something that we hope for—it’s something we demand.”

These may be the kinds of things you would hear if you went to committee. That’s possibly the reason why we are debating a time allocation motion and possibly the reason why this government doesn’t want to hear from the people, because they might hear the same kinds of sentiments that we’re hearing from Mayor Brown as he stands up for the people of his city.

The government stands up and assures us that this is the right thing to do and people will be made whole, despite all of the warnings from the current municipally elected leaders. But you just don’t need to look far back to see that, in fact, government meddling in municipal infrastructure and governance structure always costs taxpayers. It’s never ever a cost savings. There’s a strong body of evidence that shows that this never results in a cost savings to taxpayers.

You have to look no further than to the city of Hamilton, which was a forced amalgamation. At the time Premier Mike Harris introduced the legislation, it was supposed to solve, apparently, what ailed the province. It was forced upon the municipality. Harris and his cabinet promised a 30% decrease in provincial taxes combined with no increase in property taxes by merging municipalities and doing away with politicians and bureaucracy—so

getting rid of big government, as we heard from the MPP from Durham.

Guess how that turned out? It did not turn out that well at all. In fact, rather than a cost savings, according to studies, amalgamation increased property taxes by about 50% in Hamilton, and the long-term debt rose by about 11%. When we now flash forward 25 years later, we have another Progressive Conservative government that is trying to break up the region of Peel without the consultation and the study to see what has happened in the past, to learn from what has happened in the past.

We know Brampton officials are saying that separation will come at a cost because, as we’ve heard, they both paid into the region of Peel for shared services which include housing, waste management, transportation, paramedic, public health. Mayor Patrick Brown has said that Mississauga owes them nearly \$1 billion to replace that infrastructure. This is messy, messy indeed. The only voices that we’re not hearing are the Conservative MPPs who represent Brampton and the people of the region, who have not been given an opportunity today to come here and have their opinions heard on something that will impact them so disastrously—so significantly, let’s just say. It was a premonition.

We stand in this House, and there are a lot of parliamentary traditions that we are meant to uphold. We have right here—all over the wall in this chamber, if you look, there are carvings that are inscribed. They remind us of what our duty here is. This here says, “Gubernatio bona fructumparit.” That’s my Latin. I look at this because I sit here. That means, “Good government bears fruit.” Good government: That is what we are charged here to do. So it is my humble opinion that shortcutting debate, debate closure, not sending to committees—none of these are any of the markers of a good government, not at all. This is a government that really is taking unilateral action, on behalf of whom we’re not sure, but certainly it’s not the kind of action that you would expect from someone who would like to describe themselves as a good government.

Not only is this government short-circuiting debate, skipping committee—we hear a lot of talk about consultation, that people have been consulted. It’s ironic to note that the word “consult” is not actually even in the bill. So it’s clear that there is no real interest in hearing from or consulting despite the words that we hear on the other side. If you look at the motion or at the bill itself, there is no commitment to consultation, absolutely none at all.

The thing that is really, I would have to say, disappointing is that this is a government that does not want to learn from the past. I campaigned in my riding and near Flamborough. There are people that still talk about Free Flamborough and “Dundas Forever.” We have to grapple with the issue of area rating, which is really a hangover from a forced amalgamation. And how many years ago was that? Twenty, 25 years ago—

Miss Monique Taylor: In 1999.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. That’s 24 years ago and the problem still exists. So take the time to learn from others’ experiences.

I would like to also say that a transition board is not democracy. That is not democracy. The minister is going

to appoint people to a transition board. So really, this transition board—is it five people that are on the board?

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw:—appointed directly by the minister. Five people that are now given the task to divide up billions and billions of dollars assets, to divide up and reallocate services like paramedics, public health, fire, ambulance—five people.

Miss Monique Taylor: Roads and maintenance—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Roads, maintenance, water, waste water. I mean, it's huge. This is huge. But five people, apparently—five pretty, what can I say, magical people—rather than a Legislature, are going to be able to take care of this. Really, this is such an undemocratic way of doing business. It's shocking. It shouldn't be shocking, actually, but it continues a trend—

Miss Monique Taylor: Not really. He likes to meddle in municipalities.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, and it continues what we have seen in this House of ministers and this government taking unilateral action, imposing their will on municipalities, bigfooting municipalities all across Ontario and, really, going to court if they don't like the results of decisions or if they're not getting their way. Again, a government that's determined to get its way, not listen to the people, go to court if you will, but that has absolutely no problem making sure that taxpayers end up with the bill.

This is the experience in Hamilton. Taxpayers are still footing the bill for a Conservative government's forced amalgamation. I hope it's not the case, but I cannot see how the average real folks working in Brampton, working in Caledon and working in Mississauga are not going to pay the cost of this, literally with tax dollars and figuratively with a completely chaotic transition that this government is going to conduct with five people.

Without getting too wonky, Madam Speaker, this bill also has a clause in it—if it's not undemocratic enough, it has a clause in this bill saying that regulations made under Bill 112 can modify the act. Let's be clear: What they're saying is, now a regulation can supersede and change the act. I'm hoping that the member for Durham would be interested in this, because we share a lot of historical context. This is known as the Henry VIII clause. Why is it known as that? Do I need to explain Henry VIII? He was known not to be a very democratic fellow. This clause, which allows the government to change the act itself through regulation without coming back to the Legislature—this is the kind of power that Henry VIII gave to himself, and this is the kind of power that this government is giving itself.

1710

So your bent of not following parliamentary tradition, not respecting our Westminster parliamentary democracy—you are now going back to the 1500s to use the Henry VIII clause, to get your will, to bend to your will. And that's really—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's mind-blowing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know; it's mind-boggling.

It's all that needs to be said about this time allocation bill. I want to say it's surprising, but it's not. It continues to be endlessly disappointing.

When I was first elected to this Legislature, the sense of duty that I had, the enormous responsibility that I felt in faithfully discharging my duties as MPP and standing up for my constituents and making sure that we followed democratic traditions—I just expected that that would be a given; that I would come here and the members across, on the other side, despite having a majority, would respect democracy and give people of the province of Ontario an opportunity to weigh in.

But again, we see with this closure motion a tradition with this—

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the closure motion.

I think it's pretty self-evident why we are bringing forward a closure motion, but it is certainly interesting to hear the conclusion of the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, talking about the Henry VIII clause.

In the context of the Ontario Legislature, Madam Speaker, you will recall that there was no such thing as time allocation until it was invented by the NDP. It was the NDP who actually invented time allocation. Until then, it didn't exist. Their government was so bad between 1990 and 1995 that their own members became embarrassed to be part of the government, so the government had to bring in time allocation in order to try to get anything done. I've talked about it before. The government of the NDP was so bad that the one and only NDP Premier they had left the party after he was booted out of office. He left the party, claimed that the party was completely out of touch and would never serve in office ever again, and disavowed ever being a member of the NDP. That is, of course, the legacy of the NDP. So she talks about that.

This is a very simple bill, frankly. It's not a complicated bill, no matter what the members opposite want to say. It is a bill that, after months and years of hearing and consulting and listening to the different people in the area, dissolves Peel region. And then there is a board that comes in and starts to deal with the financial implications of that dissolution, which then, in turn, requires us to come back to this place and have another bill passed in order to make that happen. So you either agree with dissolving Peel or you don't. There's not much else that you have to debate.

After one hour of speechifying yesterday from the NDP on their lead—one of our members asked a very simple question after that. He said, “I still don't know. Are you supporting it or are you not?” The answer that the member for Niagara Centre said: “Well, we'll either support it or we won't support it, or we'll abstain.” Man, this is today's NDP. And we heard it today from the Leader of the Opposition herself—they have no intention of supporting literally anything. We've heard that from the Leader of the Opposition herself.

Bear in mind that this bill was tabled on May 18. The members don't even know when the bill was tabled.

Somehow, magically, the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas said it was tabled last Thursday. Well, I don't know about her or the NDP—

Hon. Todd Smith: I was home.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I was actually in my riding listening to people and hearing from people. On Thursday, I actually may have been opening up a new long-term-care facility. I could have been there; I don't know because I was doing a number of them last week. I was breaking ground on long-term-care facilities, opening up others that they voted against.

They don't even know. So what was happening? On May 18, debate started on this bill in this House. May 18: That's when we started debate on this.

Our entire Peel caucus spent the entire time talking to people in their community to hear what they had to say, because you have to reconfirm. Not only is it the mayor of Mississauga, the current one and the former one—because let's be honest, the current one had nothing to do with this. It was all Hazel McCallion who had her fingerprints all over this. And God bless her, the current mayor came along for the ride, and that's wonderful. Mayor Brown supports it. The mayor of Caledon supports it. They just want to make sure that the transition is done appropriately.

Now the NDP say, "Well, how does this help housing? I read the bill and there's not a word of housing anywhere in the bill. It's not mentioned." Isn't that the height of why it is that they are so out of touch?

I'll try to explain what happens when you build a home. What happens is, you go and you get some plans done. You then go to Mississauga, let's say in this instance, and you deposit a plan with Mississauga, and they take a look at that. They look at the subdivision and say, "Is it good? Is it bad?" And then once you've got that approval, you pick that up and then you've got to go to Peel region, and Peel region will then have their say on it. They might disagree with Mississauga; it goes back to Mississauga, then Mississauga makes a change, and then it goes back to Peel region—on and on and on. So that's kind of how development works in the province of Ontario. That is why, when we do something like this and we eliminate the duplication that exists in communities—for instance, in this one—it will bring on housing quicker. It's just common sense.

But not to the NDP, because their fight really isn't about the bill. We heard this time and time again. The member from Hamilton Mountain herself, when she was asked by one of our Peel caucus members, "Do you support it or don't you?" she tied herself in knots and pretzels. I didn't know what the heck she was talking about. I have no clue. I still didn't figure it out. Even now, I still don't know what it is that they're doing. They're going on this nugget that we're skipping committee. That's what they say: "Oh, we're skipping committee."

Madam Speaker, what we're doing is that we're saying clearly that we're passing something that has been on the table, that people have talked about for literally 25 years. We're getting it done. We're bringing proposals to the communities themselves. We're saying, "How do we disentangle?" and then we're bringing a bill back to

implement that. That's what we're doing, because that's the process.

But they don't know about the process because for them, it's not about that. It's not about better government. It's about what we say all the time: They're only happy when people rely exclusively on government. When people only have the government to rely on, that's when they are happiest. For us, it's not about that. For us, it's about disentangling things, making things work better across governments.

In this instance, we are bringing the dissolution of Peel region because we know that it could lead to more homes being built for the people of Peel region. We know that Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon will work better separated. But we've also at the same time said that across all of these different communities that have structures like this, we will be looking at everything that you're doing, with the number one goal of making sure that homes get built faster across all of those regions, full stop—full stop, Madam Speaker. That is what we're doing.

They talk about debate. Colleagues, they talk about debate: "We didn't have enough debate." I scheduled last night a night sitting because I thought it was really important to get debate in this place. We thought, "They complain about debate; we didn't have enough debate." So we scheduled to be here last night until midnight. Almost every member of my Peel caucus got up and made speeches. A couple maybe didn't give a speech yesterday; they did today. So every single member of the Peel caucus was engaged in this debate giving speeches—the Peel caucus on the Progressive Conservative side.

I don't know where the Peel caucus was on the NDP or the Liberal side. It's not my business that not one member of the opposition Peel caucus got up and—oh, wait.

Interjection: They're all retired.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They all got retired by the people; that's right. There is nobody from Peel, Madam Speaker.

But more importantly, what happened? At 9 o'clock, they had no more speakers. They decided, "Pack it in. Let's go home." Peel isn't that important if it means working past 9 o'clock for the NDP. And we hear this over and over and over again.

Now it's all about committee: "Bring it to committee. Bring it to committee. Bring it to committee." Well, when we do bring things on committee, they barely show up anyway. How often have we gone on the road and we can't get them actually there?

Mr. John Fraser: Can't say that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I can say it because it's true, Madam Speaker. People can look at the TV. They can watch their committees, and they see what happens.

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But the real work that is going to be done now is going to be done by the people on the ground in Peel region. It's going to be done by the people of Mississauga, by the people of Brampton, by the people of Caledon, who have spoken literally loud and clear that this is what they want to happen.

The members opposite also talk about property tax increases in Hamilton after amalgamation, that amalgamation is what caused property tax increases. Well, in my experience, it's rarely a bill that causes a property tax increase; it's the elected politicians who cause a property tax increase in the community. Because when we have had Conservative mayors in my community, when we have had Conservative mayors here in Toronto, when we have had Conservative mayors in other parts of the province, guess what happens? We're able to hold the line on taxes all of the time. We're able to provide better services for the people of the province of Ontario in communities across the province of Ontario, Madam Speaker.

But when it is not a Conservative who is in charge, what happens? Well, they start to increase taxes. And then they go back—this is what I love about the NDP, right? It's not about all of the things that NDP leaders in different communities, especially Hamilton, have done; it must be about the bill that happened in 1997, right? It was the 1997 bill that said that Hamilton has to always increase property taxes for the people of that community.

They talk about disentangling, but again, we can go back to this over and over and over again, because it is so valid. They had the balance of power. They could do whatever they want. Look, the Liberal government at the time, between 2011 and 2013—I know the member opposite will agree with me; the entire Liberal caucus that used to sit there will agree with me, as they're watching on TV, no doubt, right now. They will agree that they would have agreed to literally anything to stay in power, because there's one thing a Liberal can rely on: taking advantage of the NDP. It is the most easy party to take advantage of. We saw this. David Peterson did it initially to Bob Rae. Kathleen Wynne magically did it to the NDP at the time. They could have done anything. They could have said, "Our priority is to disentangle Hamilton and break it apart. That's all you've got to do." They didn't do it. They didn't care about it.

We've gone over all of the things that they could have done, had they only taken the opportunity to do it, but they never did, because for them, it isn't about making government work better. It's not about making things work better for the people of the province of Ontario. It is about making sure that people are confused, making sure that they rely upon government. For them, they love the fact that over 15 years together, they put so many obstacles in the way of building homes that people can't afford it. It has taken us five years, and each and every year, to disentangle all of the harsh policies that they put in place.

My gosh, Madam Speaker, they left us the most overregulated jurisdiction not only in Canada, but in North America. Can you imagine? The most overly regulated jurisdiction in North America, thanks to the combined efforts of the Liberals and the NDP. That is their record.

So let's, again, just unpack it for a moment. Why are we doing time allocation? Because we want to start this. After 25 years, we've listened. We're the first government that actually listens to the people in Peel region, and we're getting it done for them. We will do the disentanglement. We will work with them. They will work with themselves

to ensure that it is fair for each of the different municipalities, and a bill will come back to this House which will implement what has been done. That has been said.

They, themselves, have said that they agree with the disentanglement of Peel region—maybe, or maybe not; they're just not sure. But they need a committee to hear from other people to make a decision what it is that they should do, Madam Speaker. That's not leadership. That's exactly what the Liberals are all about, right? The NDP are becoming more like Liberals each and every day. They're becoming more like Liberals each and every day, because the Liberals—it has never been about doing what's right for the people of the province of Ontario. They're like a dog following—I used to have a Labrador retriever, and I could never let her off the leash because if a squirrel ever ran by, that retriever would go like a wildfire. She would go chase the squirrel, and I could never hold her. That's what a Liberal is, right? That's what a Liberal is—they're not like a golden retriever; like a mutt, though—because they will do whatever it takes only to stay in power. That's what Liberals do. They bankrupted the province of Ontario. They never listened to people.

You talked about bingo. Remember? They talked about bingo. For me, bingo is A to A-. Do you know what that is? Our credit rating following every single year under the Liberals—an F for what they did in health care. That's what bingo is to me, for the Liberals.

And now what are the NDP doing? They're trying to emulate the Liberals. They didn't get enough holding them in power for all of that time. They're trying to emulate them. They're trying to figure out, how can you say and do nothing and somehow be more like the Liberals?

Madam Speaker, the best thing to do is be more like the Progressive Conservatives—have values, stand up for the people of the province of Ontario, and do good policy.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Ms. Williams has moved government notice of motion number 15, relating to allocation of time on Bill 112, An Act to provide for the dissolution of The Regional Municipality of Peel. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL PR23

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 89(a), the Clerk has received written request that Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Ice Hockey Resources Ltd., be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The order for second reading of the bill is therefore discharged and the bill is deemed referred to the committee.

Orders of the day? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I request that the House stand in recess until 6.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The House stands in recess until 6 p.m.
The House recessed from 1727 to 1800.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

STOPPING HARASSMENT AND ABUSE
BY LOCAL LEADERS ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 VISANT À METTRE FIN
AU HARCÈLEMENT ET AUX ABUS
COMMIS PAR LES DIRIGEANTS LOCAUX

Mr. Blais moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to workplace violence and harassment policies in codes of conduct for councillors and members of local boards /
Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les politiques en matière de violence et de harcèlement au travail prévues dans les codes de déontologie des conseillers et des membres des conseils locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's an honour to be here tonight. I rise to speak once again to my private member's bill, Bill 5, the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, 2023. This is the second time we're debating this bill in the Legislature. I was enthused, if not ecstatic, last year when it received the unanimous support of the Legislature, unanimous support from both the opposition and from the government. There was hope and there was time to have the bill go to committee and to come back on time for third reading and pass into law before the municipal elections last year. Alas, that didn't happen.

I first raised the issue of abuse by local leaders in the Legislature in November 2020. At that time, the city of Ottawa was in the process of addressing the first of the integrity commissioner's reports into serious allegations of harassment at city council. The city was requesting that the government take action to bring about stronger penalties for elected members, penalties including the vacating of office. Madam Speaker, 30 months later, here we are.

Il est inimaginable qu'en 2023, nous parlions encore des préjugés et de l'abus contre les femmes dans presque tous les aspects de la vie.

It's unimaginable that, in 2023, women in our society continue to face unbelievable, unconscionable and horrific acts of abuse and harassment. This abuse—psychological, emotional, physical—sometimes comes from the hands of strangers, but too often it is inflicted by friends, partners, employers and those in positions of authority around them.

Some in this House may not be familiar with what happened in the city of Ottawa. What kind of bad behaviours are we talking about? I want to apologize in advance, Madam Speaker; this might be difficult for some people to

hear. Imagine yourself asking the young staffer who works in your office to come to work without wearing a bra. Imagine asking them to go to a strip club to spy on your political enemies. Imagine pressuring them to perform oral sex on strangers in exchange for money. Sadly, in Ottawa, this doesn't need to be imagined; this happened.

What would you do if you found yourself in that situation? In these cases, the most severe penalty that can be imposed on a mayor or a municipal councillor is the suspension of pay for 90 days. In any other work environment—at a bakery, at a hospital, at an auto plant—individuals would lose their jobs for these behaviours. Local leaders must be held to that same standard.

I've never really had to think about or deal with this kind of harassment or abuse by anyone in my life, let alone someone who has a degree of authority and power over my future success. Many men—I would say most men—never really have to think about that. And while the abuse of this authority, no matter what form it takes, is not limited to victimizing women, it is women who are the overwhelming victims of it.

The harassment and abuse of women is a plague. It's a plague that infects almost every aspect of our society. And tragically, as we have witnessed over the last number of years, the halls of power in cities right across the province are not immune to this plague. In fact, in many ways, our institutions of democracy are ill-equipped to handle it. There are many reasons for this, but one of the most important reasons is the absence of the most severe professional consequences—consequences that any employee in any organization in Ontario and, I would say, across Canada would almost certainly face, and that's termination.

The integrity commissioner in the city of Ottawa finished several multiple years-long investigations into shocking and horrific abuse and harassment of women in the workplace. As I've described, and even more, the actions were so beyond the pale that the city imposed the most severe penalties possible—which is the suspension of pay. But the councillor maintained his position of authority and power. And while the trauma he inflicted continues, his pay eventually resumed; he continued to accumulate pensionable service; he publicly contemplated seeking re-election. As I've said, in any other workplace in Ontario, what happened in Ottawa would have led to termination. As a colleague of his for many years, it was difficult to comprehend how this could be happening. I've expressed my regret the best way that I know how to his victims, some of whom are with us today. I want to thank them and congratulate them for coming forward—Stephanie and Nancy, who are with us.

Shockingly, the situation in Ottawa is not an outlier; it's not a unique situation. It is one of several similarly serious allegations that have occurred and come to light in Ontario over the last three or four years. There were serious allegations of sexual violence by a city councillor in Brampton. I've heard the speech—the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity spoke passionately about this at Brampton city hall when these allegations were being discussed and investigated. There were serious

situations involving councillors in Barrie and another in Mississauga. Sadly, that's only the tip of the iceberg.

The women who have faced this harassment and emotional trauma have taken the most difficult and courageous first step. They've come forward and they've reported the abuse. They've shared their stories so that the light can be shone on this dark corner and actions can be taken to stop it from happening again.

And now it's time for this Legislature to act. It's time for us to show a little democratic and political courage ourselves. We must ensure municipal leaders can truly be held accountable for these actions.

Les femmes qui ont été victimes de ce harcèlement et de ce traumatisme émotionnel ont pris la mesure la plus difficile et la plus courageuse : elles se sont manifestées et ont signalé les abus. Il est maintenant temps pour l'action.

Bill 5 would create a process to help stop elected officials from abusing the trust and authority placed in them and, if necessary, to remove them from office for violating that trust. It involves the municipal integrity commissioner and ultimately a judicial review to ensure that this process is not used as a political weapon and that the sanctity of our democracy is protected.

