

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 91

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 91

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Wednesday
27 September 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Mercredi
27 septembre 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 27 September 2023 / Mercredi 27 septembre 2023

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Transportation for the Future Act, 2023, Bill 131, Miss Surma / Loi de 2023 pour un réseau de transport orienté vers l'avenir, projet de loi 131, Mlle Surma

Hon. Kinga Surma.....	5093
Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	5096
Mr. Joel Harden.....	5100
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	5101
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5101
Mr. Mike Harris.....	5101
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	5102
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5102

Wearing of ribbons

Hon. Neil Lumsden.....	5102
------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco- Ontariennes

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	5102
--------------------------------	------

Health care

Mme France Gélinas.....	5102
-------------------------	------

Events in Kitchener-Conestoga

Mr. Mike Harris.....	5102
----------------------	------

Ontario Place

Mr. Chris Glover.....	5103
-----------------------	------

Brooke Overholt

Mr. Matthew Rae.....	5103
----------------------	------

Government's record

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	5103
------------------------	------

Events in Flamborough-Glanbrook

Ms. Donna Skelly.....	5104
-----------------------	------

Prostate cancer

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady.....	5104
--------------------------	------

150th anniversary of Burlington

Ms. Natalie Pierre.....	5104
-------------------------	------

Victim services

Mr. Nolan Quinn.....	5104
----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Hon. Jill Dunlop.....	5104
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	5105

Mr. Rick Byers.....	5105
Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	5105
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	5105
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	5105
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	5105

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Government accountability

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	5105
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5105

Government accountability

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	5106
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5106

Government accountability

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5107
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5107

Manufacturing sector

Ms. Laura Smith.....	5108
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	5108

Land use planning

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	5108
Hon. Doug Ford.....	5108
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	5109

Concussions

Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	5109
Hon. Neil Lumsden.....	5109

Municipal planning

Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	5110
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5110
Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	5110

Government accountability

Ms. Stephanie Bowman.....	5110
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5110

Health care post-secondary education

Mr. Trevor Jones.....	5111
Hon. Jill Dunlop.....	5111

Municipal planning

Ms. Sarah Jama.....	5112
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5112
Miss Monique Taylor.....	5112

Government accountability

MPP Karen McCrimmon.....	5112
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	5113

Forest firefighting

Mr. Dave Smith.....	5113
Hon. Graydon Smith.....	5113

Amateur hockey	
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	5114
Hon. Neil Lumsden	5114
Affaires francophones	
Mme Goldie Ghamari	5114
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney	5114
Municipal planning	
Mr. John Vanthof	5115
Hon. Paul Calandra	5115

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

WSIB Coverage for Workers in Residential Care Facilities and Group Homes Act, 2023, Bill 54, Mr. Fraser / Loi de 2023 sur la protection à accorder aux travailleurs dans les établissements de soins en résidence et les foyers de groupe par la Commission de la sécurité professionnelle et de l'assurance contre les accidents du travail, projet de loi 54, M. Fraser	
Second reading negatived	5116

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

South Simcoe Developments Inc. Act, 2023, Bill Pr28, Mr. Saunderson	
First reading agreed to	5116
Supporting Economic Recovery and Renewal in the Niagara Region Act, 2023, Bill 132, Mr. Gates / Loi de 2023 visant à soutenir la reprise et le renouveau économiques dans la région de Niagara, projet de loi 132, M. Gates	
First reading agreed to	5117
Mr. Wayne Gates	5117
Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act, 2023, Bill 133, Mme Collard / Loi de 2023 sur le Mois de la sécurité et de la protection de la vie privée des enfants en ligne, projet de loi 133, Mme Collard	
First reading agreed to	5117
Mme Lucille Collard	5117
Hillsdale Land Corp. Act, 2023, Bill Pr29, Mr. Saunderson	
First reading agreed to	5117
Geranium (Hillsdale) Limited Act, 2023, Bill Pr31, Mr. Saunderson	
First reading agreed to	5117

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Gender Equality Week	
Hon. Charmaine A. Williams	5118
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5118

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Labour legislation	
MPP Jamie West	5119
School boards	
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	5119
Alzheimer's disease	
Ms. Catherine Fife	5120
Police funding	
Mr. Dave Smith	5120
Tenant protection	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	5120
School boards	
Mr. Anthony Leardi	5120
Road safety	
Mr. Joel Harden	5121
Tenant protection	
Mr. Chris Glover	5121
Road safety	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5121
Animal protection	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5121
Alzheimer's disease	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	5122