The need for change and stronger consequences, including the removal from office and a prohibition against seeking re-election, is endorsed by the Association of Municipalities Ontario; it's endorsed by the Rural Ontario Municipal Association; it's endorsed by Ontario's Big City Mayors.

Bill 5 is endorsed by over 150 municipalities across the province, from every corner of Ontario—from Ottawa to Windsor, up to the north in Kapuskasing, and others—and it's time for Bill 5 to be endorsed by the Legislature.

Il est temps que le gouvernement donne l'exemple, prenne des mesures et fasse savoir que les représentants élus ne seront pas traités différemment de tous les autres employés dans tous les autres lieux de travail en Ontario.

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It's time that the government set an example and take action. Let it be known that elected officials won't be treated any differently than any other employee in any other workplace. Madam Speaker, I stand in solidarity with the brave women from Ottawa and from all those across Ontario who have faced this harassment, abuse and trauma from those around them. I hope that this government will stand up for them. I hope that the government will stand up for the victims. They deserve nothing less than their government's full support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: It is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 5, the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, 2023. This is close to me because I used to be a municipally elected official in Brampton. As the member opposite mentioned, the incidents that took place and the allegations happened in my city as well. The member opposite knows that our government has been absolutely crystal clear that we will not

tolerate any workplace harassment or discrimination of any kind, full stop. We're not going to tolerate this activity by any councillor in the province. Any woman or person that has been subjected to harassment or abuse by an elected official knows that it was wrong. You should never have been made to feel unsafe by a person that has been elected to serve. We expect all of our mayors and all of our councillors will carry out their duties as elected officials in our province in an ethical and responsible manner.

I appreciate the essence of the bill. However, I'm concerned with the consequences that will occur if this bill was to go forward. This bill might drop the guard that is in place with our Municipal Act—so much so that women who are elected to council tables are at risk of losing their spot if they speak out against their council colleagues.

I would like to explain how things are right now, according to the Municipal Act. Currently, municipalities in Ontario are required to provide access to an integrity commissioner. The integrity commissioner's role includes applying the local code of conduct and may include providing advice and education about the code of conduct and other ethical rules to members of council and the public. If an integrity commissioner reports that, in their opinion, a member of the council or local board has contravened the code of conduct, the municipality may impose a penalty in the form of a reprimand or a suspension of pay for a period of up to 90 days. It is up to the municipal council to decide how to proceed after an integrity commissioner's report, including whether to apply a penalty recommended by an integrity commissioner and/or penalties using their broad powers, such as requesting an apology and/or removing the member from committees.

The system has been effective for many years because of the expectation that those elected to office are ethical and responsible. If you do something wrong and you are accused of harassment and charges are laid, we have a judicial system to get involved to do its work because, in Ontario, you are innocent until proven guilty. This bill wants to make integrity commissioners more powerful than an appointed judge. If you're accused of something illegal, you get a trial, but this bill wants to replace that and this bill wants to allow the integrity commissioner to remove an elected official without a trial.

This bill also wants to give integrity commissioners more power: the power to remove publicly elected officials. That's a very strong power. Even voters cannot do that until an election has happened, so the bill wants to make the integrity commissioner stronger than a judge and stronger than voters, and that is democratically wrong. With that much power, this bill put forward by the member could actually increase the amount of damaging allegations and harassment and abuse that takes place in a town or city in the hopes of seeing the removal of a member of council, male or female.

The office of the integrity commissioner is established to address serious issues like fraud and corruption; however, a number of municipalities have expressed concerns about the potential misuse for political purposes. Even without the authority to remove elected officials from

office, the integrity commissioner can already have a negative impact on the reputation of councillors and their ability to serve residents and the city.

Also, keep in mind there are very few qualifications for an integrity commissioner, and there's no requirement for an integrity commissioner to be a lawyer. The majority of council can appoint a biased person and use them to constantly attack the minority of council, imposing the harshest penalties for the most minor infractions while at the same time receiving or taking no actions against their friends on council, even for serious infractions.

There are no appeal mechanisms other than the courts, which is very cost-prohibitive, especially for smaller municipalities where councillors' salaries are low. Defending against repeated nuisance complaints can place a significant financial burden on elected officials. Additionally, the discretion to choose which complaints to investigate gives the integrity commissioner significant influence.

Given these considerations, I strongly advise against expanding the powers of the integrity commissioner at this time. It is important to remember that elected council members already face the consequences of their actions and decisions through the electoral process and the courts, both civil and criminal. Our government supports the local democratic process and believes in the ability of voters to hold politicians accountable.

We saw this in Brampton. Where allegations came out against the councillor, the member did not win their seat and is no longer serving on Brampton council. We saw this in Mississauga and we've seen this in other municipalities, where allegations have been made and the individuals do not run in the next election.

Speaker, as I said before, it is not okay for women to be objectified, harassed, made to feel uncomfortable in municipal spaces, in township spaces. Every woman should have the right to be at the table in any capacity but especially to serve as an elected official in safety and with dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence.

Last term, I had the opportunity to work with some council colleagues through AMO and talk about how we can encourage more women to get involved. Some municipalities have initiatives and workshops and opportunities for women to ask about elections and get involved. We need more women at the table.

Even FCM has done extensive work to do this as well. They've even said, "Women still make up less than half of elected members on ... councils. The number of women mayors also lags behind that of men." So there is still work for us to do to see more women in these elected positions so that we can get more women to be a beacon and to make sure that other women are being ushered into these council chambers as well. It doesn't matter where we are; you need to be encouraged to get involved in the electoral process and to see yourself at the table.

Madam Speaker, as a government, we have been making significant investments—as the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity—expanding the Investing in Women's Futures Program, expanding the Women's Economic Security Program,

which provides wraparound supports, skills development, opportunities for women to see themselves in sectors where they're under-represented, like the electorate. We've seen over 5,000 women get involved in these programs and seen over 1,300-plus women become employed and have greater pathways open to them to get jobs in sectors where they're under-represented.

Madam Speaker, we have seen an increase in the amount of locations, and that is something I'm very proud of. I have been able to go around Ontario and speak to women and talk about the expansion of 10 new locations for the Investing in Women's Futures Program. We're making changes. We're seeing women are starting to see themselves in these spaces. That is a good thing.

The women who are at the table, who are part of making those decisions, face a lot of pushback. I know myself, as a councillor, faced a lot of pushback. I strongly feel that if the powers were there to remove a councillor, I might not have been stated as elected because of the amount of pushback I received as a councillor, just for going to the beat of my own drum and speaking out and serving the residents in the best way that I felt was necessary. And it was effective because I had a lot of support, and that allowed me to be here now today, provincially, to serve.

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Madam Speaker, I invite the members opposite to read our most recent budget—which they voted against, unfortunately—and see the many programs that have been invested in—the Investing in Women's Futures Program, the many programs for housing, all of these things—to make sure that those affected by violence and exploitation receive the supports they need, while offenders are held accountable, which is one of the main pillars in the gender-based violence national action plan. We feel strongly about that.

Let me be crystal clear: No woman should ever be harassed or sexually assaulted or used by any member that has been trusted by the electorate to serve their community that is abusing their power. Our government condemns this behaviour.

Speaker, I want to see more women at the table, at the council table, but I want to make sure that the policy is in the legislation that comes forward by us as the government supports women in retaining their space as well. I'm concerned that a bill like this is essentially throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and we can't afford to do that at a time when we need to see those who have different opinions and different experiences to share elected to office.

These issues are best handled at a local level, and ultimately, elected members of council must face the consequences of their actions and decisions at the ballot box. Our government believes in the local democratic process. We trust voters to hold local politicians accountable at the ballot box, and we will continue to support that process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill 5, the Stopping Harassment and Abuse

by Local Leaders Act. I want to start by thanking the member from Orléans for bringing this bill forward again. I hope that the same result is achieved today.

Also, it was a pleasure to meet Stephanie and Nancy, who are here. Congratulations for coming to Queen's Park. It's very brave to stand up.

I don't have time to get into all of the details of things I disagree with the associate minister on in some of her comments, respectfully, but I would be remiss if I didn't say that we were involved in a consultation with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing over a year—so there's been over a year for the government to do something. After having consulted, I was on a phone call with the member from Orléans and the leader of the Green Party and we had a full consultation, and nothing ever happened. So I'm glad that the member has brought something forward, and we have a chance today to make something happen.

We're strongly in favour of efforts to strengthen workplace violence and harassment policies, especially when it comes to councillors, local leaders and those in positions of power. As the official opposition critic for municipal affairs, this is something my team and I have been following very closely.

We've seen time and again in this province councillors get away with absolutely disgusting and egregious behaviour in Ottawa, West Lincoln, Mississauga, Brampton and the list goes on and on. When councillors who commit such acts are not held to account, it denies justice for those who have been harassed and creates an environment that prevents others from coming forward. It shows that local leaders get to operate by a different set of rules when they should be held to a much higher standard.

As pointed out by the advocacy group The Women of Ontario Say No: "A fundamental, underlying principle of broadening diversity, equity and inclusion in politics rests on the assumption that the workplace is safe. This is currently not the case.... When councillors who have perpetrated harassment to staff or fellow councillors can retain their position, no matter how serious, it creates and protects toxic workplaces, which in turn has an adverse effect on mental health in the workplace and throughout the community."

Speaker, having this new accountability ensures those responsible for terrible acts are held to account and that the rest of council will be able to continue their duties in serving the public.

I was proud to see, just the other week in my riding of Niagara Centre, councillors in the city of Welland passed a motion supporting this bill. This follows the city of St. Catharines, the Niagara region and countless other municipalities that have also voted to show their support for the passing of Bill 5. It's great to see this bill gaining a broad coalition of support across the province, and it's my hope that this government will recognize the importance of these measures and support its passage.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It is a great pleasure to stand in the House to offer my total support for the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, also known as Bill 5. I want to thank the member for Orléans for bringing that forward. However, I'm a little bit disappointed after I heard the associate minister deliver her remarks. This proposed legislation is an important proposed change to address the important issue of workplace harassment and violence, specifically within our municipal councils.

Le harcèlement et la violence ne devraient jamais être tolérés dans aucun lieu de travail, et encore moins au sein de nos conseils municipaux. Il est grand temps de soumettre nos élus aux mêmes normes que le reste des employeurs et travailleurs.

Notre société a depuis longtemps décidé que les individus qui harcèlent et abusent de leur pouvoir envers les employés doivent répondre de leurs gestes. Les conseillers municipaux ne devraient pas faire exception. Pour protéger les employés contre de tels abus de la part des élus, qui sont supposés inspirer le respect, nous devons doter les municipalités des outils nécessaires.

Harassment and violence should never be tolerated in any workplace, let alone on our municipal councils. I don't understand the arguments of the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity to not support this bill. She said that the bill would be giving too much power to the commissioner of integrity, yet the government is moving exactly in that direction for school trustees in Bill 98. I simply don't understand why the associate minister is asking for the status quo when so much harm has been done to women already. I don't understand why the government is clearly not supporting this proposed legislation when so many municipalities have clearly expressed their support.

Our society decided a long time ago that individuals who harass and abuse their power over employees must be held accountable. City councillors should be no exception. This is not a matter of partisanship; it is an issue that affects us all. Allowing this kind of abuse to continue does not help with the declining reputation of politicians. We must come together and support this essential legislation, which focuses on the well-being of our employees and the creation of safe working environments.

It is our responsibility to act on our core values and foster an environment where violence and harassment are clearly condemned. We owe this much to the victims by ensuring that no more victims will be denied justice in the future.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Toronto Centre. I want to thank the member from Orléans for tabling this important piece of legislation. It's regrettable that he has to table it for the second time because, simply, it could have been passed in the last term.

This legislation is, to me, a very simple extension of accountability. We all know, as elected officials, that we

have a code of conduct we must adhere to, and in municipalities, many of them, by option, may have hired and brought in an integrity commissioner. Certainly by the city of Toronto—through our act, we have to have one; it's not optional. And yet we know that the repercussions of wrongdoing have very limited options of reprimand. It's just simply too light, especially for some of the more egregious violations and offences.

The Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association had an exit interview as they were leaving their conference, and what they determined was that 77% of their respondents reported harassment and bullying by elected officials, and 76% stated that they had been personally on the receiving end of harassment by a member of council. That just shows you a snapshot of what's really wrong with the system, that there's no real accountability. And yet, at the same time, we know that elected officials should be held to, I believe, a higher account. People expect that for us to hold public office.

1830

In the city of Toronto—I regret to share but I feel very compelled that I must share—we have some examples here as well. It's our shame to carry. Despite the fact that we tried to deal with it, the existing legislation just simply wasn't strong enough.

The former mayor, from 2010 to 2014 from Etobicoke North, had been known to abuse staff, frighten staff, drive drunk and speed. On multiple instances he had been seen in public in various states of drunkenness. His staff were subjected to verbal abuse, and there were reports of also physical abuse where he threatened his male staff. He also extended inappropriate behaviour to a female staff, also while inebriated. He also threatened to kill someone, which was caught on video. He was asked by city council to take a leave of absence, but then he also refused. Essentially, there was no legal mechanism to remove this mayor from office when he clearly was unfit to hold that office, and he didn't want to step down. Unless you're convicted of a crime or in jail or found to be in a conflict of interest, you get to stay.

Currently, we have another city councillor, a member from Scarborough Centre, who has been charged with two counts of sexual assault in the summer of 2022, and currently his case is before the courts. He's been asked to step down as a deputy mayor. He was the chair of various city standing committees. He was re-elected and allowed to serve as councillor with no other repercussions. If he were to be convicted without jail time, this individual can continue to serve as city councillor and stand for re-election. That simply is not right.

For a number of reasons that we don't have the time to get into, and the fact that over 30 municipalities have come on to endorse this private member's bill, I think that the response that I heard from the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity that perhaps this could be an abuse of power—I would say that it would be an abuse of power to not pass this legislation. It would be a message very clearly sent to municipalities across Ontario that this government is not willing to hold abusive behaviour, harassment in the workplace from those

individuals to account. And yet we know that is absolutely required.

Finally, I want to be able to offer this: External third-party reviews in breach of investigation provisions are oftentimes what is needed in order for the integrity commissioner to go ahead, and sometimes they have to go through the Occupational Health and Safety Act or the Ontario Human Rights Code. Any suggestion that an integrity commissioner is not qualified to do their job is simply not true. I know the integrity commissioners at the city of Toronto have done an exceptional job. I've worked with two of them, and I can hold their record to anyone else's in Ontario when it comes to accountability offices. They should be empowered to do this work, and they should be doing it in partnership with judges when necessary.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak in support of the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act. I want to thank the member for Orléans for bringing this forward. This is an important step in ensuring a harassment-free workplace for local governments. Every Ontarian should feel safe in their workplace, especially when they're serving their communities. Lack of accountability sends a poor message to the public when staff are mistreated, harassed and abused and there are no penalties or repercussions for perpetrators.

Elected officials should be held to a higher standard, not a lower standard, and that's exactly what this bill does, and it's exactly why the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario's Big City Mayors and so many other municipalities are saying to us as MPPs, "Stand up, take action, show leadership and ensure that we have a harassment-free workplace in local government."

So I was disappointed to hear members opposite question the integrity of the integrity commissioners' ability to enforce this at the local level. Speaker, I think women in Ontario are demanding and expecting more of us, and that's exactly why I want to quote Women of Ontario Say No to finish my remarks: "When municipally elected officials can retain their position of power, even when egregious acts of harassment are investigated and substantiated, we all lose. The message this sends to communities and the residents in them is toxic."

Speaker, we deserve better in Ontario. Women deserve better in Ontario.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I also want to thank the member from Orléans for putting this forward. I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, Nancy O'Brien, Stephanie Dobbs and Victoria Laaber, who's not with us today. These are the three folks who stood up to Rick Chiarelli. They're the reason this bill is on the floor.

But I also I want to acknowledge something, Speaker, in the time that I have left, to truly try to persuade the government and the associate minister in particular to let this bill go to committee, to fix what you don't like, so we

come away with something that will be a tool that we can build to ensure safety in political offices.

This is what I know. I live in Ottawa, and the Samara Centre for Democracy did a chilling report on the state of safety in political offices at the House of Commons. This is what they found. They surveyed 266 political staff of members of Parliament, cabinet ministers and senators. These staff took part in an anonymous survey about their perception and experiences of sexual harassment and assault in their workplaces. What did they say? Speaker, 29% of respondents said they had experienced sexual assault and harassment—29%. That is four times the national average. Nine per cent of respondents said they were sexually assaulted on the job.

Speaker, what I learned from this is that political offices increasingly, as recently as five years ago, are not determined to be safe. What I heard the member from Niagara Centre, the member from Toronto Centre, the member from Orléans and the member for Ottawa–Vanier say very clearly is that, right now, it is not an appropriate response to say, “Let’s wait until the next election,” because somewhere right now—right now, in this province, in this country—somebody is being harassed in the workplace by someone with a position of power, by someone utilizing that position of power to implement harm on that staff person. I want to believe that regardless of the political party we come from, we see it as our obligation to make sure that never, ever happens.

So what to do we do about it? To me, Speaker, I take what the associate minister said seriously. We have to set up due process for complaints to make sure that complaint mechanisms aren’t weaponized. I take what the associate minister has said seriously. However, I hear what the member from Toronto Centre said.

The integrity commissioner of Ottawa, in the disgraceful case of councillor Rick Chiarelli, investigated this councillor twice, involved 36 deputations of people who had been hurt by this councillor, three of whom were public, two of whom are in this House today: comprehensive analyses, Speaker. Councillor Chiarelli had the right of judicial appeal, utilized that right. His rights weren’t abrogated, but what we were able to make sure from that experience is that we shone a bright spotlight on the fact that our city of Ottawa was humiliated and embarrassed to realize that there was nothing we could do to this gentleman who refused to have any remorse and any respect for the people he worked with.

I don’t think, Speaker, and I say this plaintively to the government, that waiting until the next election is appropriate. If there are things about the bill you want to fix at committee, let’s do it, but let’s send this bill to committee. Let’s say as a chamber that we will make the safety of political staff and the conduct of elected officeholders a priority of this Legislature. It will be a proud day if we do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: This bill passed unanimously a year ago. Dozens of complaints have come forward. I feel for you. Sometimes you get sent to do something that you know is not right. The right thing to do is to vote in support

of this bill, and I want all of you to think about that, because it is. You supported it unanimously a year ago and you should be doing it again now. What’s the reason you’re not?

1840

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

The member from Orléans has two minutes.

Mr. Stephen Blais: First, I’d like to thank the members from Ottawa South, from Ottawa–Vanier, from Guelph, from Niagara Centre, from Toronto Centre and from Ottawa Centre for speaking in support of the bill tonight.

I’d also like to thank Emily McIntosh and Harvey Cooper and all the volunteers from The Women of Ontario Say No who have travelled the province advocating at town councils, big and small, in every corner of the city. As I said, over 150 cities, representing the vast majority of Ontario’s population, have endorsed the bill.

I would like, again, to extend my thanks to Nancy and to Stephanie and, of course, Victoria, who can’t be with us today, for having the courage to come forward and shed light on this in the first place in the city of Ottawa.

I also would like to correct the assertion that the associate minister made. This bill gives absolutely no power to the Integrity Commissioner to remove someone from office. This bill gives absolutely no power to city council to remove someone from office. After this bill, the Integrity Commissioner in municipalities will have exactly the same power he or she has today, which is the ability to investigate harassment.

What the bill does is create a judicial process, which is what the minister spoke about. The bill creates a judicial process where a judge, based on the investigation that will already happen, can make the decision to remove a city councillor from office. This is the same process that exists today for conflicts of interest. Today in Ontario, if you spend \$1 more as a city councillor or a mayor on your victory party—not on advertising, not on anything to gain votes—the automatic punishment, without judicial review, is vacating your office, if you spend \$1 more on your victory party.

So what you’re telling people is that if you spend an extra dollar on a beer for a volunteer after you’ve already won, that’s worthy of removing yourself from office, but if you ask your employees to come to work without a bra, if you ask them to perform oral sex in exchange for money, if you harass and abuse them for years, there is absolutely no consequence, other than a slap on the wrist.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time for private members’ public business has expired.

Mr. Blais has moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to workplace violence and harassment policies in codes of conduct for councillors and members of local boards. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Ottawa Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Transportation. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter.

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, this week in question period—yesterday, in fact—I rose because, as you know, the issue of how we build light rail transit is something that is important to the city of Ottawa. Sadly, we’ve had the experience of improperly built infrastructure and because of that experience, the advocacy we brought to bear in this province, for two years, the judicial inquiry that we won, we were able to find aspects of the truth. One of the pieces of truth that we discovered was that public-private partnership consultants had grown very handsomely rich at the expense of the Ontario public that paid for stage 1 of our light rail infrastructure. In particular, a name that kept coming up in Justice Hourigan’s report was Mr. Brian Guest, who is from a firm named Boxfish, based in Ottawa.

But Boxfish is a firm that didn’t just work on our light rail transit situation in Ottawa; Mr. Guest is on record at many conferences, in many publications, in many communications examined by our public inquiry as a mastermind not only of the Ottawa LRT system but of most of the LRT systems conducted by Metrolinx in the city of Ottawa.