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Transportation for the Future Act, 2023, Bill 131, Miss Surma / Loi de 2023 pour un réseau de transport orienté vers l'avenir, projet de loi 131, Mlle Surma	
Mr. Joel Harden	5122
Mr. Mike Harris	5131
Ms. Catherine Fife	5131
Mr. Mike Harris	5131
Mr. Chris Glover	5132
Mr. Andrew Dowie	5132
MPP Jamie West	5135
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	5135
Mr. Chris Glover	5135
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	5136
Ms. Catherine Fife	5136
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5136
Mr. Mike Harris	5139
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5139
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	5140
Mr. Joel Harden	5140
Ms. Catherine Fife	5140
Mr. John Fraser	5140
Mr. Mike Harris	5141
Ms. Catherine Fife	5141
Hon. Kinga Surma	5142
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5142

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 September 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 septembre 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION
FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023
POUR UN RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT
ORIENTÉ VERS L'AVENIR

Miss Surma moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to enact the GO Transit Station Funding Act, 2023 and to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 131, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur le financement des stations du réseau GO et modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm happy to rise for the second reading of Bill 131, Transportation for the Future Act. I will be sharing my time today with the Associate Minister of Transportation, my former parliamentary assistant, the MPP from Scarborough.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the quality of life enjoyed by all Ontarians. It's what makes our roads safer, our travel more convenient, and our communities healthier and more vibrant. When we build hospitals and long-term-care homes, we're ensuring the most vulnerable people and our loved ones are taken care of. When high-speed Internet infrastructure is deployed, we're ensuring that all communities across the province can participate and thrive in the 21st-century digital world. When a new highway or transit line is built, we're helping hard-working residents get home to their families faster.

Our government is moving forward with the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history by investing more than \$184 billion over the next decade. We are making historic investments in infrastructure that will make a difference in people's lives while creating good jobs in communities across Ontario.

Every day, our ministry is working hard to improve the lives of millions of people. But to do that, we need to build better infrastructure, faster and more efficiently, while saving taxpayers money. That includes a well-functioning

transit system that is critical for those who rely on it every single day, whether they're travelling to work or school, visiting family or friends, or making their way to a medical appointment.

Now, more than ever, our province continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. There is an urgent need to build better transit for the future. We have much work to do, and we cannot delay. We know that we face challenges that, if left unchecked, will lead to much more significant problems down the road.

We know that our province, like many areas across the country, is facing a housing crisis. We also know that we're experiencing the fastest population growth in years. Therefore, we need the necessary infrastructure to support this growth. We need to deliver a transit system that meets the challenges of today, while preparing for the needs of tomorrow. And we need new tools that will help fund and deliver new transit stations, while expediting transit-connected housing to meet our goal of building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

That's why, today, we are introducing the Transportation for the Future Act, 2023, that, if passed, would build more GO transit stations, spur more housing and create mixed-use communities around transit, resulting in a more convenient commute across the greater Golden Horseshoe. Speaker, before getting into the legislation, I'd like to talk briefly about why this is so important.

We have over 500 kilometres of GO rail service. As we expand service with OnCorr, we also have an opportunity to build new stations. These transit-oriented communities will bring more housing, jobs, retail and public amenities close to transit. People's day-to-day lives are getting busier. Between work, family and other responsibilities, they not only want convenience; they need it. TOCs create places that are more livable and walkable. By building transit where people live and work, we are increasing ridership, reducing gridlock, stimulating economic growth, increasing housing supply, and lowering the cost of building infrastructure for taxpayers. And we've made excellent progress. Work is already under way to deliver eight TOCs along the new Ontario Line and Yonge North subway extension, which will create approximately 77,000 jobs and about 48,000 residential units, including affordable housing. We are also creating new housing and mixed-use communities around GO stations within the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Through TOCs, we are taking a bold and innovative approach to city building. To support the delivery of GO expansion, several years ago, the province, through MetroLinx, introduced a market-driven strategy to help build new

stations and improve existing GO stations. That meant new stations would be delivered by the private sector, where financially feasible. While that strategy has worked well and transit-oriented communities are being built, this approach typically relies on one single landowner or building partner, and it could mean years before a new station is actually built.

Our proposed legislation would, if passed, create a station contribution fee as an innovative new tool that municipalities can use to help spur the construction of new GO transit stations, leading to accelerated transit expansion and vibrant, complete mixed-use communities with much-needed housing. If adopted, it would allow municipalities to recover costs from funding the design and construction of new GO transit stations. The station contribution fee would be charged on new developments within areas surrounding these new GO stations identified by municipalities, with revenue collected over time, as transit-oriented communities are built around them. The municipality would only collect the fee until the full station costs are recovered. Municipalities proposing to use this tool would be expected to show a reduction in other development costs to help offset the fee. To give an example, municipalities could reduce parking requirements, which is a huge development-related expense. Such a reduction would be made possible because of the introduction of new transit, which would reduce the reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and the number of required parking spaces. Therefore, municipalities, builders and Metrolinx will have to work together to keep costs down. Together, we will build more stations, housing, and improve access for riders. Also, it is important to note that this would be an optional tool that could only be used in places where the province has determined a new GO station is warranted. We have consulted with a number of municipalities, and they have indicated their support for such a tool to help them expedite transit expansion in their jurisdictions.

0910

If passed, our proposed legislation would help municipalities take an active role in transit expansion and delivery, while serving as a catalyst for unlocking new transit-oriented communities without burdening taxpayers. It would lead to more housing, local businesses, investment opportunities, reduced travel times and better connections across the province, benefiting residents and municipalities, and encouraging more housing near transit. And it means stations will be delivered sooner in many communities.

This voluntary tool could help deliver new stations along the Lakeshore East extension into Bowmanville, Lakeshore West into Niagara, and along the Milton and Kitchener lines.

This is a win-win-win for the province, municipalities and residents. It would mean that transit stations are built sooner, at little cost to the province and taxpayers. The proposal would give municipalities an additional revenue tool to bring a regional transit connection into their cities and their towns, spurring economic growth and bringing vital housing to their residents.

Meanwhile, residents and local businesses will clearly benefit from a new transit station that connects to jobs, opportunities and destinations throughout the region, as well as the increased housing options that are built around them. It means more convenience. It means fewer cars on the road and less time spent in traffic. It means getting to where you need to go faster and more conveniently, with more travel options. And it means more businesses forming in those communities, and more jobs, along with opportunities for those businesses to reach even more customers. It will be especially beneficial for less densely populated areas that have limited or no access to regional transit, as rural and urban areas are further connected. It will help boost local economies, such as local construction and engineering businesses that benefit from the design and construction of new stations.

And with increased growth around future stations, we're also encouraging more walkable communities, further stimulating the local business economy as more people walk by and visit shops, restaurants, cafes and local services. It will mean people can have better access to vital services in their communities and across the region, such as education and health care, while benefiting those who rely on public transit every day. And this will help more people reduce their carbon footprint.

Everyone benefits from better transit infrastructure and greater regional connections. Should municipalities choose not to use this proposed funding tool, the province will continue to work with them through a market-driven strategy to help fund and build new GO stations.

Speaker, this proposed tool would be used with the utmost transparency, as municipalities will be required to conduct a background study and also consult with the community on that study before submitting a proposal to the province. The decision will then lie with the province to approve the use of the station contribution fee for each municipality. The province would only select proposals where the municipality is in a financial position to ensure they have sufficient borrowing capacity.

When we were developing this innovative new tool, we looked to other jurisdictions to find best practices. Studies have shown how collaboration amongst government, transit agencies, municipalities, builders and others can help finance world-class transit infrastructure. Fees like our proposed station contribution fee have been part of financing strategies for successful transit expansion projects such as new stations in various countries.

In fact, the use of land value capture funding methods similar to our proposed tool is well documented. These methods have, for example, been used to fund two world-renowned transit systems.

In Hong Kong, they have a model where transit is built simultaneously with residential development by capturing real estate income to finance the capital and operating costs of new transit. This approach has been adopted to deliver several projects in the city, including Kowloon station, Tin Hau station and the Island Line.

Meanwhile, in London, UK, you'll find a major cross-London rail link that serves the entire region called the

Elizabeth line. That line was made possible through an innovative program of project financing and land value capture.

We also found other examples of development-based fees in North America that helped fund the costs of building transit infrastructure.

The city of Vancouver has a development cost levy that applies to new development projects through the amount of square footage, similar to how our proposed station contribution fee would be implemented. The funds collected through this levy are used to support various infrastructure projects, including transit.

Portland, Oregon, uses a transportation system development charge applied to new development projects. It helps fund transportation infrastructure, including transit expansion and construction of new stations.

So our proposal follows in the same tradition of best practices used around the world.

TOCs have also been successfully implemented in cities like Sydney and Washington, DC.

Speaker, it's time that we think of innovative, creative solutions that will help reach our common goals, help build much-needed housing, and ensure our infrastructure meets the needs of today's rapidly growing population.

Earlier this year, I had the honour of leading an infrastructure mission to Japan to continue building on our history of friendship and close economic and cultural ties. I was there to strengthen relations, share best practices and exchange ideas with key Japanese builders on building urban railways and transit-oriented communities, while also promoting Ontario as a place to invest. We met with officials from various government bodies and transit companies, including Tokyo Metropolitan Government; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Osaka Prefecture; Tokyo Metro; and JR Central. I also met with private sector leaders with extensive experience in infrastructure development. It was a wonderful opportunity to be able to exchange ideas on building key infrastructure, including urban rail and transit-oriented communities. I visited Shinjuku Station, which had well over 200 exits, surrounded and filled with shops and restaurants. I rode the Shinkansen, also known as the bullet train, visited Tokyo Station, and learned about all of the different lines for the local subway system, the regional system, and the bullet train. As we are also building transit-oriented communities here in Ontario, it was extremely valuable to learn how jurisdictions like Tokyo developed TOCs, which created mixed-use communities around their transit stations.