On January 27, 2022, an article ran in the Toronto Star where it was discovered that Mr. Guest was a vice-president of Metrolinx and that, as a vice-president of Metrolinx, he was also a consultant as a representative of Boxfish, earning millions of dollars in contracts for his company. This sent a shudder down the spine of those of us in Ottawa who are familiar with Mr. Guest.

When the Minister of Transportation was questioned about what she was prepared to do, she said at the time that she was going to investigate Mr. Guest and Boxfish. We have been waiting patiently. I’ve been waiting, as the transit critic for this opposition, to find out the results of this investigation.

My patience ran out. We did a freedom-of-information request with the appropriate channels here, of government. We asked what investigation has been done at the Ministry of Transportation, at Infrastructure Ontario, of Mr. Guest or of Boxfish. Those were the two search queries. I want to read to you, verbatim, what we heard back in the letter from the commissioner who responded to us for an information request. We asked for all reports summarizing the findings from the ministry’s investigations into Metrolinx contracts awarded to Boxfish Infrastructure Group, as described in the Toronto Star article, dated January 27, 2022, that I mentioned. This was the response: “No records exist.” The ministry undertook a search and did not find any responsive records. That’s why I stood in this House in my supplementary question to the minister and

was astonished to find out in question period that an investigation did apparently happen.

My question to you, Speaker, is, how can the minister stand in this House and claim that an investigation is being done while the authorities we entrust to disclose information to the public and the official opposition and the government are telling us otherwise? What’s the truth? Will the minister be apologizing tomorrow in question period, today, at some point, to lead us to the actual answer? Did an investigation happen?

I asked in question period yesterday, and the Leader of the Opposition has stood in press scrums and asked, “Will you produce evidence that this investigation of Boxfish and Mr. Guest actually took place?” We have heard nothing but the sound of one hand clapping—nothing. It goes to integrity. It goes to leadership.

The government says time and again that they want to build transit. They want to be known as the government that builds transit. We in the opposition, too, want to see the flourishing of public transit. What we don’t want to see is improperly built infrastructure. What we don’t want to see are consultants paying consultants, enriching consultants, so consultants get rich at the expense of the Ontario public.

So what I hope to hear in the answer from the government today is a commitment that this investigation, if it happened, will be released to the public. And if it won’t be released to the public, why is the minister telling us something that our privacy commissioners are saying is not true?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response? The parliamentary assistant?

The member from Niagara West. You have five minutes.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for Ottawa Centre for his passionate contributions to debate. As always, I appreciate hearing from the member opposite.

I do have a question for the member. I know it’s important for all of us to hear from our constituents—it’s important for us to inform them about the avenues to them.

And so I just want to move adjournment of debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, no.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: No? You just said that?

Interjection.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: But I do want to hear from the member opposite if he has had the opportunity to share information about the red tape reduction portal with his colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I’m sorry to interrupt the member.

We were expecting the PA to the minister. In what capacity are you answering the question?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Sorry; I thought it was Q and A.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): It’s not Q and A. It’s the response to the member’s—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do have a point of order, Madam Speaker, just to long enough delay so that the

speech can arrive over at the hands of the parliamentary assistant. There we go. I think I've resolved that issue.

1850

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I don't appreciate the tactic, but I will allow the response to be given, for the benefit of the member.

The PA to the Minister of Transportation, to respond. The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for the question and looking into transit, and trying to understand how to improve transit. Speaker, we made an internal review and found out that the contract awarded to Boxfish was based on a fair, public and competitive procurement process in 2020. The member opposite's suggestion that's otherwise is completely false.

Metrolinx hires contractors to support our government's plan to deliver the largest transit infrastructure expansion in Canadian history. We're focused on building transit for the people of Ontario.

If they really cared about the residents of Ontario and they really cared about building transit faster, they would stand up in this House and vote in favour of those bills that we introduce. When it comes to supporting Ontarians wanting more transit access, they should vote in favour of the budget, where we've made unprecedented investments into transit infrastructure across the province. We're delivering transit to the communities that need it most, and when it comes time to vote and to bring those projects to fruition, this is the same member who votes no.

We're here for transit riders. We're going to build transit faster. We recognize the issues that took place in other projects, and that's why we brought in the Building Transit Faster Act. When you look at projects like the Crosstown West project, we're almost 50% complete, and that's a direct result of the hard work of the members of this House and the bills that we pass.

I'd like to thank you, Speaker, for giving me the time to speak on this issue, and thank you to all of our government members for the great work that they're doing in building transit faster.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I will now call for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 30, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 91, Loi

visant à édicter deux lois, à modifier diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: The bill is a red tape bill, Bill 91, of the many red tape bills this government created. I like very much those red tape removal bills, because it helps residents. It opens some of the obstacles in front of businesses, to make things work for the businesses, to make things faster. It makes the business be able to conduct their business in a smoother way.

When we even compare a regular bill size to a bill for red tape reduction, we see how thick the bill is, because many of those red tape issues prevent and leash business. We need to unleash the business, to make sure that the businesses can flourish and can prosper.

I will concentrate or focus my speech on some of the items of the red tape reduction bill. Because, as we see, it's so thick, I just will choose some of the points I want to speak about. I will talk about this historic progress so far in saving businesses nearly \$700 million per year in net annual regulatory compliance costs. That's also on top of what we did in another red tape bill before, in 2022, saving businesses \$120 million in burden reduction.

To date, our government has taken more than 450 actions to reduce red tape, without compromising public health, safety or the environment. The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act will, if passed, pave the way for better services, help Ontario businesses grow and save Ontarians time.

Some of the points I would like to talk about are about the energy sector. We are proposing some changes for the Ontario Energy Board. The proposed framework seeks to enable innovative pilots or demonstration projects that would be subject to OEB oversight. By allowing the OEB to expand its innovation sandbox, participants will be able to undertake innovative pilot projects, such as exploring peer-to-peer energy trading, that could result in benefits for the energy sector and economic development for Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as a technology specialist for more than 35 years—almost 36 years today—I believe that anything we can do to enable innovation, to enable thinking out of the box, to enable creators, incubators, technology incubators, universities and research centres to come up with some ideas might end up giving us an opportunity to be up front in different directions of the technology. We need to enable innovation. We need to allow companies to officially be able to try things and see if it works and if it has business viability.

One of the other changes this bill is proposing—and it's actually very nice, I think—is the carbon storage. Part of the new energy initiatives is carbon storage. It's new to Ontario, and by these changes, we are ensuring that the activity is done responsibly, with measures in place to safeguard people and the environment. As we continue our phased approach in creating a framework to regulate carbon storage in Ontario, we are proposing changes that

would protect public safety while allowing carbon storage demonstration and research projects.

Another big change I think is a game-changer: allowing electronic forms of delivery under the Pension Benefits Act. Now we can depend on the electronic delivery of forms, delivering information through electronic means. It doesn't opt out of electronic communications, but at least it enables it to take its level as an approved means of communication.

Another area of this bill talks about the Building Broadband Faster Act. The government remains committed to bring high-speed Internet access to every community by the end of 2025. Madam Speaker, Internet became not an optional thing, not a best effort. Now we do our Internet banking online; we do our procurement and buying and selling on the Internet; we do our education on the Internet; we deliver emails. Email has become now like an official replacement for fax machines, so delivering information and instructions to different aspects of life through email. Also, in businesses like agriculture and manufacturing, the Internet has become a main pivot in any of those sectors. Having no broadband Internet in northern Ontario and some areas of Ontario is not only not acceptable, it's actually impeding those areas from being able to attract business, attract residents, attract manufacturing. We need those areas to have broadband, so by allowing some of those barriers to be removed, we are accelerating building the broadband in areas in northern Ontario where there is no broadband.

As I mentioned, Internet is not a luxury; it's not something good to have. It's becoming impossible to live without. I had an incident when, here in Ontario, we had Rogers going down for almost a week. It was paralyzing: paralyzing businesses, paralyzing people. People were not only not able to do their work remotely; they couldn't even interact or do their homework or access their banks to do any transactions; they couldn't pay their bills. The people started feeling how important it is to have Internet.

1900

So if we can imagine that some of the communities in the north don't have that access and never had it before, we can understand how important it is. Removing any barriers would allow us to accelerate this faster to deploy it better and get Internet to those isolated communities—I say isolated, because without Internet, they feel isolated; they don't have the same access level like we have here in Toronto and the GTA and so on.

Another part of the bill talks about the guideline version 3.0 for building broadband as well. It's a very important part to regulate and allow the providers—it reflects updated legislative and regulatory authorities, which provides best practices and processes to help stakeholders deliver high-speed Internet. It's important for service providers, the people who are building and for our municipalities to understand this relation between different stakeholders so that we can smoothly move on with building Internet faster in northern Ontario.

Another area—again, I'm focusing on the technology changes, talking about the permanent virtual process

changes. During COVID, a lot of businesses enjoyed doing everything virtually: meeting virtually, conducting business virtually, doing their work virtually and remotely. With COVID ending, some of those measures, which were put in on a temporary basis for the COVID time, have started falling and now we need to make sure that, permanently, we have that allowance to be able to conduct business and conduct virtual and remote business. It's here to stay; it's not going anywhere. It helped us during the period of COVID to continue our life. If we can imagine, for example, that we didn't have those tools during COVID, it would have been really impossible to run anything during COVID, during the lockdowns. At least, during the lockdowns, we were able to do our business remotely, to do virtual meetings, to conduct our day-to-day life as usual. So those changes will allow businesses to keep these kinds of processes—to keep virtual and remote work and remote offices and such.

Another area related to technology is the Milk Act amendments. To keep up with enhancements to modern safety and sanitation practices and technology, the government is proposing amendments to regulation 761 under the Milk Act. The proposed amendments to regulation 761 maintain and enhance Ontario's food safety standards and reflect ongoing modernization of dairy-processing facilities. Again, we are trying to make sure that the regulation goes with the industry's improvement and development of technology, deploying different aspects of technology to improve the safety, improve the business and improve the way we conduct business.

Also, one of the areas which I like about the bill and would like to speak about in a little bit more detail is the Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan. This Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan is the first made-in-Ontario plan to ensure Ontarians are safe, practised and prepared before, during and after emergencies. The plan is the first of its kind in Canada to require annual and public reporting on progress. Again, it has to be ready and we have to know it's ready. We have to test it. We have to make sure it's ready, because that not only saves time during crisis, it actually saves lives; it saves properties. We need to be able to know what needs to be done at what time when we have an emergency. This amendment responds directly to feedback from municipalities and ministries to provide more flexibility in the allocation of emergency management resources while ensuring that emergency management plans are tested annually through the annual practice exercise or responding to an emergency.

I remember, Madam Speaker, during my work in banking, managing some of the major banking network environments, by banking law we had to do a test every year—high availability and remote site redundancy. We actually shut down the main systems of the bank—in a specific time, of course; it's an agreed plan—to test that all the services will be failing to a redundant location and the bank can continue serving the customer as usual within a specific gap of time in between the flip of this site to that site. So it is best practice. In technology we do it, and it

should be in every sector. There should be a test to see if things work. Even when we do a backup for data, like the people who are here in IT when they do data backups, every few months we have to do a restore from this backup to make sure that the backup is working, because the last thing you need to discover when you have a disaster is that the backup wasn't working properly so you lost all the data. So these types of standards to be put in place for the first time in Canada, to have a requirement to annually test and report on progress—I think that's a very, very important aspect of what we do as a government in this bill.

Changes in this bill allow businesses to deploy technology, to innovate. Yesterday, Madam Speaker, here at Queen's Park we were honoured to see Project Arrow, the first all-Canadian zero-emission concept vehicle designed and built in Ontario. This is the type of innovation we need to see, we need to encourage. We need to remove obstacles. As Premier Ford said multiple times, government is not in any business. We are not in business, but we create the environment for the businesses to be able to function better, to be able to prosper and offer production and offer jobs. This project, for example, is made possible thanks to the provincial government, the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network, the Innovative Parts Manufacturers' Association and 58 Canadian industry partners. Those are the types of projects where many, manufacturers, many Ontario stakeholders come together to create something which can benefit everybody and, before anybody, benefit Ontarians. Working together, Ontarians can accomplish anything. Project Arrow is just one of many projects demonstrating Ontario's leadership in new and modern technologies.

Madam Speaker, from technological innovation to mining, from service industry to manufacturing, from automotive to agriculture, Ontario is on the cutting edge of technology with the modern global economy, and the legislation has to reflect that. We have to remove all the obstacles which obstruct those kinds of initiatives, to encourage them, to give them a lifeline to be able to do testing and innovate. Today, I rise in support for the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act because this legislation will continue to promote Ontario's modernization effort.

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In the 21st century, modernization is extremely important for the success of our province's economy and for making our province competitive. We are competing against many jurisdictions, including the US, China and many other countries. If we cannot give our businesses here the option to work and innovate, it will go one of two ways: Either they will not be competitive and they will lose their market share and slowly they will close or go bankrupt, or they will move to another area where things are less constrained.

So, by doing that, we are actually keeping our businesses. We are encouraging more businesses to come to Ontario. As we can see, every time we do changes, we see more projects coming to Ontario. We see more businesses coming to Ontario. We see more jobs coming to Ontario,

and that's what we need more of, not only because of the Ontarians we have today, not only to promote our Canadian expertise and skill sets here and keep them in Canada—instead they get offers to leave the country and go to the US or anywhere else. By having more jobs and more companies coming here, like Volkswagen, for example, which adds 3,000 jobs and 32,000 indirect jobs, this is how we will be able to keep our skill sets in Canada and all our experts stay and find good jobs here.

Also, by doing that, we can allow our Ontario economy to grow. We can export. In many cases, actually, we can have superior technology which is competing with technologies from other countries. I've seen that in technology, when I was in many of the international corporates, I saw that Canadians are competitive. They just need the right chance, the right environment, and they will be able to exceed anybody.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: There's a part of the bill that deals with the Ontario Energy Board—he mentioned it at the beginning of his presentation. We have in northern Ontario an abundant supply of clean, renewable green energy through run-of-river dams. Many of those have been built or are in the process of, and then we're looking at big transmission lines that take the power that is generated in northern Ontario and bring it to southern Ontario. When the power lines are put up, right now they are going through six different First Nations communities. Those six First Nations communities have written a common letter to say, "We would like to be consulted before you put transmission lines through our territory." Do you think consulting with First Nations before you put a transmission line on their territory is red tape?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the colleague across. I understand your frustration, and I understand some of the Native, Indigenous communities when it comes to the government trying to do things, but we have seen this—and I don't disagree that we need to focus on having negotiations and being more transparent with Native communities or, generally, even local communities per se when we do any project. But sometimes some decisions have to be taken to be able to benefit the whole public—not specific sectors, but everybody.

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

Mr. John Fraser: What I haven't heard very much of in this debate is something that's in this bill that we haven't talked much about, which is penned dog hunting. I know my colleagues over here—it's something that Mike Harris was going to put an end to. Mike Harris said, "We can't do this anymore. It's inhumane. It's not right. It's animal cruelty." I mean, penning up a wild animal with packs of dogs who are trained to hunt it and kill it: What's the sport? Can anybody explain that to me? Why is it in a red tape bill? What do you mean, "red tape"? The message from this government was, it's about red tape. The message from the previous government was, what we're doing

is wrong in allowing penned dog hunting, so Mike Harris said, “I’m going to sunset it. It’s not going to happen.”

Can someone on the other side—the member—explain to me why penned dog hunting is in this bill?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I have to come back to you about this. I don’t know. This specific point is not one of the points I did choose to speak about, so definitely I will come back to you about that.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently to my colleague’s statement. He talked about so many significant and impactful things that need to happen: technology, the Internet, businesses, multiple businesses. But what intrigued me was when he talked about the dairy industry and how this is going to be changing regulations under the Milk Act to better support Ontario’s industry in the milk area. I was wondering if he could talk a little more about that so I can understand the improvements that are going to occur in that area.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague. In the dairy industry, everything is very, very regulated, even the processes: the way they handle the milk, the way they manufacture it, the way they produce it. Everything is very, very controlled. With different technologies coming into play in sanitizing, in pasteurizing and all those aspects of milk and dairy handling, some of those technologies are not allowed by regulation. Modernizing and allowing manufacturers, allowing milk producers to be able to use some of those technologies to improve production guarantees the safety of the people and the product as well.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for his presentation. The bill, Bill 91, is titled reducing red tape, building a stronger economy. On this side of the House, the NDP supports the idea and we want to build a stronger economy. But I think that to have a strong economy, we have to take care of the people. It’s the people who build the economy. It’s people’s labour, people’s time and people’s talent, and there are some very, very basic, fundamental things that everybody needs: housing, health care, education. On all of these things, actually, there’s a very strong argument that when you have this very strong foundation, it gives Ontario an edge to attract investment, to make sure that the talent pool remains in the province.

My question to the member is, why is it that on some of the most fundamental things that we can do to build a strong economy, the government is instead underfunding, making cuts, not tackling affordability when it comes to the housing crisis? What is the member going to do about this?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I totally, totally agree with my colleague from the other side about the different elements to attract business. We are here discussing the red tape reduction bill. It’s not included in that how to promote housing or how get better education or better health or

spending more money. This is this bill. What we are discussing today is Bill 91.

But relevant to that, our government did four different bills to promote housing. I don’t think there is any government, at any point in time, that had that amount of focus on housing, trying to tackle this housing crisis—which, again, didn’t happen yesterday, didn’t happen in four years. It happened in the 12, 13, 15 years of neglect in planning. Now we are in crisis.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I’d like to continue along in the same vein as I was talking about, with penned dog hunting. Now, we all have animals. I have a beautiful dog at home. I know the Solicitor General has a bunny. But we have relationships with animals, right? So we know that we want to treat our animals humanely—our pets, right? We believe that. We actually have a society set up for that. We have rules and laws to set up to prevent the cruelty to animals.

Penned dog hunting is cruelty to wild animals. So I’m going to ask this question. I don’t expect an answer today, so you don’t have to give me an answer right now, but why in God’s name is this in the bill? Why in God’s name is something that Mike Harris said was a practice that we need to end—is this Premier and this government bringing it back—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. The member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague on the other side. I think the bill is having some schedules about improving the veterinarian processes and animal care. I don’t know about the specific penned dogs hunting. I have to get back to you about that. But within that bill, in the red tape reduction, there is some changes to allow the cattle and livestock breeding to be able to conduct more flexible businesses when it comes to growing animals in farms and stuff. I will go back to the dog piece after that.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Quick question, the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Yes, having hunted when I was living in Michigan, and having seen well-trained dogs and how they can track an animal and then stop dead still and point and wait for the command, I’m surprised for the member from Ottawa South that he fell into the opposition trap of thinking that we’re going to have dogs killing animals. I was wondering if the member opposite would support having well-trained dogs to be all that they can be.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: As my colleague explained, there are some points in the legislation here meant for a specific purpose, not for what the opposition member is meaning about killing animals.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I’m happy to rise today to discuss government Bill 91, entitled the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. As has been mentioned before, we agree

that it's the government's job to build a strong economy, and if red tape is the problem, not regulations that keep people safe, then we would agree with that as well.

But as has been shown and said, this bill opens up so many acts. It opens up the Business Corporations Act; it opens up the Condominium Act; it opens up the Courts of Justice Act; it opens up the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. It opens up all kinds of acts. While you were doing these bills, why is there nothing in here in the health care bill? Why did you not open up that act to make sure people have timely access to health care? Why have you nothing in here to do with real tenant protections in the province of Ontario? Because we know we have an affordability crisis in the province, we know that we have a housing crisis, we know we have an opioid addiction crisis. Those are acts that you could have opened up in this omnibus bill, but you chose not to.

But what I find particularly ironic, if you will, is that you did open up the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, which is schedule 23 of the bill. But in doing so, you somehow seem to have ignored the fact that in the province of Ontario, we have a significant problem with abandoned oil and gas wells. In southwestern Ontario, many of the Conservative ridings are ground zero for these abandoned oil and gas wells. We know that the town of Wheatley blew up because of an abandoned oil and gas well, and they deserve the justice that they're not getting. This government, opening up the act, didn't take into account the safety concerns that people face across the province of Ontario. Don't take it from me. I will just read from the Auditor General's 2022 annual report, where her findings say, in part:

"The province also fails to identify and inspect high-risk oil and gas wells, even though improperly maintained or abandoned wells are safety risks for people and for groundwater resources. As well, little progress has been made on the rehabilitation of hazardous abandoned mines. Only 111 of the over 3,900 abandoned mine sites with hazards had been partially rehabilitated, while 2,335 sites had not been rehabilitated at all. The Ministry of Mines didn't know the rehabilitation status of the remaining sites.

"The lack of so much basic information about natural hazards across the province is surprising and troubling...."

I agree with the Auditor General. It's not like the government doesn't understand the significant risk that these pose to the people of the province of Ontario. You opened up an act, the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act. There must have been discussion at that time about the significant problem, the lack of progress in identifying and rehabilitating abandoned oil and gas wells across the province. How is it that you opened up this act and made changes that completely fell silent when it comes to protecting people, lives, property and groundwater? You did nothing to protect them when this problem is looming over all of southwestern Ontario and all of our ridings. I'm very disappointed that you chose to open up all these acts, but you continue to ignore the significant problem of abandoned oil and gas wells across this province.

It has been said very eloquently by the member from Parkdale—High Park that you can't have a strong economy without people being looked after, without strong people, and you did nothing to help address the significant health care crisis that we are facing in this province. I just want to read to you an email that I received—many of the emails that I've received. I'm going to read this one about people's concern when it comes to the privatization of health care in this province.