Japan has the world's most extensive railway network and one of the most reliable transit systems, with countless examples of successful and vibrant communities centred around their stations. We found that what makes their transit-oriented communities so successful was thinking outside of the box, along with the partnerships between various levels of government, transit agencies and municipalities, and the adoption of various land value capture models.

If we want a world-class transit system, now is the time for creative solutions.

This proposed tool, if adopted by municipalities, will help accelerate transit expansion all across the greater Golden Horseshoe and unlock significant housing opportunities across the region. It will help address the challenges associated with the typical market-driven approaches that require a single landowner and building partner, especially for communities outside of Toronto.

0920

If adopted, the proposed tool would apply to all landowners and developers looking to redevelop within a specific area around a GO station, which means that the funding contribution is spread out among many interested parties instead of just one. It would also provide more certainty around the timing and the delivery of the station, and it would allow municipalities to initiate and have more control over when the station will be delivered, while encouraging them to take an active role in spurring more housing in their jurisdictions. If a municipality funds the delivery of the station using this proposed tool, the province, through Metrolinx, would be responsible for owning, operating and maintaining it upon completion.

It's exciting to see various levels of government and our private sector partners working together to build better transit and create vibrant mixed-use communities along our transit lines, while addressing one of the biggest issues of our time by spurring the creation of more housing. Speaker, by passing this legislation and approving the use of this new tool, we will create more GO stations and transit-oriented communities so that people can get to where they need to go faster, while reducing gridlock and encouraging economic renewal and growth. TOCs are a forward-thinking approach to strengthening the relationship between transit, employment, housing, commercial spaces and public amenities to create vibrant and mixed-use communities.

With today's challenges, it's time we build a world-class transit system that looks to the future. That's why we are taking bold steps to build integrated mixed-use communities around the subway and the existing GO rail network. This will help families and businesses better access transit and jobs in their neighbourhoods so they can better participate in our province's economy. By bringing jobs and housing closer to transit, we're also helping the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, resulting from fewer cars on our roads.

Our Transit-Oriented Communities Program is allowing us to leverage third-party investment to explore new funding avenues and opportunities to deliver the cost-efficient transit solutions commuters have been waiting for, and we are making terrific progress.

On the Ontario Line, we have proposed transit-oriented communities at six stations. East Harbour will be an integrated transit-centric station that will include a diverse range of commercial, residential, affordable housing, retail, food, cultural uses, and community amenities. The site will be a multimodal transit hub incorporating GO train, TTC light-rail transit and the future Ontario Line subway. It will also become the gateway to the Port Lands. At Corktown station, the site will provide a mix of new

housing opportunities and commercial, retail and public realm space, while commemorating the history of the first Parliament site. The other three transit-oriented communities along the Ontario Line south will be at Exhibition, King and Bathurst, and Queen and Spadina stations, featuring new housing, office and retail space.

Most recently, we announced a proposed transit-oriented community on the northern portion of the Ontario Line at the future Gerrard station, which will create about two acres of public space including access to retail, a grocery store and other amenities, while adding housing and jobs and a new public park. The future Gerrard station will connect users to local TTC bus, streetcar and subway service.

Interjection.

Hon. Kinga Surma: You like that one station?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I do.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Meanwhile on the Yonge North subway extension, the proposed sites at Bridge and High Tech stations would bring new housing, parkland, commercial, retail and community spaces all within a short distance of transit.

We'll continue to work closely with the city of Toronto and York region to identify and plan additional opportunities to bring more transit-oriented communities to subway stations. More will be announced very soon.

As I mentioned earlier, we are also creating new housing and mixed-use communities around GO. For example, Ontario is already working with partners to explore a transit-oriented community at the new Woodbine GO station in Etobicoke along Highway 27. This proposed station would help residents in Etobicoke and surrounding areas connect to the GO line and get to where they need to go, while serving as a future hub for economic development and jobs, and increasing housing opportunities.

We're also working with a builder to construct key improvements to the existing Mimico GO station, including a new, fully accessible main station building and the extension of a multi-use greenway path for pedestrians and cyclists to use to access the station. This TOC is expected to create more than 2,000 housing units, including affordable housing options, along with retail, a passenger pickup and drop-off area, and enhanced station amenities, including hundreds of new underground parking spaces and spaces for bike storage. It will transform Mimico GO station and the surrounding area, bringing more housing, office and retail right next to transit in this rapidly growing area.

Having a third party construct and deliver improved transit infrastructure reduces costs for the taxpayer, while also creating opportunities to bring more jobs and housing closer to transit.

We continue to work with Metrolinx and local municipalities to plan additional transit-oriented communities at GO rail stations throughout the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Speaker, if passed, our proposed legislation will complement these efforts by helping to build stations in communities around Ontario sooner. It will bring new transit stations right to the doorstep of where people live, work

and play, creating thriving communities and providing new ways for residents to get to where they need to go. And we can't do that without our partners. It's clear that we can no longer build transit stations in isolation. With our historic transit expansion, we cannot waste this opportunity.