Brenda and Roy sent me this email saying, "It would be a gross understatement to say that I was appalled when, three weeks ago, my wife received a notice for her MRI appointment for July 2024. This is quite simply mind-boggling. I think it is also true to say that an appointment set 15 months into the future will inevitably be later than that."

It gets worse, "Out of curiosity, I inquired into when she could obtain an MRI if we travelled across the border—within 24 hours. The disadvantage of travelling of course is that it would cost us \$780. I hasten to add that I am not in favour of privatization of OHIP services. I cannot believe it would cost that much for it to be done within OHIP. Apart from the profit margin in the US system, the difference must simply be that successive Ontario governments have underinvested in OHIP, both in facilities and personnel.

"So, despite our distaste for getting the MRI done outside the country, we can eliminate 15 months at a minimum of worry and uncertainty. An additional positive from doing that is that it will shorten the waiting list and help others, but what a condemnation of how our health services are being managed."

These are the kinds of emails that we are receiving—you must all be receiving—about people's concerns getting basic services, diagnostic services, access to emergency rooms, doctors—the list goes on and on.

You have a bill that talks about a strong economy. You can't have a strong economy without a health care sector that serves people properly. This is something you should be addressing instead of privatizing our health care system.

But it has been said a lot in this House, and I think I need to say that while some of the schedules here are supportable, the changes you're making, basically a lot of it is housekeeping and I'm not entirely sure why it deserves an entire bill for some of these things. But really, this omnibus bill that opens up almost all of the laws of Ontario does nothing to address the real challenges that Ontarians are facing. Once again, it shows that while you are crowing about all the red tape you are cutting in the province, you are doing nothing to ensure the health and well-being and the prosperity of individual real people in the province of Ontario.

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But the thing in this bill that is so egregious that I'm going to spend the bulk of my time discussing this, Madam Speaker, is schedule 14, where you opened up the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. The schedule repeals current

section 35, which prohibits the operation of enclosed wilderness areas—train and trial areas—for the purpose of training a hunting dog, and limits the prohibition to those operating the facility with a licence to do so.

For those who are concerned with animal welfare in the province of Ontario, this government is allowing the continuation of a very cruel practice called train and trial. Essentially, this is a practice that allows penned wild animals to be hunted down by hunting dogs. This government is extending this practice and continuing to make it legal in the province.

As has been said before, the first train and trial licences, I believe, were extended in this province in the late 1800s. About 100 years later, Mike Harris, in 1997, decided that it was time to stop this practice. The theory at the time was that, through attrition, by not extending additional licences and by not allowing these licences to be sold or transferred, this practice would be phased out. At the time, groups like Animal Alliance participated in the development of the legislation. Hey, there's an interesting concept: allowing groups to actually weigh in on legislation that you are proposing. Just like, for Bill 112, it would be nice to hear from the people of Peel region when it comes to their future.

But back in 1997, groups were included in the participation to develop the legislation, and so they worked with government to make these changes, to phase out this practice. But as I've said, we have a government that does not seem to want to listen or to go to committee or to have robust debate in this province, and I would say that this is true here. I am very curious to know who this government consulted when it came to extending this train and trial practice.

It wasn't just animal rights groups or Animal Alliance that thought this was cruel. The ministry staff at the time also thought it was cruel; the people who researched and created this policy and who enforced the laws in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act thought that this should end. Here's a quote from this letter: "The intent was to phase them out through attrition because MNR staff recognized the inherent cruelty of these operations which involved trapping coyotes, foxes and rabbits to be supplied to operators of compounds, a fenced-in area where dogs would be permitted to chase, harass and often kill these wild animals." Really, it's not difficult to see how grisly this practice is and why people are rightly concerned.

I'm going to read a petition that my office and many of you on the other side of the aisle received. It should be no surprise to you that people are angry about this and that you should have answers to why this is in this bill. The petition says:

"I am deeply disturbed that Ontario plans to reverse a province-wide ban on new, cruel train and trial areas, where hunters participate in the blood sport of penned dog hunting. Ontario passed a law in 1997 to phase out new penned hunting facilities for good reason. Penned hunting is incredibly cruel to the coyotes, foxes and rabbits who are used as live bait and are chased and killed by packs of

dogs. The dogs forced to participate can also suffer from injuries and death.

"In addition to animal cruelty, penned hunting is a public health risk. The trade and transportation of wildlife is a major contributor to the spread of disease and parasites, including zoonotic diseases that can affect wildlife, domestic animals and humans. Research is clear. More than four out of five Canadians are against animals for sport. No other Canadian province allows penned dog hunting, and the cruel practice is unlawful in most of the United States.

"So please do the right thing for animals and public health. Don't undo all the progress made to phase out penned hunting facilities. Your government should instead focus on strengthening existing legislation and shutting down the few remaining train and trial areas in the province."

That is a petition that I received. I know that you are all receiving these in your offices, and my question is, how are you responding? What are your responses to the people who rightly are horrified and concerned with this grisly, cruel practice that was intended to be phased out in the province?

Now, I'm going to say that the minister was asked about this. There's a CBC article, among others, where the schedule in this bill, the change, was investigated, and there were a lot of questions asked about the fact that "Ontario wants to expand a licensing regime that allows residents to unleash dogs in an enclosed area to teach them how to hunt captive coyotes, foxes and rabbits." This was put to the minister.

The province's natural resources and forestry minister said, among other things, that "the government wants to allow more of the hunting facilities to prevent the sport from moving underground.

"These facilities are going to become less and less over time unless we take some level of intervention...."

So I'm not sure, but I take it from the minister's words that this is a practice that they don't like but that they are unable to enforce, that that enforcement is not something that they're able to do when it comes to people engaged in this activity.

Mr. Joel Harden: That sounds like the Pride flag.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

The minister went on to say, "This isn't about active hunting or anything like that. This is about animals that are bred for this purpose." I don't understand that thinking. I don't know where that comes from. Is that true? Are these animals bred for this purpose? Are we talking about rabbits and coyotes that are being bred for this purpose? Are we talking about dogs being bred for this purpose? But it seems to be very flippant, I would say, when we're talking about a practice that really most Ontarians would see as unnecessarily cruel—and barbaric, really; I would even go on to use that word.

So is the minister concerned with this happening, or is the minister concerned that he is unable to enforce the law, so people breaking the law? I don't really understand why, rather than enforcing the law, the government would change

the law just so that the whole practice can be reopened and can be expanded rather than the trajectory that we are on, which was to phase this out, a trajectory that was introduced by Conservative Premier Mike Harris, who himself had thought this practice needed to end.

When it comes to enforcement, I'm curious why this government changed the law and not just chose to actually enforce the law. In fact, one of the concerns that I have with the government and with this ministry in particular is concerning conservation officers. Yet again, we have the Auditor General to thank for identifying that in the province of Ontario, we have fewer and fewer conservation officers in this province and that their job continues to become complex, and this would be an area where they would be able to intervene to enforce the law.

So I wrote a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry about conservation officers. It reads, in part, "As you know, conservation authority officers work in conditions that are unsafe, remote and largely outside traditional office hours. The work they do puts them in direct contact with armed hunters and problem animals. They also are scheduled to work during weekends and evenings and often in cold areas with increased bug density." So they work in difficult conditions, and despite this, they receive less pay than their counterparts in other enforcement agencies like the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. So if the minister is concerned about enforcement rather than just allowing this practice to flourish, the minister might want to consider the under-resourcing and underpay that conservation officers are facing in this province, and recognize the significant role that they play and the significant role that they could play in addressing this concern.

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We do have a lot of quotes from Hansard from this government talking about animal welfare and I'm happy to hear that. Those words are important, but in this context, they just ring hollow when it comes to such a cruel practice. The Solicitor General is quoted as saying, "When it comes to keeping people safe and addressing crime in our communities, we will stop at nothing"—which is correct and that is right. But then why are we turning a blind eye to this practice and extending it instead of continuing on the trajectory to phase it out?

We have heard about the Solicitor General's rabbit Hal, which is a family pet. We have heard from the MPP from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who is the parliamentary assistant for the Solicitor General, who is in charge of animal welfare in the province. She talked about her fur babies, Bruce and Edward. She's very protective, very loving and very concerned about their welfare. I support that. She went on to say, "There's no place in Ontario for cruelty to animals"—I couldn't agree more. And she said, "It is all of our responsibility to look after these animals"—agreed.

In a question, the same MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore read a petition that read, in part: "Whereas the continued protection of animals across this province is an urgent priority to the people of Ontario"—yes, it is urgent for the people of Ontario.

The MPP for Burlington, in a question to the Solicitor General, said, "Abuse, neglect and cruelty to animals in any form is unacceptable." And the Solicitor General said, and I agree with him, "Just like we believe that people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, we think that animals should be treated with dignity and respect too."

So animal welfare is not just about our pet rabbits or our pet dogs or our pet kittens. This should extend to all living creatures in this province, and we were on a path to phase this out. I don't understand why this government has slipped this into a bill that's about red tape, and I'm looking forward to the questions from the other side. Maybe, perhaps, in your questions, you will elucidate what is your thinking when it comes to this cruel practice in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're now going to have questions to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. We'll start with the member for Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Sarah Jama: Thank you to my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for your contribution to this debate. As you talked about in the beginning of your speech, this bill opens almost all of the laws in Ontario but does nothing substantial to address the very real challenges that Ontarians are facing right now.

In your speech, you focused mainly on health care. Are there other aspects to this bill that you think are missing?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member for Hamilton Centre for this question. I'm sure you have thoughts on this yourself, all of the things that are of concern for the people of the province of Ontario and certainly in Hamilton. We talk about a housing crisis where we talk about housing affordability, but in Hamilton—just like in all the communities across the province—people are living in tents, on streets, on our city halls. They are living under bridges. They're living in parks, in Allan Gardens in Toronto. This is a crisis, and you cannot have a strong economy, as this act purports, when people see the kind of despair and the kind of inequity and suffering that their fellow citizens are facing. So why that is not a priority is a mystery to me. Thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened to the member opposite and appreciate her concern. Our government is making more than 450 different actions to cut red tape on a variety of different spectrums. Getting rid of undue regulations really does help the ultimate machine in getting processes complete, and I know this as a professional, and I know this as somebody who worked in the legal world not too long ago.

Moving back to the soil of the ground, so to speak: Our government is doing everything it can to give farmers the tools that they need to succeed. Ontario farmers are second to none in their dedication to the community and their craft. They play a huge role in our economy and feeding our communities.

Does the member embrace supporting and protecting our province's farmers when it comes to updating the legislative framework governing the financial protection programs for Ontario's agricultural sector?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for the question, but my question back to you is: Does your government?

In this province, we are losing 319 acres of prime farmland a day—an unsustainable amount of loss for prime agricultural land. This is a government that has introduced MZOs that will pave over farmland. It's a government that has introduced Bill 23, which will also have loss of farmland for housing that we need, but we don't need to build it on green space and on farmland.

You've received letters from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from the National Farmers Union. They're sending your government letters saying that they do not agree with your actions.

So my question back to you is: How are you showing that you support the farmers in the province of Ontario?

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're going to go from farming to mining.

At the beginning of your speech, you talked about the ministry sharing with us the hundreds of abandoned mines, many of them leaching chemicals—I have one: the Long Lake gold mine, which was abandoned quite a while ago and is leaching arsenic into Long Lake. Long Lake is a beautiful lake within the city of Greater Sudbury. Since I was elected in 2007, I have worked with every head of the Ministry of Natural Resources—because they change very often—to try to get this project done, to try to stop the arsenic from leaching into Long Lake. When I talk to the minister—we are at the top of the list. They have the money to do the work, but nothing gets done. And we have a mining bill that takes away closing plans.

Do you really think that mandating every mine to have a closing plan so we don't have any more abandoned mines is red tape?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is the responsibility of a good government to ensure that they protect the well-being, health and safety of the people of the province of Ontario.

You're talking about Long Lake and the legacy of a mining industry. We need look no further than the Wabigoon River and look at the fact that there's still no remediation for that community as well.

When this government calls remediation and protections for communities and people and water and waterways after a mine has closed red tape, it shows that they are not learning the lessons from the tragic experiences that we have had and continue to have in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: The bill we are talking about covers 450 actions—152 pages—at least covers 14-plus ministries. When the member says, “This is not covered, that is not covered”—I can tell you, the sun is not covered; the clouds are not covered; the rain is not covered; the wind is not covered; the bugs in my backyard are not covered; the mice are not covered. A lot of things are not covered, but it covers a lot of things as well. The key is, the red tape—

we have to cut because this red tape is needless; it is a burden. We want to help people in Ontario live an easier life. Can the member opposite pass this one in this bill first and we move forward?

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Ms. Sandy Shaw: Life in this province is not easy for most Ontarians. It may be easy for the long list of people who are benefiting from this government, the gravy train of people who are benefiting from the actions of this government. They will be doing very well in this province. But counting red tape regulations like it's a measure of success, like it's the big thermometer the people use to track fundraising numbers, does not translate into improving the lives of the people of the province of Ontario. People, right now, can't afford their groceries. They can't afford to pay their skyrocketing hydro bills.

So my question back to you would be: Name one regulation that you've changed that's put food on the table, helped a woman access daycare or helped someone get into an emergency room that is closed in their city.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I was really taken with the member's comments on animal cruelty and animal welfare. I'm getting a lot of correspondence on this, Speaker. I guess I'm just wondering, from a sporting perspective—because I grew up in a rural community, and hunting was important to many of the people I grew up with. Where's the sport in hunting game that's penned in? Where is the enjoyment in inflicting cruelty upon animals?

I think of the great David Suzuki, who's often telling us that we need to realize our place in nature—not the arrogance that we get to control everything.

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: The heckling from the members opposite leads me to believe that they control everything. I'm wondering if the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas can set the members straight and realize that humans are just one creature on this planet.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for the question. I cannot purport to understand this practice. I don't hunt. I understand that hunting is an important component of people's lives in the province of Ontario. I get that. But when something has been identified by so many people as a cruel practice, when this has been identified as a cruel practice by a previous Conservative Premier, Mike Harris, I am completely gobsmacked to see members on the other side defend this, to heckle us when we just want to talk about making sure that we extend animal protection, animal welfare and prevent cruelty to all animals, not just to our pets—not Hal the rabbit, Bruce or Edward or any of our pets, or my dog, Nellie—that we extend it to every animal and that we respect biodiversity in this province.

If there is an answer to why you are doing this, I have yet to hear it in this House.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak against Bill 91, and I'm going to focus my comments primarily on schedule 14.

Let's just be really clear. Penned hunting facilities are regressive, barbaric, cruel and have no place in 21st-

century Ontario. My gosh, Speaker, it's 2023, not 1953, but you wouldn't know it given what we're debating today.

But don't take my word for it. Take the humane society's word for it—the humane society, an organization that almost every Canadian can get behind. I'm going to quote extensively from a letter they've sent to all of us because I think these words are critically important to have in the record:

“Please allow me to express Humane Canada's complete opposition to this proposal to extend dog training and trialling using penned hunting facilities in Ontario, due to the severe animal welfare implications it entails. We find the proposal to be completely inhumane and unethical.”

The letter goes on to say, “We are opposed to hunting using dogs due to the distress, injury and inhumane death caused to wildlife, in addition to the risk to dogs. Therefore, we do not support any activities to teach dog hunting skills or to conduct trialling competitions.

“We are also opposed to holding wild animals in captivity as they cannot be provided with adequate care.

“We are furthermore opposed to hunting in which the target animal is confined.

“Prevalent trapping practices to capture wildlife from their habitat are not humane and cause great risk to non-target animals and humans”—humans because of the risk associated with disease transmission, which I think we've all experienced enough of over the last three years.

The letter goes on to say, “This inhumane, unethical activity is completely unacceptable in contemporary Canadian society, which is why steps were taken to phase it out more than a quarter of a century ago.” Yes, Speaker, steps were taken to phase it out a quarter century ago. As a matter of fact, a former Conservative government in 1997 said, “No more.” Every Canadian province outlaws penned hunting facilities. Most states in the US outlaw penned hunting facilities. Yet this government, in 2023, wants to bring them back.

Speaker, I'm from a rural community. I grew up in a community where many people hunt, and many of them hunt with dogs. I can tell you, all the years growing up in that community and hunting with dogs, I didn't even know penned hunting facilities existed, let alone that the things are legal, let alone that we have a government that actually wants to bring them back and expand them.

So I don't understand where this is coming from, why the government would want to bring this forward. I know the minister said that he was worried about underground facilities. Well, if that was a concern, how come we don't hear about that in other provinces? How come we don't hear about that in the US? Why doesn't the government actually stand up for conservation officers and enforce the rules and the law and make sure that we actually protect the integrity of hunting? I actually think this undermines public trust and social licence in the practice of hunting. I would strongly encourage members opposite to just withdraw schedule 14 from this bill. I know we're at third reading now, but my gosh, let's have a UC tomorrow to do it and end this inhumane practice in Ontario.

Speaker, I have a few minutes left, and I cannot not comment on schedule 23 in this bill. Schedule 23 takes additional steps to increase carbon capture and storage in the province, especially when it comes to enhanced oil recovery. It builds on what was done in Bill 46. And let's be clear: The International Energy Agency, a long-time pro-oil-and-gas organization, has said that no new fossil fuel infrastructure can be built if we're going to have any hope of addressing the climate crisis, including enhanced oil recovery, which will actually escalate climate pollution in this province at a time when we need to lower it.

Furthermore, almost any scientist, economist, or expert you talk to questions whether there's any economic viability right now in carbon capture and storage. And if we're going to need carbon capture and storage, we need to reveal with it for hard-to-deal-with sectors such as the cement sector. So why is the government bringing this forward when its own paper on this questioned whether it was viable or even safe to have carbon capture storage in the province in enhanced oil recovery, why the government has schedule 23 in this bill, is inexplicable to me, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: To the member: I was getting educated here over these dog pens. I wasn't even aware they were happening in the province of Ontario, never mind bringing it back into a bill. What I will say is that most people love their pets. All my daughters have pets. I just want to say it's disgusting. I agree 100% with you. It should not show up in a bill in the province of Ontario.

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But my question really is about—to you, because you don't get the chance to talk about this enough. I'm giving you an opportunity. We're losing 319 acres of farmland every single day in the province of Ontario. There are changes in here, in this bill, that talked about changes for farming and how they support farmers, and you heard the Premier today say that they're supporting farmers. I don't know how you support farmers and take prime farmland away from them. But they weren't even consulted. And you've been at a couple of committees with me. It seems like every single bill, there is no consultation. Can you talk about losing the farmland, how important the greenbelt is? And I do agree with your statement on schedule 14.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to the member for the question. It's completely economically, environmentally and, from a food security standpoint, unsustainable to lose 319 acres of farmland each and every day in the province of Ontario. To put that into perspective for people, that's like the size of the city of Toronto on an annualized basis.

We have some of the best farmland in all of North America. It's why the food and farming sector contributes \$50 billion to Ontario's economy, employs over 870,000 people. And if we destroy the asset base, which is the farmland, of all that wealth, all that prosperity, especially for rural Ontario, it's going to be devastating for our food security, for the farming sector itself and for our economy.

So I would think—and I think especially when we look at Bill 97, if you want to connect it to this, I haven't seen

the NFU, the OFA and the Christian Farmers so united as they are right now, pushing back on this government, saying, “Let’s protect prime farmland in this province.”

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Ric Bresee: This bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, includes a broad suite of initiatives to help Ontario businesses grow, like building broadband faster. While the former Liberal-NDP government left numerous communities and businesses disconnected, we are eliminating the red tape and paving the way for faster access to high-speed Internet for homes and business, helping them grow. This is all part of our goal to bring high-speed Internet access to every community by the end of 2025. Connected communities attract significant and long-lasting investments, which boosts the local economy and improves the quality of life for all Ontarians.

I ask if the member opposite would agree that bringing broadband to all of our residents is a positive step.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member’s question. Absolutely, we need faster rollout of broadband Internet in this province. And as a matter of fact, when I go to the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, one of the many things that mayors and councillors said to me was, “When you go to Queen’s Park, can you tell the government thank you for having broadband money in the budget, but can you tell them to actually get the money rolling out faster because people in rural Ontario need access to broadband right now?” So absolutely, we need to ensure that we increase broadband access in all parts of this province. There is no doubt about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one quick question: 20 seconds.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My 20-second question: I also come from northern Ontario, where everybody hunts. Some will use dogs, but never to hunt the prey. They use dogs if you go bird hunting. Let’s say you’re good enough at a bow and arrow to get a goose—you have to be pretty good with a bow and arrow to get a goose—and the goose usually falls in the middle of the water. You don’t want to go swimming—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. And the member can reply.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I’ve certainly been out hunting with friends, with ducks and geese that we’ve needed to retrieve on water. But I will say that, if we’re going to be really frank, I believe this section of the bill actually undermines public confidence—

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: It’s always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to the important things that we do. In fact, it is third reading of Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, and I will be sharing my time with my wonderful colleague the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore, who is actually doing an incredible job, so we can clap.

Our government has made it a priority to continuously track down and remove the unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that hold Ontario’s economy back.

Why? Consider a company—and it’s a simple rule, Mr. Speaker, a vicious cycle. When a company is making \$10 and spending \$12, it has no choice: It can either have to close down, reduce the costs, or move it to a place where there is less cost and they can sustain.