By 2041, Ontario's population is expected to grow by 30%; the reality is, our infrastructure needs to grow with it. To meet the demands of this rapid population growth, we need to continue to build new and better infrastructure. Our province also faces increasing risks and pressures on the capacity of its infrastructure if we do not make these critical investments today to keep up with a growing population.

Together, it's time to move things forward, to get things done, collaborating with our municipalities and those who will help us build more infrastructure. It's time to think outside of the box, and it's time to build for the future—a future with better transit, more housing, and more vibrant, mixed-use communities so that we build a stronger, more prosperous and more competitive Ontario now and for many years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: I am honoured to rise in this House for the first time, as the Associate Minister of Transportation, to speak on Bill 1, the Transportation for the Future Act, 2023.

I would like to thank my honourable colleague Kinga Surma, the Minister of Infrastructure, for her remarks. I'm thrilled to stand by her today as Ontario's new Associate Minister of Transportation, having served as Minister Surma's parliamentary assistant for over a year. I am forever grateful for her guidance and support.

Thank you, Minister Surma.

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of Bill 131; specifically, on how the proposed legislation sets the groundwork for making travel more convenient for transit riders in and around the Toronto region. At a fundamental level, the City of Toronto Act amendments proposed in Bill 131 are proof that our government is a collaborative government—a government that is willing to work with municipal partners to get it done for the people of Ontario. In the spirit of collaboration, the City of Toronto Act amendments are our direct response to the city of Toronto's request to run its transit system the way it sees fit to better serve its residents and neighbours. In sum, the proposed changes in Bill 131 provide the city of Toronto with the tools to better integrate transit services with other regional transit networks by allowing the TTC to enter into cross-boundary service agreements with neighbouring transit agencies.

Speaker, this is great news for commuters, who, at the end of the day, don't care about what colour bus they are getting on. They only care about getting from point A to point B safely, quickly and affordably.

0930

Working in close collaboration with our municipal partners for the benefit of transit riders around the greater

Golden Horseshoe is something our government, I'm proud to say, is making a habit of doing, whether that be in terms of improving existing service or building for the future. In regard to the former, our government is making transit more convenient and easier to use by offering riders more ways to pay.

Following the successful rollout of credit payments on GO transit and most local transit agencies across the 905 between September 2022 and early 2023, in May of this year we launched debit payment across much of the Presto system, including GO transit, UP Express, Brampton Transit, Burlington Transit, Durham Region Transit, Hamilton Street Railway, MiWay in Mississauga, Oakville Transit and York Region Transit, allowing riders to get on board with just a tap of their debit card, including debit cards stored on their smart phones or smart watch.

This upgrade marked another milestone for the Presto system, giving transit riders yet another convenient payment option when travelling for work, school and more, and demonstrating our government's commitment to making the transit experience easier for Ontarians, no matter where they live.

The launch of credit and debit payment on GO and local transit agencies around the 905 served as another example of our government making transit more convenient. By increasing transit payment options, we gave more people more options to access public transit in ways that work for them.

We didn't stop there. Last month, we made it even easier and more convenient for commuters in Toronto to take the TTC. Since August 15, TTC riders have been able to use their credit or debit card—including cards, as I said, stored on their smart phones or smart watches—to pay their fares. This is a game-changer for anyone who uses the TTC, and it has made life more convenient for people across the GTA area, once again proving that our government's efforts, working in tandem with partners like the city of Toronto, are actually paying off.

Whether Ontarians are travelling for work, for appointments or anything in between, the transit experience should be safe, fast and as convenient as possible. Adding the option to tap a debit or credit card on Presto devices across the TTC gives riders more choices in how they pay their fares as they travel throughout the region. More choice is not only what Ontarians need; it's what they deserve. And that's exactly what we will continue to deliver.

Since our government took office, we have worked with municipal partners to make it easier for transit riders to get from point A to point B. We are continuing to do that by improving Presto services and introducing new and innovative payment options that make fare payments faster and more convenient than ever before.

In addition to making public transit more convenient, we've also made it more affordable. By working together with municipalities and transit partners, we have eliminated double fares on transit throughout much of the greater Golden Horseshoe. That means when you transfer from, for example, a Mississauga MiWay bus to a GO transit train, you only pay the GO fare.