That is why we are having a bill to make sure that it’s less red tape, which can lead to a strong economy. Since 2018, we have eliminated over 16,000 individual compliance requirements for businesses, reducing our total regulatory burden by 6.5%. These changes have helped save businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public nearly \$700 million, and it’s not just one time, but every year. That’s \$700 million that can now be reinvested in Ontario’s economy.

We’ve seen the results. Since 2018, over 600,000 more people are working. We’ve attracted many, many billions of dollars of investment to our province. Why? Because we are able to be competitive. This ongoing work is a necessity, because red tape causes frustration, expenses, needless delays and complications for everyone: individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector.

I’m proud to say that our ministry has continuously worked, along with the other ministries, to look at ways to save more for our businesses. These regulatory burdens are barriers to our productivity, to innovation, to our economic competitiveness and development, and this results in real costs.

Just look at Ontario’s track record, Mr. Speaker, during the previous 15 years of Liberals and NDP. Our province had the highest regulatory burden in the country. Companies were tangled in endless regulations. Debt, deficit and taxes were all going up, and life was becoming way unaffordable every day. Hydro rates going out of control, and the result? Very simple: More than 300,000 manufacturing jobs packed up and left Ontario.

Thankfully, when we formed government, we knew that we had to change something. We worked hard and made sure that it happens. Under the leadership of this Premier, this government has brought forward 11 red-tape-reduction and regulatory modernization packages that have helped our province to get back on the right track. This is called thinking out of the box. We are committed to continuing this important work, while maintaining those important rules and regulations that are necessary to keep our people safe and protect our environment.

Speaker, reducing red tape is not just counting the number of regulations and trying to reduce them; it is about the impact those changes are having on real Ontarians and the businesses across our great province: changes like, for example, accelerating the timelines for municipal approvals for broadband, helping businesses embrace new technologies; saving people time and frustration when they access government programs, by offering them more services online, so that people do not have to wait in line and they can spend that time on productive work or with their families.

This bill is the result of continued collaboration across government with ministry partners and extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders and people across the province to develop an unparalleled inventory of red-tape-reduction ideas. I'm proud to say the proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act is our government's 10th burden reduction bill and our largest one to date, with 37 different schedules.

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I just want to share some of the examples that we'll be doing in this bill. Changes like making sure that our government—as we believe that everyone deserves to come home after a hard day's work, and especially our miners, who form the backbone of our province's prosperity. Their sweat, labour and dedication fuel our economy and drive us forward.

In recognition of the invaluable contribution of our miners, we are embarking on a transformative journey to enhance safety measures for our miners. One significant step we're talking is to reduce the allowable level of exposure to diesel exhaust fumes in underground mines. Our government is setting some of the most stringent standards in North America, refusing to compromise on the well-being of our miners. We recognize the harmful effect of these emissions on their health, and we're determined to protect them.

Moreover, we are committed to improving the ventilation systems within these mines. Adequate airflow is not just luxury; it is a fundamental requirement for a safe and healthy environment. To further ensure this, our government is also tightening the requirement for diesel equipment used in mining operations. These are some of the things we're doing.

I want to emphasize that these changes are the result of constant consultation with the miners and safety advocates, and everything that you see in this bill is because of the changes that we had discussions with the proper and good consultation. Our government believes in the power of collaboration and values the input of those directly affected by these policies.

These changes also align with our commitments to the principles of "open for business" and red tape reduction, ensuring that Ontario remains an attractive destination for investment and economic growth.

We are making significant changes in international cooperation by implementing the Hague Convention on International Recovery of Child Support. This step will reduce frustration on families involved in the province's child and spousal support orders. It demonstrates our commitment to assisting families and ensuring a just system for all.

In our pursuit to improve safety on Ontario's roads, we are updating the Ontario Highway Traffic Act to prohibit drivers from overtaking a working snowplow unless a full lane is available. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to give you an example of some of the measures—our measures emphasize our dedication to the well-being of both drivers and road workers, and Ontarians at large.

To adapt to the changing world of work, we are proposing changes that would make virtual board meetings a permanent option. The adjustment acknowledges the transformed landscape of employment and positions Ontario at the forefront of modern practices. Some of these are the examples.

In my own riding of Mississauga–Malton, which represents one of the largest and most-vibrant constituencies in the greater Toronto area, during the pandemic and even before, small businesses faced significant challenges due to the burden of red tape. Whenever we approached them seeking ways to assist, their priority request was always the same: Help us reduce the red tape, lower the cost of doing business, lower the cost imposed by the government.

Through this bill, we are answering their call by reducing the cost of doing business. When a small business owner saves money, they can reinvest that money into their ventures, fostering growth and development. As their businesses expand, so does the prosperity of our beloved Ontario. Let us not forget the benefit extends to the public at large, as a competitive business climate created through the reduction of red tape attracts economic growth, job opportunities and new investment to our great province.

The concept is very simple: We cannot rely on outdated rules and processes of the past to build a robust Ontario for our future. We must shed the obsolete and redundant, retaining only what is truly essential, and recalibrate our trajectory towards a better future.

I fully support this bill, and from here on I will be passing on the baton to my good friend.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I would like to thank my friend from Mississauga–Malton—he does a great job in has riding as well—for sharing his time with me this afternoon.

As always, it's an honour to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore and to speak in support of Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and his parliamentary assistant from Niagara West for this latest red-tape-reduction bill, which is our government's 10th and largest so far, with 37 schedules that are expected to save businesses and non-profits in the broader public sector another \$119 million each year.

My colleagues have had the opportunity to speak about many of these. But as the minister said, Bill 91 is only one part of our larger red-tape-reduction package this spring, which includes changes to regulations and new policies that will all contribute to the goal to reduce the burden of red tape. As the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, I'd like to speak about two of these items in particular.

Firstly, the spring red-tape-reduction package includes steps to implement the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, or, BOBI, which was passed last year in schedule 2 of Bill 84. BOBI will help provide businesses across Ontario with greater access to procurement opportunities, from ministries to agencies but also hospitals and schools

and right across the public sector. It will do this by changing the way that we evaluate bids to help level the playing field for Ontario businesses. Traditionally, winning bids are determined based on price, experience and qualification. BOBI will expand on these factors to include social and economic conditions. I'd like to give a few examples of what this will mean to Ontario businesses.

Recently, I had the opportunity to join the President of the Treasury Board and the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for a tour of the Medical Innovation Xchange and the Communitech hub in Kitchener. Again, I want to thank Elliot Fung and Chris Albinson for the tour. We were also joined by Jamie Wallace, the CEO of Supply Ontario, who is working on another related project to centralize procurements and use the province's purchasing power to ensure consistent access to the best-quality products at the best value for the people of Ontario.

The Communitech hub supports a community of over 1,000 high-tech companies in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. They pay their employees fair wages, so they have higher costs than many high-tech businesses overseas. These extra costs can now be taken into account. Extra costs to comply with Ontario high standards on worker health and safety and environmental protection will also be considered so that when Ontario businesses pay more to protect their workers or to protect the environment, they still have a fair chance in the public procurement process against foreign companies that can pollute for free and don't provide safe working environments.

Our goal of awarding at least \$3 billion in contracts to Ontario businesses each year by 2026 will help them to sell more goods and services and create more jobs right here in Ontario. Most importantly, this program will help strengthen the supply chain across the province so that Ontario will be better prepared for any future emergency.

Speaker, that brings me to my second item. Earlier this year, in February, the President of the Treasury Board released Ontario's first ever Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan, or PEMSAP, which is the first of its kind in Canada, building on the lessons that we learned during the pandemic. One of the key priorities of this plan is to reduce the burden of red tape on our partners in emergency management. Every year, ministries and municipal governments are required to carry out annual practice emergency exercises. On page 14, PEMSAP includes an important red-tape-reduction item, which is also part of the spring package, together with Bill 91, to make these annual requirements more flexible for ministries and municipal governments. The details are included in O. Reg. 591/22, which amends O. Reg. 380/04, under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Basically, a ministry or municipal government might now qualify for an exemption from the requirement for an annual emergency exercise in years when they have done responsive action in an emergency.

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These changes are based on feedback we received from experts in the field. To give just one example: Recently, I had the opportunity to join the President of the Treasury

Board and Deputy Minister Bernie Derible, Ontario's Commissioner of Emergency Management, for meetings in the city of Thunder Bay with city manager Norm Gale, manager of emergency services Karen Lewis, fire chief Greg Hankkio and manager of operations Kerri Marshall. I want to thank them again for sharing some of their experiences with us.

Each year, First Nation communities in northern Ontario are threatened by river ice breakup and overland flooding, which generally means that at least one community along the James Bay coast requires evacuation each year.

Speaker, in my riding, we remember the Mississauga Miracle, Canada's largest peacetime evacuation of 240,000 people 44 years ago. But in northern Ontario, as I said, there are flooding emergencies and evacuations every year. If you already respond to emergencies every year, it only makes sense that we may not need more practice exercises.

We also visited the Forensic Services and Coroner's Complex in North York during the Huron Endeavour exercise that tested Ontario's ability to respond to an emergency. In this case, a plane crashed into the Bruce B nuclear plant in Kincardine, which led to the loss of lives, missing people, radiation leaks and environmental issues, including a spill into the lake. Just to give members a sense of the scale of an exercise like this, it took over a year to plan this exercise, and over 40 agencies took part over three days, including Emergency Management Ontario and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The local municipal evacuation centre was activated, with patients sent to hospitals in Kincardine and Saugeen Shores. About 14,000 people took part across the province, from Toronto to Kincardine, London and Ottawa. Bruce Power holds one of these large-scale drills every three years, because they're great tests of emergency management plans across the province.

As the President of the Treasury Board said, "Safety starts with having a plan and being prepared, and routine exercises such as the Huron Endeavour support our government's comprehensive approach to emergency preparedness."

Again, I want to thank the commissioner and all the partners who work so hard on exercises like this to ensure that Ontario is ready for any future emergencies.

At the same time, we need to ensure that our partners are not burdened by unnecessary red tape. And Speaker, as part of the PEMSAP, I know that that we will continue to work with our municipal and federal partners to reduce the burden of red tape for our partners in emergency management.

In closing, Bill 91, together with the changes to policies and regulations in the minister's spring red-tape-reduction package, would continue this government's work to reduce the burden of red tape, and Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity today to give a few more examples of this.

I urge all members to support this very important bill to reduce red tape in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: This government wants to cut red tape and ease regulations. That's what I got from the 20-minute speech from my two colleagues. But what I don't understand, being from the wine industry down in Niagara-on-the-Lake: Your government refuses to eliminate the 6.1% basic tax on small- and medium-sized wineries in Ontario. So my question is, why won't you do that?

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to acknowledge and thank the member from the other side for acknowledging the great work that we're doing. He was able to understand what we're doing through this bill is very simple: Anywhere in this world, not just in Ontario, when the cost of doing business is more than your revenue, you have no choice but to leave.

That's exactly what this bill is doing, Madam Speaker. We are making sure that the burden reduction initiative is not to get rid of rules and regulations for the sake of doing it but to ensure that there is no longer a reliance on burdensome, inefficient, inflexible, outdated regulations. That is what we're doing, Madam Speaker; we're reducing the cost of doing business. When you reduce the cost of business, the cost goes down; even if revenues stay the same, the business becomes competitive.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm enjoying the debate tonight and all the different back-and-forth—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Conversations?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Conversations. I'd like to ask the member from Mississauga–Malton: I was reading the article here, and I think I just might have seen the echelon snowplows when I come down the Gardiner or the 401 coming here. Could you expand upon the changes that you recognized in the bill to do with echelon and overtaking snowplows?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to acknowledge and thank the member for that question. We call him Uncle Bob—not my uncle, but others. We're talking about overtaking working snowplows. That's what you're talking about. The Ministry of Transportation is proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act to add clauses to the HTA to define a snowplow and prohibit overtaking a snowplow working in an echelon on highways with a posted speed limit of 80 or more.

Why are we doing it? We're doing it to make sure that collision reduction with snowplows will enhance public safety, reduce burden on emergency responders, health care services, the insurance sector, the legal system and help maintain winter services level on the highways to ensure the safe movement of people and goods. Again, Madam Speaker, we want to make sure that we have rules and regulations in place when they help and support Ontarians.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore, who talked about the Medical Innovation Xchange that he had gone to see. Ontario has gone to a system of purchasing agencies where hospitals don't get to purchase what they want directly from the purchaser. They go through a centralized purchasing agency. We used to have injectable chemo drugs done right in Niagara, but now, we buy our injectable chemo drugs from India because they supply the entire province.

Small producers in northern Ontario that used to be able to make gloves, that used to be able to make masks cannot get a contract with those big purchasing agencies. Therefore, we bought, before COVID, all of our gloves and all of our masks from overseas. Do you really think that it is red tape to make sure that small agencies in Ontario have an opportunity to sell to our hospitals, not solely through a group-purchasing agency?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As you remember, during COVID, we had problems getting our PPE because we didn't manufacture anything here in Ontario. But now, with our centralizing everything plus manufacturing here in Ontario, it will be much easier, and we will not run into the issues that we did have during the pandemic moving forward.

But not only that—if you remember, you were here during the Liberal 15 years. They were putting in 10,000 regulations a year, 30 regulations every day for 15 years. Can you imagine how the province was back then? We lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. But that has changed now. Now, we have a climate here. We're attracting businesses. Reducing red tape is all part of attracting new jobs here and better-paying jobs for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I speak for, as the Minister of Energy calls it, Canada's clean energy capital. I want to ask the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore about the energy measures in this Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, if passed. We already know our government is taking action on 450 items to reduce red tape without compromising public safety, public health or the environment. We already know that, if passed, we'll have better services, lower cost for Ontarians and families in this province and businesses. But as part of the energy plan, reliable, affordable and clean electricity is important, but what about the costs? How will Ontarians save with the measures that are proposed by this bill?

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Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Durham for that question. As you remember, before we were elected in 2017, people could not afford to pay their electric bill or eat food. They couldn't buy food because of the high cost of electricity.

Thank you to this minister here, who has been able to reduce the cost of energy in this province. I know he'll continue working to reduce the cost, but there were a lot of contracts that were signed before we took office. I know that we still have to work to get rid of those contracts so

we can still lower the price of energy in the province of Ontario, and I know he'll continue working hard to reduce the cost of energy for the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sarah Jama: This bill opens up almost all the laws in Ontario, as I said earlier. Has anyone on the opposite side of the House examined this bill with an accessibility lens in mind in terms of implementation and communication around the changes in this bill? What mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that disabled consumers, stakeholders and business owners were consulted during the drafting of this bill?

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, what I could understand from the member's—first of all, I would like to welcome the member—I am answering a question from her first time—who is a new member from Hamilton.

What I'm trying to understand from the member is that while drafting this bill, was there a consultation done? The answer is yes, Madam Speaker. There's always consultation going on. If anyone in the province of Ontario has a great idea and they believe there is excessive red tape they want to reduce and move our province forward, they can always go to—there is actually a website, Madam Speaker. It is called www.ontario.ca/form/survey-cutting-red-tape-businesses. Again, they can google—there is a form that they can fill out and they can provide their ideas. That's how we are doing consultation at large. But at the same time, across ministries, we are reaching out, we are meeting many, many stakeholders, and they give us suggestions which—

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

Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Madam Speaker: These measures that we're making, we're increasing it on so many different levels, but historic progress has been made with the substantive moves set forth in this bill. Nearly \$700 million per year in net income regulatory compliance costs have been saved. The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, if passed, will give way to better services.

We talked about some of those business services briefly, and the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore talked about this. I believe he was in the automotive business previously and he has an extensive amount of information. Can he talk about some of the pieces of business legislation that will be important to make it easier for people to own businesses?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to thank the member for that question. Not only was I in the automotive business, my father-in-law was an importer of Italian shoes, and during that time, we had problems with all the red tape and the time consumed to be able to import shoes and then export them to other countries. By all the reductions we are doing in red tape, we are helping small business owners succeed in this province of Ontario and be able to hire more people as well—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park to speak and, tonight, to government legislation Bill 91, Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act.

Speaker, before I start to talk about what's in this bill or—as I will be spending perhaps more of my time—what should have been in this bill, I just want to say that my daughter is watching. It's way past her bedtime, but she was doing her homework late tonight. So I want to say, hi, Tsilu, and now please go to bed.

Speaker, getting back to this bill: As has been mentioned by my colleagues, this bill is an omnibus bill. It opens up 37 pieces of legislation. What I find—I don't know how to describe it—mind-boggling, incredibly remarkable is that this government goes through the effort of creating these massive pieces of legislation that amend a whole host of other legislation and yet manages to really not do much in terms of addressing what I would say is the real red tape that the people of Ontario are experiencing, the challenges that people are facing today and have been for a while now. It fails to support Ontarians, and to me, what that really says is that this government is out of touch with the reality of the people of this province.

Unlike the Conservatives, the NDP is focused on making life easier for the people of Ontario. And how would we do that? By addressing some of the real red tape that people experience.

First, let's talk about health care. The province has been in crisis, when it comes to our health care system, for a number of years. We have proposed solutions that could be implemented to fix some of the immediate challenges. In the health care sector, one of the most pressing issues—I certainly hear it from the health care leaders in my community—is the staffing issue, the human resource issue. What we're seeing as a result of that is emergency rooms and operating rooms not being utilized in our public hospitals, not being able to stay open during the weekend. We've seen where hospitals and our health care facilities have to rely on agencies to be able to recruit health care workers. It's pretty straightforward. Front-line health care workers who we called heroes during the pandemic have said that one of the most significant things the government can do today is to repeal Bill 124, which caps public sector wages to 1%—far, far below inflation—and we've proposed that to this government many, many times. We've also proposed solutions to get people the care they need when they need it, all without having to open their wallets to privatized care.

We know that this government has drastically under-spent when it comes to health care, and that includes leaving billions of dollars that have been earmarked for public health care unspent. This is not just me in the opposition saying it; this is the FAO, the Financial Accountability Officer, saying this. The FAO is an independent office whose main responsibility is to follow the money and to see where the government spends or doesn't spend. The FAO has said that when it comes to health care,

Ontario spends the lowest in health and social services per capita in this country.

We are experiencing a health care crisis, and we are underspending. What does that lead to, as well? Unacceptable surgery backlogs. In this House, I have advocated for many of my constituents—in fact, this is not just, of course, in Parkdale–High Park or in Toronto; this is across the province. People are being forced to wait very, very long to be able to access surgery. That also puts a lot of pressure on people to seek privatized care, which the government is expanding, with cataract surgeries, CT scans, MRIs, knee and hip replacements—again, all of this while operating rooms in public hospitals remain unused. With the billions of dollars that have been underspent and with the real need that people have—what it boils down to, really, is a will and maybe even a conscience that this government lacks. Instead of repealing Bill 124, the government is fighting nurses tooth and nail in court to suppress wages. And we're ensuring, really, that the burnt-out health care workers leave the public system, a starved public system, and are being pushed into the private system.

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We're also seeing emergency rooms closing across this province. Right now, there is this massive campaign to stop the Minden hospital from closing. Speaker, if there is an emergency and anybody in the Minden area has to access the emergency department, they have to travel 40 minutes—40 minutes—to access the nearest public hospital. That's not a health care system that's working. And this government is allowing the Minden hospital to close.

So for all of this talk of cutting red tape, I can't stress enough that what is really happening through the government's actions is this Conservative government is actually creating red tape for millions of Ontarians. Because what is going to happen? People are going to have to navigate a privatized health care system and manage the hidden costs of upselling, of comingled services. So the government has essentially downloaded this responsibility to Ontarians, instead of investing in our public health system.

They are forcing patients to make a choice: Suffer for who knows how long to wait for a surgery date in an underfunded public facility, or pay out of pocket for expedited care if the pain and health consequences cannot be endured any longer. That is, if, of course, they can even pay in the first place. And where is all that money going? Into investors' pockets. Private health care treats people's health as collateral in the pursuit of shareholder profits.

Unlike this government that rammed through Bill 60, the NDP actually listened to constituents and stakeholders in the public health care system. We introduced 74 amendments, all of which this government voted down. Every single one of the 74 amendments were voted down.

Now, I want to talk about another issue where there's really a lot of red tape, and that is the Ontario Autism Program. This government has created red tape for families in the autism community just to be able to access funding, resources and the therapies that they need. So before this

government took power, the list of children waiting for core autism services was 24,000. That was already unacceptable, and this government promised to revamp the Ontario Autism Program to address the backlog. And what did they do instead? Create more red tape. Instead of making access to funding and supports easier and to clear the backlog, the wait-list has now grown to over 60,000 children. That is absolutely egregious.

When the OAP was revamped, the government changed the funding criteria to be based on age and not on needs, which is what families in the autism community had asked for. Everybody understands and is asking for needs-based funding. So as a result, we know that children over the age of six are only eligible for \$5,500 maximum in supports, regardless of their needs. We also know that many families can't even get a diagnosis early on, which means families are not getting the funding that they need when their children are very young. And early intervention and early supports are so important to make sure that children are able to live their best lives and to live up to their full potential.

Speaker, the situation is so dire that families are actually leaving the province because they cannot get their kids the support that they need. That is how much red tape this government is creating. People are having to leave the province simply to access vital care. This should not be happening.

Last year, the government promised to get funding for 8,000 children before the end of 2022. We've seen the government backtrack and insist that the promise was to register 8,000 children for funding. It's not to give the funding, but simply to register them, which is basically to say the government is just putting kids on yet another wait-list.

Even worse, Global News reported this past March that just 888 families were put on this new wait-list—so not even 8,000 children on the wait-list—to access the funding. First of all, let me just make it clear, the 60,000-plus were on the original wait-list, and then the government committed 8,000 in this new registered wait-list, but even so—that commitment of 8,000—there's only 888 families there. At this rate, it's going to take 66 years to clear the backlog. Can you imagine that? This is red tape that the Conservative government is creating.

I'm sure every member has families in their riding who are on these wait-lists. I want to share some of the examples. One of my constituents, Cathy, had her son registered June 2022—still no funding. Another parent, Anastasia, told me that her child was registered in January 2022. Here we are in June 2023—still no funding. Another constituent, Pema, contacted my office to let me know that her son was registered for OAP in December of 2021; he's still waiting—no funding.

When my office contacted the ministry about these cases, we were told the OAP funding is now being administered and managed by AccessOAP. It's a non-governmental agency; it's arm's length. The ministry said that it isn't accountable, the wait-list is up to AccessOAP, the ministry can't intervene or do anything about it and my

constituents should simply contact the general number for AccessOAP.

So what happened when they called? They were just told, “You are on a wait-list,” which they already knew. And even when families finally make it to the top of the wait-list, AccessOAP requires them to do a needs assessment all over again. What does that involve? Scheduling meetings, even more delays, and until the assessment is complete, families don’t even know how much funding they’re going to receive—let alone receive any funding. That’s red tape.

Earlier this year, when the government introduced the Ontario budget for 2023, there was no mention of autism. It was not mentioned once. There was no new funding to ensure that families and children get the support and therapies they need, no attempt even to address the backlog to support kids. So not only does this government create red tape, it also appears that they’re absolutely fine in perpetuating red tape for Ontarians who need the most supports.

Speaker, I could go on. There’s going to be—actually, you know what? I do want to talk about this: the red tape that people who are on ODSP experience. My goodness. I want to share with this House—I don’t even know if most members understand how difficult it is to qualify for ODSP. I hear from lawyers and legal aid clinics who are constantly dealing with folks who have applied for ODSP and get denied. They get denied even though their disability is so obvious and clear. But the government, through the ODSP program, denies these applicants. So what do the applicants have to do? They have to appeal. They have to go to the legal aid clinics. They have to get the lawyers to take on the cases. The lawyers have to file an appeal. They have to go before the board to make their case.

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Very often, the lawyers succeed, because they shouldn’t have been denied in the first place. That’s red tape. Why are you making ODSP recipients go through numerous, numerous processes to qualify in the first place for ODSP and, second, to be able to maintain their ODSP funding? It’s incredible.

I don’t know the exact numbers right now, but I can bet you that if you really looked into how much money is being spent in all of the different ways that ODSP offices and applications interact, there is probably more money being spent on surveillance than on actual funding. That’s red tape. That is absolutely red tape.

But does the government take any initiative to get rid of that? No. They don’t even acknowledge it. And here you have some of the most vulnerable people in this province, who are literally going through enormous, enormous barriers to get funding that isn’t even enough to survive on. Where is the action on that?

Speaker, I don’t have time, but there’s another whole very complex system when it comes to ODSP recipients and their living arrangements. That’s a whole other layer of red tape that many, many people have to go through.

I just want to say, finally, that there’s red tape in our schools and education system because of the lack of

funding, particularly in mental health supports. We know that there are over 28,000 children waiting up to two years—two and a half, I think, now, or maybe even longer—simply to access mental health supports. By not taking action and by not funding a lot of these very core services properly, essentially what the government is doing is downloading the responsibility of navigating the system, of trying to put small pieces of various pockets of funding together, and that is creating a lot of unnecessary work and burden for the people of this province. I call that real red tape, when it comes to people’s daily lives.

Finally, Speaker, I want to say that this legislation is titled “Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy.” If we truly wanted to build a strong economy, there are some very foundational things that we need to have, and that is abundant, secure, safe and affordable housing. If people cannot live in Ontario because housing is too expensive, we’re not going to be able to attract, let alone retain, talent.

If we want a strong economy, we need to have a healthy workforce. If you want a healthy workforce and healthy communities, you need to invest in education, mental health, housing, health care. These are the basic responsibilities of the provincial government.

Finally, Speaker, I just want to say that if the Conservatives were truly interested in reducing red tape, they would listen to the needs and concerns of Ontarians, and they would do things to make people’s lives easier.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened very intently, and I honestly appreciate everything that you brought to the table. I appreciate anyone who wants to talk about the most vulnerable, because that was something that existed in my previous life. For over 20 years, I dealt with matters under the child protection act and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. That was literally what I did. One of the things that this bill directly deals with is updating the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, and it announced a reform plan to this. So Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion—this plan will help improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families through greater flexibility and choice and person-centred supports.

I’m going to ask, has the member looked at this? Could she comment on this, and would she support this?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank the member from Thornhill for her question. Actually, I didn’t know about her background, so thank you for sharing that.

I think, fundamentally, when you think about social inclusion, particularly when you think about social inclusion for those who have developmental disabilities—again, it goes back to what I was saying: We need to fund these services, because when you don’t fund the services, then those with developmental disabilities, particularly at a younger age, when they really have that opportunity to be able to get therapies they need and make their lives better, for everyone, not just in their families but the community, that helps them in feeling a sense of belonging to

the world around them, to the communities, in their schools. So at the end of the day, social inclusion is extremely important—I agree on that—but you're not going to achieve that if you don't fund the programs.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from Parkdale–High Park for her remarks. I'm starting to think that any time a Conservative government talks about reducing red tape, the people of Ontario should put their hand on their wallet and make sure they know where their wallet is, and here's why: I think about what you said about health care and the fact that this government has pursued this reckless privatization agenda—nothing in this bill to deal with the red tape that breast cancer patients from our city have had to deal with, going down the highway to Montreal to pay \$30,000 to \$50,000 for life-saving care.

So I'm just wondering if the member can help me understand, because it really seems to me that the government, purporting to care about red tape and making people's lives easier, seems to be making them a lot more expensive and worse.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre for his question. He's absolutely right, and it's exactly what I was trying to explain in my debate, that when you cut services and funding when it comes to our health care and then you privatize parts of our health care system and you create that two-tier system, what is going to end up happening is people now have to figure out two systems. People are going to have to navigate two systems. People are going to have to be on two wait-lists, maybe, if they were going to try to get access to the services. That's creating a lot of burden. That creates unnecessary work for a patient to be able to access services. And it's going to cost people. So the real red tape is the red tape, the challenges and the barriers that people experience in their daily lives.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I have listened carefully to the member for Parkdale–High Park and even the question just asked, from the member opposite. I am delighted to hear that His Majesty's loyal opposition is against red tape. They understand it's a crushing burden. And yet, in our five short years in office, we have taken 450 actions.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Long, long years.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, let's talk about long years. Let's talk about 20 years: a five-year NDP government, three years of an NDP propping up a 15-year Liberal government. That's where all this red tape, regulation and high debt came from.

We've taken action on 450 items to reduce red tape. We've reduced compliance costs by \$700 million annually. If you're against red tape, which I congratulate you for, why will the member not support this bill?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you to the member from Durham for his question. You know what? It's not just this member, but several members from the government side have said, "Oh, we've taken 450 actions," like that's the measurement of their success. Not what kind of

actions; just the figure: "Oh, 450 actions." But when you really look at what specific actions this government has taken, most of them actually hurt the people of this province. Most of them actually create more burden on people's daily lives. It doesn't improve people's lives.

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So yes, we are against unnecessary red tape when it comes to people's lives, but this government is creating red tape and that's what my point is to this government. What I'm trying to explain is when it comes to the real red tape that people experience, there's no action.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was happy to listen to my colleague talk about Bill 60, where we presented 74 amendments to the bill and they were all voted down. Bill 60 served one purpose: to allow investors to build infrastructure we do not need to provide hip and knee surgery and diagnostic services. We have plenty of operating rooms already paid for by the taxpayers sitting empty in 52 general hospitals in Ontario, yet the government wants to have this parallel system.

Does the member think building a parallel for-profit system where investors make profit off the back of sick people—how does this have anything to do with red tape and is this going to make life easier for people who need hip and knee surgery or diagnostic imaging?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I want to thank my colleague the member from Nickel Belt. Actually, as the critic for health care for the official opposition, really, the member from Nickel Belt has been such a strong voice and a leader in making sure that we are not only protecting and defending our public health care system, but that we're actually putting forward solutions to make people's lives easier and to have a health care system that truly serves the people of this province.

I guess my response is probably best answered through an example. I put out a call to my constituents asking for—

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Oh, I'm out of time. Okay, I'll just say this: A couple, husband and wife, both had cataract surgery, one through the public system and one through the private system. The private system partner paid thousands of dollars for their cataract surgery.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Does the member for Parkdale–High Park also realize that while we only talked about the 450 actions, we've actually eliminated over 16,000 regulatory compliance requirements which often placed duplicative and unnecessary requirements on Ontarians, families, individuals and businesses? We're just getting started. As I said, going back in history, five years of an NDP government added debt and burden, then three years of 15 years of propping up a Liberal government—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: That propped it up.

We're just getting started. I'm asking in a positive way: Since the members opposite agree that red tape is crushing and must be eliminated, join us and continue this process, and we'll get to all the red tape that needs to be eliminated. Will they not join us and stop polarizing, political and unnecessary disputes in debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I only have 30 seconds, so I will say this to the member from Durham: You really want to go back in history? I'll take you there: Walkerton.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Seven people died.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Seven people died, exactly. What did the Conservative government do? Removed protections in the name of red tape that led to seven people dying from doing this simple thing, the act of drinking water.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for this opportunity to speak on Bill 91, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023. Our government has placed a strong emphasis on identifying and eliminating unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations—not all regulations, but unnecessary, redundant and outdated ones—to move the progress of Ontario's economy. We recognize the persistent impacts of red tape, which cause frustration, financial strain and unnecessary delays and complications for individuals and businesses.

When we formed government in 2018, we saw the urgent need for change. We saw that businesses under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, found themselves tied up and trapped in a web of unending regulations.

I would like to take this opportunity to address a couple of vital matters at the forefront of the minds of residents and businesses in my riding of Markham–Unionville and also throughout Ontario.

Broadband services: Our government is committed to connect every community in the province with high-speed Internet by the end of 2025, because high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury. It has become a necessity. Especially now, Ontarians require reliable high-speed Internet to stay connected with loved ones, access essential public services such as health care and education, operate businesses, work from any corner of the province, create jobs and drive economic growth. Our goal is to ensure that every individual, community and business in Ontario can thrive in the digital age, leaving no one behind in an increasingly interconnected world.

We have earmarked nearly \$4 billion to expand high-speed Internet access to every community in the province by the end of 2025 and we are steadily approaching the realization of this goal. However, some Internet service providers continue to face unwanted delays in obtaining necessary municipal permits and approvals for their broadband infrastructure projects which our residents urgently need.

That is why our government's proposed bill includes amendments to the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021. These amendments will facilitate the efficient collection

of utility infrastructure data, optimize routing for projects, streamline network planning and prevent delays in the permitting process between municipalities and Internet service providers. By implementing these changes we ensure that ISPs can plan, design and construct high-speed Internet projects swiftly, connecting more communities across Ontario to fast and reliable Internet access. In today's digital world, broadband is an essential service. This funding will help close the digital divide across the province and will provide more equitable access to high-speed Internet for all Ontarians.

Next, I want to highlight a couple of crucial measures put forth by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to modernize the education system in Ontario. Ontario's education system is widely regarded as a global leader. We have earned a strong reputation for our high academic standards, student achievement and overall quality of education. In our commitment to continuous improvement it is vital that we implement new measures and modernize outdated regulations to strengthen oversight and accountability of private career colleges.

Our government will ensure that students are protected, taking decisive action against private career colleges that fail to operate within the boundaries of the law. Firstly, Bill 91 proposes enhanced administrative monetary penalty collections for long-standing non-compliant private career colleges. Under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, administrative monetary penalties are imposed on career colleges and other institutions that violate the legislation. This rule plays a crucial role in tackling bad operators, safeguarding compliant institutions and upholding the integrity of the private career colleges sector.

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However, the available collection tools have proven to be inadequate, resulting in unpaid monetary penalties by those who are not following the legislation. That's why we are proposing to bolster the collection of outstanding administrative monetary penalties from non-compliant career colleges by leveraging enhanced collection tools such as liens on assets or property. This measure will reinforce the accountability of training providers, protect students and foster a thriving and reputable private training sector.

Additionally, Bill 91 proposes a legislative review of the Private Career Colleges Act every five years. When originally passed, the Private Career Colleges Act mandated a review seven years after its implementation. This requirement was fulfilled in 2013, and the legislation currently lacks any provision for subsequent reviews. By introducing regular reviews of the Private Career Colleges Act, Ontario demonstrates its commitment to supporting career colleges in promptly adapting to the needs of the economy and employers. This ensures that students are equipped for promising careers and preserves Ontario's reputation as a welcoming place for students to study and a welcoming environment for businesses.

Lastly, Bill 91 proposes updating the name to the Ontario Career Colleges Act to underscore the significance of career colleges in preparing students for in-

demand professions. This name change signifies the crucial role that career colleges play in equipping students with the skills and knowledge required for thriving careers in high-demand fields. It acknowledges the important contribution of career colleges in Ontario's educational landscape and reinforces their relevance in meeting the evolving needs of the workforce. Through these measures, we are determined to create a modernized and robust education system that prioritizes student success, fosters accountability and aligns with the demands of Ontario's dynamic economy.

This latest red-tape-reduction package will enable us to achieve even greater milestones. Our goal is to set the gold standard for regulatory service excellence and make Ontario one of the best places to invest and do business in North America and around the world. I urge all members to support the initiatives we introduce, ensuring that our province remains competitive on the global stage.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The member makes some excellent points, I submit, in his remarks, and I appreciate them very much. Can he address the issue of how far we've come and how far we intend to go with reducing red tape and why it's so important to families, individuals and businesses, the growth in the economy that results, and then the obvious benefit that is to public sector services in terms of funding—so when the economy is strong, our public services are funded. Can he address that in terms of the connection between reducing red tape and a strong economy?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member from Durham for the quick, very important question. Red tape impacts innovation, investment and economic efficiency. Just look at the legacy of the former Liberal-NDP government. Record-high compliance costs and the largest regulatory burden in Canada led to the complete destruction of Ontario's manufacturing sector and the thousands of jobs it supports. They regulated jobs to death.

Now, our government is cleaning up 15 years of Liberal-NDP waste and mismanagement by reducing the regulatory burden by 6.5% and saving Ontario businesses nearly \$700 million annually. Our government is taking unprecedented action to make life easier for Ontarians and our small businesses.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've enjoyed this debate for the last two and a half hours. But I was wondering, as I listen to all this—this government wants to cut red tape and these regulations for businesses. They say they support farmers. So I'm asking, why does it refuse to eliminate the 6.1% basic tax on small and medium-sized wineries in Ontario?

Mr. Billy Pang: Madam Speaker, I love this member's question. Adding burden is not our intention. As we have shared from our members, our government is taking unprecedented action to make life easier. This bill is the 10th red tape reduction package from our government. Madam Speaker, how to eat an elephant: one bite at a time, right?

When I listen to the members from the opposition, one member says “do, re, mi” are their priorities. The next one is: “A, B, C” are their priorities. The other one is: “One, two, three” are their priorities. Madam Speaker, I really want to know, what are their priorities? They may want to prioritize their priorities.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I always enjoy listening to my friend and colleague's saying. It invigorates me, and that's going to get me through this next question.

Building Ontario is also about building broadband. We've heard from so many of the different areas of Ontario that still suffer with broadband connection. Can the member talk about how these changes will help speed the delivery of Internet infrastructure projects to the people of Ontario?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for her important question. I can still remember one time I answered one question regarding the dial tone. I am not doing that again.

But still, Internet service providers are having challenges with effectively leveraging existing BBFA requirements aimed at making broadband development deploy faster, because there's inconsistency in stakeholders' understanding of what the BBFA requires of them. The MOI is proposing an amendment to the BBFA to authorize the Minister of Infrastructure to make regulations that clarify the geographic areas of designated broadband projects, to better support the collection of utility infrastructure data so that ISPs can leverage information to plan, design and build high-speed Internet projects efficiently and effectively.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to talk a little bit as to what red tape looks like in northern Ontario. I will start by reading into the record a letter that I wrote to the Premier on January 6, 2021. That's two and a half years ago.

“Premier Ford,

“I am writing to you about the economic potentials of Côté Gold Mine for my constituents and for the community of Gogama. Gogama is a beautiful, small, isolated northern community in my riding of Nickel Belt. It was once home to 1,200 residents.

“I want to thank you for attending the groundbreaking ceremony of Côté Gold Mine on September 11, 2020. As you know, the mining company IAMGOLD is opening a new gold mine across the street from the community of Gogama. This mine is an opportunity for Gogama businesses and people to flourish. Unfortunately, there are currently very few opportunities for potential businesses, mine workers and their families to purchase properties in Gogama.

“The community is home to many abandoned homes and lots. These homes are on paved roads, with street lights, hydro, telephone, Internet, water and sewage. For example MNR used to have many houses in Gogama.” These houses are still there. “They have not used them for

over a decade”—because the detachment closed in Gogama. “They are being managed by CBRE” that comes and cuts the grass and that kind of stuff. “Many people are interested in purchasing these homes.” They’re also interested in other lots that “have been cautioned by the Ministry of Finance, but they cannot be sold or acquired as crown land by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. And since Gogama is an unorganized area, they also cannot be acquired and resold by a municipality.

“In September, at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Côté gold mine, you spoke about the potential of the gold mine to bring economic prosperity to change lives in Gogama. Unfortunately, without land for businesses to set up shop and houses for people to live in, Gogama will be missing out. Workers will commute directly to the mine and leave once their work is done. Many people want to live in Gogama, send their kids to the local school, be part of the community. Some fully serviced lots as well as lots on crown land could be purchased by people who want to move and set up shop in Gogama in order to work for or do business with Côté gold mine. If you are serious about this mine having a positive local impact, then the government needs to create avenues for people to purchase these properties in Gogama.

“Premier, will you create a clear and simple process for people to purchase government-owned properties in Gogama? People and businesses need a single point of service that they can reach out to for help in acquiring these properties. You often speak about your government’s commitment to cutting red tape. Please don’t let red tape stand in the way of the economic opportunities for this community. Stand by your commitment at the Côté gold mine groundbreaking ceremony, and allow Gogama to benefit from the gold mine across the street!

“Sincerely,

“France Gélinas.”

Well, it has been two and a half years, and, so far, we have heard crickets.

Let’s be clear. These are homes that are owned by the government. These are homes that people who used to work at MNR used to live in. They are fully furnished, with stone fireplaces. They are very nice homes that have been empty, that nobody can use. They are owned by the government, who cannot find a way to sell them.

The government often speaks about supporting the police—not in northern Ontario, because they closed the OPP detachment in Gogama. The police officers had beautiful homes that belong to the government in Gogama. Nobody lives there anymore because the government closed the detachment in Gogama. All of those homes are there. There’s a gold mine across the street that is hiring 700 workers who all need a place to live. Living in a shack on a mine site is not that much fun; living with your family in Gogama and driving across the street to go to work is a whole lot more fun. So why is it that this government that says, “We will cut red tape and we will make sure that we have a strong economy,” cannot see that owning a dozen homes that they have not used at all, that they will not use, that have been identified—and I have personally written

to the Premier. I just read the letter. I will spare you, but I also wrote to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the ministry of northern resources and forests, the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. I have written to infrastructure. I have pretty much written to everybody who could ever have anything to do with owning those properties.

Gogama is not a municipality. It is directed by a local services board. Local services boards don’t have the same privilege as a municipality. If the same thing had happened within the confines of a municipality—if people do not pay their taxes and abandon their homes, those lots go back to the municipality, the municipality cleans them up and puts them back up for sale, and the economy goes on. But because you are in northern Ontario, because you are not within the boundary of a municipality, those lots go back to the provincial government, who does nothing.

It used to be MNR—now MNRF—the Ministry of Natural Resources, who used to sell those lots. It happens everywhere in my riding in northern Ontario. They would put them up for sale and they would sell them. So I went and saw the good people at MNR and said, “Come and look at all those lots that you own.” Do you know what they told me, Speaker? They told me, “We are so short-staffed that we do not have the resources to go through the steps”—think red tape—“that the government wants us to do before we put a property up for sale.”

So instead, the government pays money to CBRE to maintain those homes that a lineup of people want to buy, and they pay money to maintain those homes that they will never use again. Try to make sense of that. How can you read a bill that says “less red tape, stronger economy,” look at this through the view of what I’m looking at, and say—this bill is not for northern Ontario, Speaker, is it? Because if we were looking at red tape in northern Ontario, we would make sure that in a community that is facing a housing crisis, when you own a dozen homes, when you own seven or eight lots that have abandoned homes on them, you would put them up for sale. It doesn’t matter how much you get for those homes; you’re never going to use them and you’re paying to maintain something you will never use—

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Durham has a point of order.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I’ve listened carefully to the first eight minutes of the member’s speech. There are 37 schedules. I haven’t heard her address one of them. Standing order 25 requires that a member be called to order if a speech or debate is directed to “matters other than,” in (b)(i), “the question under discussion.”