Our government's introduction of one-fare transit travel has been a game-changer for commuters around the 905, saving riders hundreds—in some cases, thousands—of dollars, leaving more money in families' pockets at a time they need it the most. For example, a Mississauga resident who commutes five days a week using MiWay and GO Transit can now save \$1,600 a year on their transit expenses. That's a game-changer savings for riders. Imagine having an extra \$1,600 or more each year to pay for your family expenses, save for a trip, or invest for the future of your kids. Thanks to the work done by former Associate Ministers of Transportation Miss Kinga Surma and Mr. Stan Cho, in collaboration with our ministry partners and transit partners, these savings are now a reality for many Ontarians in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Because of their efforts and those of our municipal partners, today GO Transit riders pay only one fare when connecting to Barrie Transit, Bradford West Gwillimbury Transit, Brampton Transit, Burlington Transit, Durham transit, Grand River Transit, Guelph Transit, Hamilton Street Railway, MiWay, Milton Transit, Oakville Transit and York Region Transit. That's a lot of transit agencies that serve a lot of riders.

I'm happy to report that for riders right here in the city of Toronto—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The NDP obviously are going to support this.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Absolutely.

Madam Speaker, right now, one-fare transit travel is coming soon to the city of Toronto. As with the introduction of open payment, we have taken a measured, phased approach to the elimination of double fares, starting with the local agencies outlined above and working our way up to the TTC, North America's third-largest transit agency. Over the coming months, because of the great work done by the former Associate Minister of Transportation, our government, Metrolinx, the TTC and the connecting agencies in the 905 will continue to perform design and assessment work so that our collective systems are aligned for fare integration.

By early 2024, Toronto riders can expect one-fare transit travel. And do you know what, Madam Speaker? Our government is fully funding this initiative. To be clear: What this means for riders is that when connecting to the TTC from anywhere in the GTA, you will no longer have to pay double fare or triple fare; you will only pay one fare. Eliminating double fares for commuters in the city will save riders considerable money every year, helping families combat the affordability crisis that they're facing right now, save for a rainy day, and relieve just a bit of that stress that so many people are feeling now.

Cutting costs for commuters is important to our government. That is why we didn't just create one-fare transit travel for much of the greater Golden Horseshoe; we went further. In March 2022, we also increased Presto discounts for youth and post-secondary students. These riders now enjoy a 40% discount compared to a full adult fare. This applies to youth and anyone enrolled in post-secondary education who rides on GO Transit or takes the UP Express.

We also launched an affordability pilot program for low-income riders accessing GO Transit in the Peel region. Today, adult riders who enrol in Peel region's affordable transit program are reimbursed 50% of their Presto fare when they travel on GO Transit. This has tremendous benefits for low-income residents of Peel region. We look forward to rolling out our affordability pilot to other cities soon.

Just last month, we reduced the cost of a physical Presto card from \$6 to \$4, cutting the price commuters pay to access the Presto program by one third.

All these initiatives have made life more affordable for Ontarians and have helped get people from point A to point B with less stress and less hassle.

0940

Moving forward, we will continue to work in lockstep with our municipal partners to make public transit as affordable and as convenient as possible. That's why we have created a Fare and Service Integration Provincial-Municipal Table made up of senior representatives from transit systems in the greater Golden Horseshoe and along the GO Transit rail network. The table is focused on short-term building blocks that are needed to improve fare and service integration while developing a long-term vision that will see riders throughout the greater Golden Horseshoe transition seamlessly from one transit provider to another transit provider. Currently, the table consists of senior representatives from transit agencies in Barrie, Brampton, Burlington, Guelph, Hamilton, Mississauga, Toronto, Durham region, Niagara region, Waterloo, York region, Peel region, Oakville and Milton.

As we continue to make progress on fare and service integration, engaging with our municipal partners and engaging with transit systems will be critical, especially as our population continues to grow at a rapid pace.

Speaker, one last note on improving our existing transit network: As we emerged from the pandemic, municipalities saw an increase in ridership on public transit. With more people returning to public transit, our government was happy to provide municipalities with the funding they needed to accommodate more riders. In February of this year, we were pleased to provide more than \$379 million to help municipalities operate and improve their local transit systems. That funding, which was delivered through the provincial gas tax program, was used to extend service hours, buy transit vehicles, add routes, improve accessibility, and upgrade infrastructure.

To make up for reduced gas sales during the pandemic, we provided an additional \$80 million to municipalities to ensure they could continue supporting their transit systems as riders began to increase. Throughout Ontario, 144 communities across 107 municipalities benefited from this funding, which helped them deliver reliable service to riders at a time when ridership was booming after two years of slowdown. This was just one example of our commitment to working in co-operation and collaboration with municipalities across the province to improve public transit.

But our government's stellar work to improve public transit doesn't stop there. Not only are we improving the

existing transit experience today, but we are building the necessary transit infrastructure for the future. In recent years, we have made historic investments in public transit across the province of Ontario. We have done this in collaboration and co-operation with our municipal partners, working together to get Ontarians, as I said, from point A to point B quickly and safely. And by doing that, we are keeping our economy growing.