There are 37 schedules. The latitude has been given; I’ve not risen once. I submit that many of the other speeches are similarly in breach of 25(b)(i), and I ask that the member be directed to address at least one of the 37 schedules in this lengthy bill.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the intervention. I consider that the bill is entitled

“red tape,” and she’s talking about red tape. I’ll allow the member to continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker.

I will talk about other red tape in northern Ontario. This has to do with a schedule in the bill that has to do with broadband. Come to my riding, and about 90% of the beautiful areas of Nickel Belt have no Internet connections whatsoever, including where I live—except that if I stand at the end of the dock and the wind is coming from the west hard enough, I get a bit of a cell signal that I’m able to use on a stick—you get the idea.

So I connected with every single Internet provider to say, “The government is ready to give you money. Come and set up Internet where I live and where many other people in Nickel Belt live.” All of them gave me the same answer: “France, it doesn’t matter if the government gives us 100% of the cost of the infrastructure; there is no money to be made. Even if we were to charge you \$300 a month, and all of your neighbours, there is no money to be made. We are not interested.”

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We used to have Ontera in most of my riding. Ontera was an Internet provider provided by the province. Why? Because there’s no money to be made in Nickel Belt selling Internet, so the government owned Ontera. The previous government, the Liberal government, gave it to Bell with a promise that they would keep it going. They kept it going at the same rate as what was happening in 2013. So we get a 5G download and a 2G upload. That means that if you want to look at a picture, it’s a good 18 minutes to download a normal picture. This is the Internet that—if you go to Foleyet right now, the equipment that was given to Bell from Ontera is still there; it has not even been dusted since 2013, and nobody has been there, never mind bringing this Internet up to spec. This is what we’re dealing with.

So, when I see a government that—it doesn’t matter—only sees that the private sector is to be the salvation to Internet providers in northern Ontario, I’m not included in that, because there is not one Internet provider who wants to come to many areas of Nickel Belt because there is no money to be made. When is this government going to talk about northern Ontario and say, “Maybe in some part of rural northern Ontario we will have to have a government-run Internet so that we all gain access”? But there’s none of that in there.

You’ve heard me talk about 911. Here again, red tape: Who can memorize the 27 different 1-800, 1-877, 1-866 numbers to be able to call either the fire department, the EMS or the police in the different areas of my riding? Nobody can do this. All that the government would have to do is call Bell and say, “We will give you the 27 cents per line”—and there are not that many lines—“and connect the rest of northern Ontario to 911.” Every other province has done this. Why? Because it is good for a strong economy to be able to call 911. The services are there. The OPP will come to your rescue, the EMS will come, if only you know the number to call. This has to change, but it’s not in that bill.

Another part of red tape is in health care. I can talk about—I will start in the southwest. The Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre has been writing to the ministry for quite a long time. Let me see. This letter is from October 2022. They explain to the minister that they are able to recruit a physician, an Aboriginal physician, who wants to work in this area. There is a physician who is retiring. All of his patients have put their names at the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre because they need access to primary care. They’re not able to take them on. The Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre writes to the Minister of Health, asks to be funded for one more physician, to be funded for one more nurse practitioner—and, crickets.

Finally, there’s a way to apply—different health centres have until June 16 to apply, and then God knows how long it will be. This is for the southwest.

Capreol nurse practitioners also started to write to Sylvia Jones—same thing. Unfortunately, Dr. McAlister, who had been a very excellent physician in Hanmer in my riding, passed away suddenly. Same thing: 3,000 patients became orphaned. They went and put their names on the wait-list to be at the Capreol Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. The Capreol Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic was able to recruit. They asked the government for about \$100,000 for a new nurse practitioner position. Think about it, Speaker: For \$100,000 you could have taken at least 750, 800 patients—some of the most acute patients—from Dr. McAlister, who died, and given them access to interdisciplinary primary care. None of that happened.

There are layers and layers of red tape before one more position of nurse practitioner can be added to a nurse practitioner-led clinic. Why is this? Why is this, when we know that there are 2.2 million Ontarians who don’t have access to primary care? We have a nurse practitioner-led clinic that writes to the minister—this is like the fourth time—and they explain to her how dire the situation is for hundreds of those patients and yet, again, crickets. All we have is, “Oh, you have to go through this process. There is no way.”

This is where the red tape is. When you see solutions, when you know—we all agree that every Ontarian should have access to primary care, a family physician or a nurse practitioner. This is what medicare is all about. Those are the people who bring you health promotion, disease prevention, who keep you healthy, who help you stay healthy and who help you gain back your health if you get sick. We all deserve to have access. Yet they go to the government and here are the steps that you have to go through. Those steps will only happen 18 months down the road, then you have so many days to reply, and then it will be another 18 months before they make their decision. A lot of people will be hurt.

People lost their physician through no fault of anybody. He died quite suddenly. Nobody expected him to die. Now those people need help. The help is there but the process to get them their help will go on for months. This is the red tape that I would like to see in this bill, but that is nowhere to be seen.

We've have talked a bit about the abandoned mines. I have them throughout my riding. I have abandoned mines throughout. Most of them are leeching some chemicals into the surrounding area. The government has a list of abandoned mine sites that need to be cleaned up. Yes, in Long Lake, there is arsenic. Yes, there are pollutants that need to be addressed. Actually doing the work? Well, I have been at it for 16 years for Long Lake and we have not cleaned up a single square inch of this abandoned gold mine. The same story repeats itself throughout my riding because I have—I don't know, 176 abandoned mine sites in my riding. Half of the abandoned sites in the province happen to be in my riding. There are lots of open mines, also, that do way better. But why is it that a process that we all know needs to be done would take that long?

This is the red tape I would like see. But none of this, none of what the north needs, is in that bill and I'm really sorry about that.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I listened carefully to the member's statements. My concern is simply this: We all want to and have to advocate for our ridings, but if that's all we focus on in judging a bill like this, I submit it's wrong. Of the 37 schedules in Bill 91, many, many—if not most—affect every riding in a positive way.

For example, presently the Ontario Children's Lawyer has to go to court to get access to records. The amendments that we are proposing align with the principle of the best interest of the child. There are thousands of children in the member's riding. This will allow clinicians conducting investigations to gain timely access to necessary information to support them in making recommendations to the court with respect to the best interests of the children in terms of parenting and so forth.

2140

Is the member not in favour of the best interests of the children of her riding?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I like it when they ask easy questions. This one is a pretty easy one to answer: Yes, I love children. We have children of our own; I have grandchildren. I love them all. And if there's anything I can do as a politician or that we can do as a Legislature to help children, I'm in, absolutely.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to thank the MPP for Nickel Belt. Your expertise and your experience when it comes to health care in the province is invaluable and I would just like to say, if you were the Minister of Health, you would be the Minister of Health that this province deserves. So I'm hoping that we get you there because we need someone that cares and understands like you do.

You know, you talk about red tape in health care. There's no better example than Minden and the hospital closure in Minden. The Minister of Health takes no responsibility; she says it's the board's problem. The board is throwing it back and the people of Minden had to come to the Legislature and sit in the chamber and say, "Help

us; do something." There are 25,000 names on a petition to get this government to act. I don't know what this government is doing if they are not addressing this urgent crisis for the people of Minden. When they're busy talking about red tape, let's talk about the health and safety of the people of the city of Minden.

M^{me} France Gélinas: What is happening in Minden is awful. The closure of an emergency department means that people who are sick who would usually gain access to care and be stabilized in a hospital in order to be transported to a tertiary care centre—none of this will be available to them. Ask anybody who works in paramedicine if they want to pick up someone on the side of the road to do the stabilization to be able to transport them. They will all say the same: "No, a hospital has the drugs. They have the support to be able to make sure that somebody will be safe and will still be alive at the end of the journey if you need to move them to a tertiary care centre."

Minden is losing their emergency room. The responsibility lays on the shoulder of the Minister of Health. No emergency room can close without a Minister of Health agreeing to this. She has to grant a one-year moratorium—

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

We'll go to the next question.

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently to the member opposite and I'm very interested in her community. Moreover, I'm interested in what her opinion is on the Northlander rail service. The previous Liberal government chose to cancel this service, cutting off people and economies in northern Ontario from the rest of the province. Bringing back this service will benefit Ontario's northern, rural and francophone populations, as well as so many others.

Will the member opposite support our work to provide efficient, safe and reliable transportation services to and from and across northern Ontario?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Northlander used to go from Toronto all the way to Cochrane, mainly through the riding of my colleague John Vanthof. He and I were there when they closed it and it has been devastating to a great part of northeastern Ontario. It is really difficult for sick people to go into a bus in the middle of the winter to make an appointment in Toronto. It was a whole lot easier to do this on a train.

So do I support bringing back the Northlander from Toronto to Cochrane? Yes, absolutely. The sooner, the better. But we haven't seen a train make it to Cochrane in—what is it, John? About eight years now? And I'm not sure when we will see them again. There are promises that it is coming, but after the next mandate of this government. I want it now—the sooner, the better.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened very closely to the member from Nickel Belt when you talked about the gentleman who passed away, and you made me think about Christine Collins, whom we lost in Ottawa Centre in March. It only came to my attention recently that one of the reasons

Christine passed away was that she had lost access to primary care. Five years ago, her family doctor retired and moved to another country but somehow managed to keep her prescriptions going, so she was still getting access to meds, Speaker. But she wasn't getting access to the early detection and care. And what she found when she presented to an emergency room was significant cancers in her breast and in her stomach, and she literally had three weeks to live after that.

I think about someone like Christine, who gave decades of life working for the federal public service, and I want to know what's in this bill to make sure there's less red tape to get people access to primary care which they urgently need.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I agree with the member that everybody in Ontario deserves access to primary care. This is how you keep people healthy. This is how you help people gain back health if they do get sick. It is through primary care, which is either through a family physician or a nurse practitioner. Everybody should have access.

But what we have right now is a list of red tape. There are nurse practitioners available right now in northern Ontario in my riding—in Capreol, in Coniston, in many areas—who are underemployed and who would love to take on an extra 750 orphan patients and give them access to primary care. This is the best way to decrease the volume of people who end up in our emergency departments: Give them access to primary care. But no, the lines of red tape that they have to go through to get one more nurse practitioner in a community health centre, an Aboriginal health access centre or a nurse practitioner-led clinic takes months that turn into years. That has to change.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciated the member's speech and especially pointing out some of the issues that she has found in Gogama with the province of Ontario being able to sell assets that it's no longer using. I know we just recently had a bill from the Minister of Infrastructure that dealt specifically with making it easier for the government to sell properties that it was no longer using, but the member voted against that bill. I was wondering if she could explain her reasoning on voting against the very thing that she is asking for here in the House.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I would be so happy if the province was actually bringing forward a bill that makes sense in northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, you are not talking about the government owning millions of dollars' worth of assets. You are talking about the government owning a piece of property that's worth maybe \$2,000, owning an old house—it still has a pretty decent fireplace, but in my neck of the woods they're worth maybe \$50,000 or \$60,000.

But yet, to sell a piece of property that is worth \$2,000, you still need to go through all of the steps that a piece of property in downtown Toronto that is worth \$20 million has to go through. There is no difference, which means that it is not worth the people's time because the piece of property is worth two grand.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: In being here tonight and listening carefully to members on both sides of the aisle, I've learned that it actually is true that debate matters in this chamber still, because people do listen and they move forward.

We've learned a few things from comments made by the members of His Majesty's loyal opposition. We've learned just recently that the member for Nickel Belt does support the best interests of children in her riding and presumably across the province, because she responded favourably to my suggestion that reducing the red tape associated with accessing records to help children, to help professionals get access to their records, as proposed by one of the schedules of this bill, is a good thing. That's what I heard.

2150

We heard generally that the opposition is against red tape. They want to keep reducing as much as possible. And I say, join us. Join us in that endeavour. We're just getting started. Again, five years after 15 years of Liberal government, supported by the NDP, which added so much—tripled our debt, tens of thousands of regulations and items of red tape that we've had to remove—we are just getting started.

With 37 items or schedules addressed here, we know, and I assume—and I didn't get a chance to ask the question, but we assume that, for example, in terms of Nickel Belt and other specific ridings represented by the members opposite, that clean, reliable, affordable energy is a good thing. Well, we're addressing that in this bill. This bill, for example, expands the Ontario Energy Board's authority to enable innovation. Our government is cutting red tape to allow more innovation in Ontario's energy sector. By doing so, we are ensuring that all Ontarians—in Nickel Belt as well; that's included—will always have access to reliable, affordable and clean electricity. Unlocking these innovations will power the future of Ontario's electricity system. It will bring about new advancements in clean energy technology. It will help keep costs low for rate-payers, individuals and families, businesses, small businesses and provide countless other benefits. That has to be good for Nickel Belt. That has to be good for Parkdale–High Park. That has to be good in Niagara. It's good in every riding in the province of Ontario.

So I can't believe that the members opposite believe that no new innovations is the way forward. I have to believe that they would want to embrace these innovations to bring about clean, reliable, affordable energy for all, to reduce costs for all, especially those burdened by other high expenses. They talk about affordability, and yet it appears they're voting against this bill. Removing red tape barriers, I thought I heard them say, is positive. I hope they will reconsider when the time to vote on this bill comes.

But just in case they're not yet convinced, I'll go to the basics, starting from the beginning—and I hope they listen as much as I've carefully listened to them, Speaker.

In a general sense, Bill 91 is a confirmation of our government's commitment when it comes to cutting red tape across the province. This government, the Ontario PC

government, campaigned on this. This government, in the first mandate, implemented measures against red tape. And yet, we heard nothing in last year's campaign from His Majesty's loyal opposition, then Her Majesty's loyal opposition, about any plans to cut red tape. And yet, they seem to have embraced it now in this House. And yet, they won't support this bill, it seems.

So far, in five short years, we have made historic progress by saving businesses nearly \$700 million annually in net annual regulatory compliance costs. This is unprecedented. This is an increase of \$120 million in savings since the 2022 Burden Reduction Report. To date, our government has taken more than 450 actions to reduce red tape, without compromising public safety, public health or the environment. That's very, very important. That's a responsible approach to cutting red tape.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act will, if passed, pave the way for better services, lower costs, unleashing the potential of businesses large and small, to create jobs and save Ontarians time and money.

We continue to encourage people, businesses and all organizations to share their best ideas for reducing red tape through our red tape portal—and write it down, I ask, Speaker. Write it down: ontario.ca/redtape. We welcome consultation. This is a process that is just beginning. Join us. Tell your constituents about it. Provide the link on your social media pages. Help us get this done. Put partisanship aside, do the right thing for the residents of your riding and join us in this effort.

So that's the broad overview, Speaker, but then, in relation to energy, as I have indicated, the idea of clean, reliable, affordable energy is the way forward. It's one reason why we have brought back hundreds of thousands of jobs to Ontario, because we provide affordable energy for businesses big and small, and that creates the environment for more jobs, stable jobs, well-paying jobs. It provides relief for families and individuals and our seniors as well. The government remains committed to this plan to keep energy affordable for Ontarians, and the proposed amendment is another step forward to keeping energy rates predictable and low. That's very important.

The government is proposing to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act—that's the OEBA—to ensure that ratepayers are not subjected to additional costs. That's good for Ontario; it's good for Nickel Belt; it's good for Parkdale–High Park; it's good for Niagara; it's certainly good for Durham, Canada's clean energy capital.

The proposed framework for the Ontario Energy Board's authority to enable innovation seeks to enable innovative pilots or demonstration projects that would be subject to OEB oversight. The OEB has a mandate to protect energy consumers, as it should. Ontario is committed to ensuring that the power that we produce can drive electrification and support strong economic growth. And I'm going to repeat it again: When you grow the economy, when you create the environment for hundreds of thousands of new well-paying jobs, you then drive the growth that protects and allows us to properly fund public health care, public education, public infrastructure—services that all Ontarians rely upon and need in every riding. Now the Ontario government is committed to continuing

the effort. This is just one in a series of efforts to reduce red tape and regulation.

The ratification of the Hague Convention is addressed by this bill and the proposals contained within it. We expect everyone, Speaker, to meet their court-ordered obligations for child and spousal support. I assumed the members opposite would join us in that, but it appears they plan to vote against it. We're focused on making life easier for families so they can make ends meet, get ahead and prosper, and a key part of that is making sure that parents meet their child support obligations through the Family Responsibility Office.

This is a government that stands by commitments it makes internationally. Ratifying the Hague Convention would be an important step forward for the Family Responsibility Office. Empowering the province to implement the 2007 Hague Convention in Ontario would give the province reciprocity to collect support payments with 34 more jurisdictions. That's good for Ontario and for children in every riding in Ontario who depend on that.

If the 2007 Hague Convention comes into force in Ontario, the province will have more than double the number of countries to work with to enforce child and spousal support orders. It would also help streamline processes to reduce wait times, effort and administrative burden for Ontario families needing that support. And it would also reduce pressure off of Ontario's overwhelmed court system. Surely that helps, because there are court-houses in every riding of this province, including Nickel Belt.

Ontario's career colleges act: Surely this is relevant to all or most ridings as well, and the proposals in regard to that. The mining provisions: Ontario's miners, I assume the members opposite agree, are the backbone of our province. To the extent that this bill addresses reducing regulatory burdens in that regard, that must be good for Nickel Belt as it is good for the north.

Now, Speaker, I'm understanding as a matter of order that I have been sharing my time with the member for Markham–Unionville. And I'm over 10 minutes, so on that basis, I submit that I may be—no, apparently I'm not. I'm correcting myself on my own point of order. So I shall continue unless there's objection, Speaker.

2200

Let me talk a little bit more about mining, because I'm happy to. I'm very happy to. We are improving, or proposing to improve, ventilation, tightening diesel equipment requirements and allowing electronic devices to evaluate certain hazards in underground mines. Surely the member for Nickel Belt would support that.

New regulatory changes will keep workers safe. They will reduce red tape for businesses and make the regulation easier to understand and follow by clarifying existing requirements, eliminating redundancy and increasing harmonization with other regulations. The changes respond to calls from unions for changes to how much diesel particulate miners can be exposed to underground.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I hear laughter over there. I can't imagine that members opposite would be laughing

about a bill that would address the safety of miners, who are the backbone of our province. But if they think it's a joke, then they'll have to answer to their constituents for that. But I want to put that on the record, Speaker: They're laughing while I'm talking about proposals that help the safety of miners.

The changes respond to calls from unions. Have the members opposite been listening to the unions lately? Or maybe they forgot, in last year's 2022 elections, we received the endorsement of eight unions in this province. I submit that the members opposite, if they ever were, are no longer the party of working people. They are no longer the party who unions look to to support.

The changes therefore respond to calls from unions for changes to how much diesel particulate miners can be exposed to underground.

I see the laughing has stopped, Speaker, so I hope they're taking this seriously, because we are concerned about safety.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Surely, we are.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The members talk about Shirley, but I would say, as a matter of a point of order, whosever's first name or second name is Shirley here, we're not supposed to call members by name, only by their riding, so I'll continue on.

I'm thinking of that film in 1980 called *Airplane!* which was a spoof with a great Canadian actor named Leslie Nielsen—and his brother represented a very northern riding in the federal Parliament, Erik Nielsen. He was the government House leader, I believe.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yukon Erik.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Yes.

Now, the changes—let's get back to what are many serious aspects of this bill. But when we talk about responding to calls for unions to ensure safety—the open-for-business and red tape reduction commitments and the need to implement the recommendations from the mining health safety and prevention review and recent coroner's inquests require us to take these matters seriously. This is not a partisan issue. Our government proposes to deal with it in this bill. We are taking steps, and we hope that we can have the support of His Majesty's loyal opposition, because these proposed changes, I submit, Speaker, improve protection of workers while also making government easier to navigate for Ontario businesses.

The estimated yearly cost savings for the mining sector due to the proposed regulatory changes are over \$100 million. This is how we create the environment for prosperity, for growth, for productivity, for job creation. And again, money doesn't grow on trees. You can't spend your way to prosperity and add debts and deficits that will have to be paid for by our children and grandchildren. What you can and must do is create the environment for growth, prosperity and job creation. That's what we're doing. We're doing it with the mining sector. We're doing it with every sector of the economy.

Carbon storage: This is a very important matter to Ontario, and it's new to Ontario. We're ensuring that the activity is done responsibly, with measures in place to

safeguard people and the environment. I'm proud of our record with respect to the environment. As we continue our phased approach in creating a framework to regulate carbon storage in Ontario, we are proposing changes that would protect public safety while allowing carbon storage demonstration and research projects.

Through future phases, the regulatory framework will support businesses in advancing these projects and may allow them to take advantage of incentives and federal funding opportunities, providing greater investment certainty and creating a new tool to help reduce Ontario's emissions. Consider that.

I know it's a long bill for the opposition members to read—151 pages and 37 schedules—but please reread it before you vote because you'll be surprised. I think they must be surprised because what I heard doesn't address any of these key features, and I'm disappointed by that.

Carbon storage plays an important role in Ontario's low-carbon hydrogen strategy. That's what we're embracing. This sets out a vision for a low-carbon hydrogen economy in our province. This is going to allow us to develop a self-sustaining sector in Ontario, evolve our energy system, create local jobs and attract investment while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. That's good for Nickel Belt. That's good for Parkdale–High Park. It's good for Durham, Canada's clean energy capital.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's good for Sarnia.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It's good for Sarnia. It's good for Brantford–Brant. It's good for Belleville. It's good for all of the city of Toronto and Hamilton, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. It's good for the province of Ontario. It's good for Canada.

But what I've noticed, Speaker, since I've been here as a new member, is how important this provincial Parliament, the government of Ontario, a sub-sovereign government, is to the future of Canada and North America. We are, I believe, perhaps the fifth largest and most important government in North America, and I take that responsibility seriously. So what we do in these areas makes a difference to the environment and to the spinoff effects of a prosperous economy and job creation associated with it.

Now, electronic forms of delivery under the Pension Benefits Act—perhaps less interesting but, again, another form of red tape. There is no red tape that is too small for us to pay attention to. That's why I encourage—and I hope the members opposite wrote down the website. We want and will receive input on every aspect of any type of red tape that we can take action against.

As I said, we're just getting started. At five years in—not quite five years in—we're only one third of the Liberal reign under which we saw the tripling of the debt and massive increases in red tape and regulation. We have to undo that, and it takes much more time than just five years, but we are getting started.

Under the Pension Benefits Act, for people who already receive e-comms and then retire, there is a requirement that the administrator send an email reminding them that they currently receive e-comms and will continue to do so. If they want to receive it another format, they need to

advise the administrator of the change. Currently under the act—Pension Benefits Act, that is—plan administrators are required provide reminder notices to members who retire and may be able to continue to send electronic communications to those members. So if approved, the changes would remove the requirement for administrators of pension plans to provide these reminder notices about communication formats, both electronic and paper, to newly retired members. It would have a general application to all registered pension plans that pay attention to members at retirement and would only affect members who are already receiving communications in electronic form.

This is what happens when a newly elected government in 2018, the Ontario PC government led by Premier Ford, creates an associate ministry of red tape and then makes that a full-time ministry. That is the kind of focus and attention we're giving to this issue. This is the kind of bill—37 schedules—that it produces, and again, it's just one in a series.

I want to conclude by saying how happy I am to hear, as I listen carefully to the members opposite, that they too agree that we need to continue to reduce red tape. Join us, reverse course, members of the official opposition, and support this bill unanimously.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I also like to listen about red tape, but maybe you can show me—especially the member from Durham—where red tape has reduced our rents in Ontario or the price of groceries or gas prices that are skyrocketing. But that's not my question. I'm going to give you another question.

When we hear the Conservative government talk about reducing regulations for businesses, that typically means helping their corporate friends make lots more money. You only have to look at the Westons for that one. How is the government ensuring that workers' safety is maintained in this province? We continue to see deaths and injuries on construction sites and job sites, including in Niagara and Durham.

2210

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for the question. As I say, I believe our Progressive Conservative government and our party have been endorsed consistently since the last election by eight unions. That's because we're listening to union members and union leaders. The Minister of Labour has tabled legislation. This legislation tabled by the Minister of Red Tape Reduction focuses on miner safety. I've already addressed that in my remarks.

Again, 37 schedules—I encourage you to consider them all. I encourage the member opposite to consider what has been done so far: 16,000 regulatory reductions. That is a great track record in five short years, and so much more to come. But we are serious about protecting workers and working for workers, and our track record proves it. We'll take no lessons from the members opposite in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question. I see some eagerness here. I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, I wanted to thank the member for Durham for an excellent presentation. But I want him to talk about how he sees this legislation affecting his local economy in the riding, realizing that in the region of Durham we have an economic recovery plan under way. Your riding in particular is going to be instrumental to the longer-term success of the region of Durham, so if you could just speak to the effect of this bill in your riding.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Whitby for the question. As we're members of the Durham four, he knows that the Durham riding within Durham region is really a microcosm of the province of Ontario. We have families and individuals of all ages living in the riding. We have businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of the riding of Durham. But we also have Darlington and the SMR, small modular reactor, still to come—thousands and thousands of jobs to be created because of that. We have many farms in the Durham riding.

All citizens in my riding are a microcosm, as I said, of the province. These measures in the 37 schedules are being embraced and applauded by citizens throughout the riding of Durham because they help small businesses, they help families, they keep energy costs down, they ensure a supply of clean, reliable, affordable energy. That helps landlords and tenants and homeowners and businesses and seniors. That's what it's about. I'm proud that Durham is a microcosm of the province.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened to the member from Durham intently. I want him to know that as he was imploring us to look up this document that the red tape ministry has issued to the people of Ontario—because I guess, as he said, this is how people are consulted now. There's not a committee that goes around and talks to people. There's about a day and a half it takes for legislation to move through this place.

I just want to point out to the good people of Ontario that if they go to the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction and find this document, it's about 12 pages; the font is pretty big. You enter in search terms like “primary care,” “red tape reduction for nurse practitioners to practise”—does anybody think that's in there?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No.

Mr. Joel Harden: If you enter in search queries about making sure internationally trained medical professionals can be certified in Ontario, is that in here about red tape reduction?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No.

Mr. Joel Harden: No. There's a lot of pomp and pageantry in here. All I see in these 37 schedules in this bill is window dressing compared to the concerns I hear at home: the \$68 billion we're spending on health care that we are not using effectively to get primary care to people.

Will the member give us some substance as to what his government is doing to make sure everybody in this province gets access to a nurse practitioner or a family doctor? Because it's not in your bill.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The member's figures are wrong: \$80 billion, actually, not \$68 billion—\$80 billion this year alone being invested in public health care. That's a record. In my riding of Durham, I was proud to be present for the announcement of 20 new medical seats at Lakeridge Health Oshawa. That is partly a partnership with Queen's medical school. That's what we're doing. We're embracing the Learn and Stay credit, and we're seeing the results. We're getting more nurses. We're getting more PSWs in Durham riding and Durham region, and we're getting more doctors.

So I am very, very proud, and we're seeing the results on the ground in Durham and we're being applauded for it. I invite the member opposite to come for a visit to Durham, to come to Lakeridge, to come see how our investments are paying off and making a difference for a stronger public health care system.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I enjoyed the debate tonight, especially the member from Durham, especially on an issue that's dear to my heart: carbon capture. One of the largest emitters, unfortunately, is in the Sarnia area, with the petrochemical industry. It's very important to the economy: \$24 billion-plus a year, thousands of jobs. Plus the rest of the province has got CO₂ emitters, as well.

Can you elaborate a little more on how carbon capture is going to lead to success in the province of Ontario, and the industry as well?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I really appreciate the member and his question. What a great, real example of a fine parliamentarian he is to me, as a newcomer.

Of course, the question allows me to repeat our government's commitment to the Ontario Low-Carbon Hydrogen Strategy. That's what this is about. We believe that not only are all the measures in the bill designed, as other measures in previous bills were, to responsibly reduce red tape and regulation while protecting public health, public safety and the environment, but by embracing the low-carbon hydrogen strategy, we are committed to a self-sustaining sector in Ontario that evolves our energy system, creates local jobs, but reduces greenhouse gas emissions. That, we must do as part of the strategy. That's what this bill, as part of a series, is committed to doing.

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

Ms. Sarah Jama: I want to give a shout-out to my nephew who is tuning in, even though he should be going to bed soon. Mikhail, thanks for watching.

My question is this: I'm curious to know what consultation has been done with the Indigenous community around the so-called "cutting red tape" in this bill.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The Indigenous communities are always front and centre in our minds in terms of consultation and partnerships. This bill is no exception.

Since many have been focused on their individual ridings—and I think that's great; as I said, we always have to advocate for our ridings—I'm so proud of our government's relationship with Chief Kelly LaRocca, who is the chief of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Our partnership with them and our consultations with them are another example of how we are engaging in reconciliation with First Nations.

And so, this bill, like all of our bills, reflects consultation and partnership with First Nations and Indigenous communities always being top of mind.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We will go for a last question. The member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently to my colleague's conversations and discussions. My head folded up as he talked about the aspects of the legal world—the Hague Convention. I used to deal with files on a continuous basis, and I would literally see clients' and families' faces—the blood would draw from their faces as we advised them that we couldn't collect support because the person that we were collecting against was in a country that wasn't part of the Hague Convention. It was such a natural reality for us to be a part of this.

Would the member like to talk about how important it is that the Hague Convention now comes into force, allowing more countries to be a part of the court enforcement process for child and spousal support?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Thornhill for the question. Like me, she has certainly been a witness to on-the-ground realities in access to justice.

By ratification of the Hague Convention through this bill, we will be able to collect support payments with 34 more jurisdictions. That creates a seamless approach that allows enforceability for children and families for the much-needed support payments they need.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in this House and debate the issues of the day. I have to be honest, there are a few places I would rather be than in the House tonight, but it's part of our jobs and it's an important part of our jobs.

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Tonight, we're discussing Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations. It's one of a series of red tape bills put forward by the government.

I think, before we go any farther, we have to determine, really, what is red tape and what is useful regulation that keeps people safe, that keeps businesses operating, and that's a balancing act. I've listened intently this evening. Many of my colleagues have put forward issues that aren't included in this bill at all, big issues that are facing this province, big issues that we really oppose the government on—Bill 60 on health care, Bill 23, the housing. There are some big issues that we disagree with that aren't covered in this bill.

But there are things in the bill that need to be discussed, and as we do with any bill, you look at the schedules.

There's a saying—one of my best friends, who many of us here know, Kevin Modeste, told me this saying, that even a broken clock is right twice a day. So you look for what in the bill makes sense. And in a bill with 37 schedules, and considering the broken clock, you look for things that make sense. That's how I look for—there are things—and there are schedules in this bill that I think make sense—not all, Speaker, and we'll get to that in a few minutes. But there are a few schedules that I really want to bring up that I think are good, that I haven't heard other people talk about. You take the bad with the good.

Schedule 15 in the Highway Traffic Act: This is a good schedule, a great schedule. “A prohibition against overtaking a snowplow is added to the Highway Traffic Act.” So if the highway is over 80 kilometres and it's marked, it's illegal to overtake a snowplow. That is a change that we have been advocating for, I think, on all sides, and I've talked to the contractors in our area, and it's something they've been advocating for for a long time, because there are many very serious accidents with snow-cleaning equipment, specifically in our part of the province—very serious. I believe in the last five years, if my memory serves me correctly, it's 260, 270 serious injuries and many fatalities for people who are on the front lines of keeping our highways clean. So, is that a good schedule? Definitely. So far, we've got one of 37.

Now, there are a few more. There are many other schedules, but one I'd like to spend a few minutes on, because I haven't heard anybody else talk about it—and it's very important. I often veer off to farm stuff, because that's what I know the best, and sometimes, I can get called out for it because not all bills include agricultural issues. But this one does, a big one. A big part of this bill is strictly about agriculture, and that's schedule 30, Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act. It repeals the Farm Products Payments Act, the Grains Act and the Livestock and Livestock Products Act and replaces them with the Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act.

I have talked and consulted with people in the agriculture sector. This a good change. This is an example of where you're reducing potentially red tape but keeping the regulation that keeps businesses whole. I give credit where credit is due. This one—and just for people who really don't understand what I'm talking about—and that's fine; a lot of people don't understand what I'm talking about—I'll give an example. When a farmer—right now many people are seeding. In our part of the world, they're just finishing seeding; other places are done. But in the fall, they'll be harvesting, and much of that grain—the wheat that makes the bread, the corn for your Corn Flakes, your corn syrup, your ethanol—doesn't stay on the farm; it gets stored in an elevator. All the farmer has is a ticket to prove the yield of his farm. He's just got that ticket. So it's very important that the farmer is sure that that elevator is financially solid, so that that ticket, which should be as good as cash, is solid. That is what bills like this are for.

It's not just with grain; it's when you sell animals—that you know that the companies you're dealing with are solid, and if something goes wrong, that this act is a back-

stop to ensure that you're not ruined because the company you were dealing with wasn't as solid as you thought. That's what the act is for, and to put the three into one—I don't have a problem with that, and neither did the agricultural organizations that I talked to. If this was this one and the snowplows, we would be golden, but they're not the only acts.

There are several others that I'm not actually—my colleagues have spoken about them. I'm sure there are good and bad points. But the one that confuses me—more than confuses me. I can remember when I spoke on this bill on second reading, and I remember—I've said this many times in this House: You always look for the poison pill. It's part of the game of politics. Often there's a wedge in a bill. You'll often hear the government in their speeches—and that's how this works: “The member voted against this.” Well, that's because there was probably a wedge in that bill or it was a budget bill where we totally disagree with the overall monetary policy of the government. There would be a couple of good things in it so the government can say over and over again that that member voted against this. That's how this game works. But you do look, specifically in an omnibus bill. I know “omnibus” sounds like “ominous,” but it's not. This is a bill with—it touches many different acts. I would think that it would have been better, specifically for the agricultural part of the bill, to be in a separate piece of legislation. It would have been open and shut, much cleaner. But I didn't put the legislation together.

The one that confuses me, and I'm going to be totally up front about this, is schedule 14: “The schedule repeals and re-enacts section 35 of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 to provide for new rules regulating the issuance of licences with respect to new and existing train and trial areas.” I missed that on the first—and I wasn't the only one. We all missed that. Didn't sound too out of the ordinary.

In northern Ontario, when you hear about changes to the fish and wildfire act—okay, so they're changing slot sizes of fish or they're doing something. But this is a whole different kettle of fish. Now, this is enclosed areas—some of them are quite large from research I've done since—where dogs are trained to hunt, but they're trained to hunt using wild animals that are trapped in those enclosures, and it doesn't always end up well for the wild animal. That's kind of random. And a lot of the people I've talked to had no idea this was happening in Ontario—very few people knew this was happening in Ontario at all.

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The interesting part about this is that the Mike Harris government, the former Conservative government, actually didn't approve of this practice, so they're the ones who made the decision not to issue new licences. Basically, as these dog-training hunting facilities using captive live animals—as they slowly went out of business, that no new licences were issued and this practice would disappear. That was a Conservative government, Mike Harris. I'm not a big fan of Mike Harris. I'm actually here because of Mike Harris, but that's a whole different story.

But that's something the Mike Harris government saw that—do you know what?—maybe that's a practice that has seen its day and should be discontinued. But this government has decided to randomly revive it, and it makes no sense—from a couple of issues.

So I don't know who it was lobbying to get this changed, but up until the current government included it in this bill, this was totally under the radar. It was dying a slow, natural death. The people who were involved in this sector, were licensed, were not being bothered—and by doing this, the Ford government has put a huge spotlight on these people and has awoken the animal activist movement, and has awoken a lot of people who weren't even aware that this was happening. So in a weird sort of way, they're actually making it worse for these people instead of better.

In the committee process, we suggested that they pull this out because it's the only—we don't agree with everything, but this one is egregious. This is something that—or that you just pull it out and look at it and study it a bit more before—but pull it out of the bill, because this is a poison pill for the government. There are people on the government benches who care every bit as much about rabbits and coyotes and whatever else they use in these hunting captive pen areas that this—I don't think this is a partisan issue. And yet, somehow, you have included this egregious schedule in the bill. You've created your own poison pill. I don't understand.

There are practices in agriculture that maybe would have been acceptable 20, 25 years ago but that aren't acceptable now.

When the Mike Harris government decided that this way of training dogs to hunt perhaps wasn't acceptable—that's why they gave it a slow, rather painless death, as a sector. And the current government is reviving it—and randomly, randomly reviving it in this bill, where no one really caught it, and then all of a sudden it becomes the issue of the bill. It would have been easy to take it out.

You know what? We know so little, many of us, about how this sector is structured. Maybe there's more to it than we understand and it should be studied further so we really understand what the issues are. But from what I understand—and many people in my area hunt; I'm not anti-hunting, not at all—there are ways to train dogs using scent that don't result in a captive animal being traumatized and killed. So, again, what is this?

This has got nothing to do with reducing regulation—nothing; nothing. There's some good things. The two I laid out, the ones that make the most sense to me, are the agriculture one and the snowplow one. And this bill is going to pass; they have a majority. But why would a government cause themselves grief by putting this random testing and training schedule in? We disagree philosophically on many things on this side of the aisle and that side of the aisle, but sometimes you just don't understand the reasoning behind what the government does.

I will commend the government—I do. It's another issue, but it's the same thing. On severances and agricultural land, the government seems to have backed away

and come to their senses, but you wonder why they went down that road in the first place.

With this, the testing and training of hunting dogs using wild prey locked in enclosures that was too barbaric for Mike Harris, for the Premier of the day, who I disagree with on many issues—but it was too barbaric for the Premier of the day, yet for some reason beyond our comprehension it is being brought back to life by the Ford government. And it's those kinds of poison pills—I can understand a poison pill that wedges us. But the government is wedging themselves on this one. Why didn't they pull it? Pull it, study it more, and put it back once everybody understands it, if it's worthy, but don't try to slip it through in an omnibus bill, because that doesn't help anybody.

I'm happy that I could get that on the record, that there are good and bad in this bill, but when you try and slip something like that through, that's enough to say no, no. You could have just taken that out and passed a lot of good legislation that wouldn't have been tainted by this. Now this whole bill is tainted.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane has said there are good things in Bill 91, including—I suppose he would agree, because I've heard him say he's against red tape; I've seen him sit among his colleagues tonight as they said they believe reducing red tape is a must, it's a good thing for individuals, for families, for businesses. So given that the name of the act includes “red tape reduction,” given that this makes life easier and more affordable for Ontarians, for individuals, for seniors, for small businesses when we have less red tape, will he admit that most—the vast majority—of the 37 schedules are proper and good governance and good for his riding and the province?

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Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his question. I made it pretty clear that there are parts of this bill that I think are good. But to the member, as part of the government, why did he not suggest to take out the schedule that is basically a barbaric practice against animals? This government claims that it's very animal-protection-friendly—the PAWS Act—yet there's a barbaric clause in this bill, and I haven't heard the member talk about it. So I question, did the member on the government side lobby his own colleagues to take that schedule out of the bill?

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: This—what is it, a paragraph, three lines?—in a 37-section bill is horrible. I would ask my colleague what kind of motivation could motivate good people to put into an omnibus bill a clause that allows wild animals to be trapped and die the death of a thousand screams? Who does that? Who allows that to go on? What could have motivated them to put something like this hidden in the bottom part of a page of an omnibus bill?

Who does things like this? How can you be motivated to do this?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for the question. I can't really answer what motivates or who pushed for this. The question I have, though, is, why didn't the government members recognize this was an issue even in committee when we asked that it be taken out? "No, no." We talked to the ministers, asked, "Can you take it out and study it further just so we know what's going on?" "No, no."

I don't understand why they're allowing their own legislation, their own reputation, to be tainted by this.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Let me be very specific in this question, Speaker, with respect to the comments of the member for Timiskaming—Timiskaming—it's very late at night—that riding with a double-barrelled name and Cochrane. I've been to Cochrane. I came up to pick a jury. I told the judge I was from Whitby, and he says, "It's the same thing. You're from Toronto up here in Cochrane."

Four specific items: the safety for miners, the best interests of children, the carbon storage plan to reduce emissions, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, our plan to reduce the cost of energy and ensure clean, reliable energy, those specific measures—can the member agree that each and every one of those measures is good in this bill?

Mr. John Vanthof: My response to the member from Durham: Can he agree that the killing of helpless trapped animals is a barbaric practice? Because that's also in this bill. Can he agree to that?

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane for his presentation. I always find that the member is very insightful, especially on issues that are important to northern Ontario, rural Ontario.

I'd like to ask what he thinks about this bill in terms of the number of different legislations that it amends, creating this omnibus bill that is very hard for the public to give feedback on because it is an incredibly complicated and big bill. I just find that the process of consultation might be not as straightforward as if it was on a specific issue—and in general how consultations are very difficult under this government.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for Parkdale—High Park, my colleague, for her question. It is a wide-ranging bill, as omnibus bills tend to be. There are sections in this bill—as I mentioned, the agriculture part would have been much cleaner if it was separate.

But when you are surprised by the testing and training part, then it leads you to wonder, what else have we missed? It's obvious that the government isn't looking that

closely—because I am sure that some of the government members find this as concerning as we do, Speaker; I truly believe that. I don't think that concern for animals is a partisan thing. I don't believe that. So, yes, it leads you to wonder whether the consultation process has been long enough. Specifically on the testing and training, we proposed, "Pull it, and let's consult on this issue and see what's really"—maybe it's not as bad as I'm portraying. Maybe it's worse, but right now, we don't know.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: We're going to go down a different road, Madam Speaker. I'm going to ask the member from Timiskaming to talk about snowplows. We're taking action to discourage unsafe passing maneuvers on working snowplows on high speed, multi-lane roadways, reducing motor vehicle collisions, helping to improve public safety and reduce the burden on emergency responders and health care services. Can we count on the member opposite to help keep our drivers safe and agree with this bill?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. If you recall—and I know you were listening intently to my remarks; it's the first thing that I brought up, because I stand up, as my colleagues do—and again, highway safety isn't a partisan thing either. I stand up a lot to talk about highway safety. I mentioned that in my opening, that this is a good part of the bill, but this bill is tainted by a very bad part. So we offered, we begged, to take that part out of the bill, and for some reason, the members opposite said no. So you're not leaving us much choice, because that part of bill is barbaric. It was too barbaric for Premier Harris.

You could have taken it out and done consultation and made sure you were doing the right thing. You refused. That taints the whole bill.

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

Mr. Gill moved third reading of Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Orders of the day? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, May 31, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2250.

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Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	
Vacant	Scarborough—Guildwood	