Ontario's population continues to grow at a rapid pace. Every year we are welcoming more than 500,000 new Canadians to Canada, who mostly settle in Ontario, in the GTA. These new Canadians are eager to contribute to our thriving economy and are proud to call Ontario home, but they can't get ahead if they're stuck in gridlock. Whether you're new to the province or you have lived here all your life, you should be able to get to where you're going safely and quickly. Our government is committed to making sure that happens, and that is why we're investing more than \$70 billion over the next 10 years to transform public transit infrastructure throughout the province. Public transit is a key driver of economic growth in Ontario, helping connect people to their destinations, whether they're going to school, going to appointments, going to work or running errands. Our government is committed to working with our municipal partners, providing them with the funding they need to accommodate growing ridership on public transit, and this funding helps our municipal partners to continue to deliver a safe and reliable transit network for people in their communities, benefiting Ontarians across the province, improving their quality of life, and helping them contribute to our economy.

Madam Speaker, last year our government achieved several milestones en route to completing the largest transit expansion of its kind in Canadian history, including breaking ground on the Ontario Line.

The Ontario Line will add 15 kilometres of new subway track to the city of Toronto's transit system. Once complete, the new line will have a total of 15 stations delivering up to 40 trains per hour, with wait times as short as 90 seconds, and add six interchange stations connecting to existing transit lines. It will reduce crowding by as much as 15% at some of the TTC's busiest stations, including—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The NDP votes against this? Wow.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Absolutely.

The busiest stations that we're going to connect are going to be Union station, Bloor-Yonge station and Eglinton station. This historic investment in Toronto's transit system will reduce gridlock and get commuters from point A to point B safely and quickly and give more people access to rapid transit within walking distance of their homes, accommodating up to 388,000 riders per day. The progress we have made to date wouldn't be possible without working in collaboration and co-operation with our partners at the city of Toronto.

Construction for the Ontario Line is currently under way at Exhibition station, at the site of the future Corktown and Moss Park stations, and in the joint rail corridor east of the Don River. Contracts have been awarded for

the southern portion of the line, which will include four new underground stations, two new underground stations that will connect to existing subway stations, and one above-ground station that will integrate with the Exhibition GO station.

In April, our government reached another milestone in our plan to deliver fast, reliable transit for the greater Toronto area. We began issuing requests for proposals to design and build the Pape tunnel, underground stations, and the elevated guideway and stations for the Ontario Line. The contract for the Pape tunnel and underground stations will deliver three kilometres of twin tunnels and two new stations, one at Cosburn Avenue, another at Pape Avenue, where the all-new Ontario Line will connect to the subway's existing Line 2.

The contract will also include the construction of two new portals where the Ontario Line will transition between above-ground and underground operations, and the contract of the elevated guideway and stations includes a three-kilometre elevated guideway, emergency exit buildings and five above-ground stations, two within Metrolinx's existing rail corridor and three along the elevated guideway on the northern part of the route. This is important progress on the Ontario Line, on this monumental project—again, progress that would not have been possible without working in close collaboration with our partners.

Speaker, building our province through critical public transit projects such as the Ontario Line is vital to supporting our economy, alleviating the gridlock on our roads, and creating thousands of well-paying local jobs. The Ontario Line alone will support 4,700 jobs annually during construction over the next decade. It will reduce commute times and connect more people to housing across the greater Golden Horseshoe and beyond. We are making it faster and easier for everyone to access reliable transit in their own neighbourhoods by improving connections to other subway, bus, streetcar, light rail transit and regional rail services. And we're working with municipal partners in Toronto and surrounding regions to make sure this important work gets done quickly.

0950

Madam Speaker, our government recognizes how important it is to build transit that will connect communities and create new travel options for people across the greater Toronto area. Another milestone initiative that will help us achieve that goal is the Yonge North subway extension, which will extend the TTC's Line 1 subway by approximately eight kilometres up into Richmond Hill. The extension will include an approximately 6.3-kilometre tunnelled segment, as well as an above-ground segment that will run along the existing rail corridor on the northern section of the route.

Once complete, the Yonge North subway extension will connect with local transit services and GO transit, improving access to public transit for area residents; reducing travel time for the residents; contributing to our economy by creating jobs and connecting Ontarians to employment opportunities; and reducing gridlock and gas

emissions. Once complete, this vital piece of infrastructure will accommodate more than 90,000 daily trips and bring faster transit to more communities across York region and Toronto. The Yonge North subway expansion will put 26,000 more people within a 10-minute walk of transit and is expected to reduce daily travel times for commuters by up to 22 minutes. The extension will create thousands of jobs during construction and generate over \$3.6-billion worth of total economic benefits to help stimulate the economy, and it is a key part of our plan to deliver vibrant, complex and mixed-use communities around transit stations for the people of Toronto and York region.

Earlier this spring, we got one step closer to breaking ground on the Yonge North subway extension. In April, the province issued a request for qualifications for the extension's advance tunnel contract. This marked another significant milestone in our plan to reduce gridlock, connect people to jobs and make travel between York region and Toronto faster and easier. The advance tunnel contract focuses on designing the tunnels and building the launch and extraction shafts that will be used for the tunnel-boring machines, and that contract also includes the design and construction of headwalls for stations and emergency exit buildings.

To deliver the new subway as quickly as possible, tunnelling will begin first, followed by a separate contract to build the stations, rail and systems. Early progress on the Yonge North subway extension is currently under way at Finch station, where workers are making upgrades to accommodate the future subway service. This is a great step forward for the Yonge North subway extension and the overall multi-billion dollar transit expansion under way across the GTA.

All said, the progress we have made to date demonstrates what we can achieve when we work together with partner agencies and municipal governments to expand transit for our residents. A project of this magnitude has far-reaching benefits for local jobs, for the economy, for the environment, and for commuters. By building critical transit like the Yonge North subway extension, we are ensuring sustainable growth for the region, providing future generations with the means to move freely and giving people access to more choices and more opportunities.

Speaker, York region is a fine example of one of our province's rapidly growing communities. Every day, more families, businesses and commuters are moving to York region, and they're choosing GO transit to get to their destinations. Throughout the summer, we continued to deliver on critical infrastructure upgrades for public transit systems by collaborating with our local partners in York region and investing in major infrastructure upgrades for the Aurora GO station.

By 2041, the Aurora GO station is expected to serve more than 5,000 commuters per day.

By 2055, GO rail will become one of the busiest railways in North America, with more than 200 million annual riders.

To address this explosive growth, we were thrilled to announce major infrastructure upgrades at the Aurora GO

station just last month. These upgrades aim to provide commuters with better service, more transit connections, and future two-way, all-day service between the Aurora GO station and Union Station in Toronto. The infrastructure upgrades at the Aurora GO station will include a new, second platform, a new pedestrian tunnel with elevators, additional parking spaces, and rail signal upgrades. Once complete, the new station will improve accessibility for riders and support Ontario's plans for 15-minute two-way all-day service on the Barrie line, better serving communities such as Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket, connecting Ontario residents to new opportunities and creating vibrant, connected neighbourhoods throughout the region.

In our spirit of collaboration and co-operation with our municipal partners and transit agencies, we are living up to a promise to bring more GO Transit trips and more frequent services to communities across the entire GO network. Alongside our municipal partners, under the leadership of Premier Ford, the Ontario government is delivering a fast, frequent and reliable transit network to keep the province moving for generations to come. We do this through our continued collaboration with our municipal partners like York region and other parts of the province.

The new and improved Aurora GO station will accommodate a growing number of people who call York region home, while connecting more people to jobs and housing across the greater Golden Horseshoe.

The investments we are making today will ensure that our growing communities are well served by the public transit system for decades and for generations to come. These investments will also encourage even more people to rely on transit to get where they need to go, reducing gridlock, benefiting the environment and improving the quality of life for Ontarians throughout York region and beyond. The investments we are making today will pay dividends for years to come.

While we were busy announcing major upgrades to our GO network this summer, we were also busy completing others.

Commuters in Scarborough deserve the same access to reliable public transit as people living in downtown Toronto. And our government is making the critical investments needed to make this a reality. Just recently, on September 13, we were proud to announce the completion of major infrastructure upgrades at the Milliken and Agincourt GO stations along the Stouffville line. Enhancements at Milliken GO station include an additional track and platform, two new pedestrian tunnels, and additional vehicle and cycling lanes on Steeles Avenue.

People are getting to their destinations with greater ease. Their lives are improving. The gridlock on our roads is starting to ease. These improvements could not have come at a more crucial time. With more people choosing to call Ontario home every year, building reliable public transportation has never been so important.

There is no greater champion for public transit than our government, under Premier Ford. We have a bold vision for the future of the province—a vision which we share

with municipalities across Ontario. We are working together to build a world-class, fully integrated transit network that seamlessly connects people to all of their destinations—their homes, their jobs, their schools, and their hospitals.

1000

Ontarians want choice in how they travel on public transit, and that's what we are giving them by offering debit card and credit card payments on our busiest transit systems, saving people time during their busy commutes and making their lives much more convenient. That's why we are rolling out our fare integration, our service integration, across the greater Golden Horseshoe.

We are working hard to upgrade existing infrastructure and get shovels in the ground on long-overdue transit projects to tackle gridlock, boost the economy and create well-paying jobs throughout the construction. We are not afraid to do the hard work that's needed to get transit built, and neither are our municipal partners across the province.

We could not be prouder of our many priority transit projects in the GTA area, because these historic investments in public transit are game-changers for commuters across the region, and across the surrounding regions. They're also key to economic growth in our province. Every \$1 billion we invest in public transit supports 10,000 jobs and adds another \$1 billion to our GDP. The subway projects we have under way in the GTA area alone will support more than 16,000 jobs annually.

We are so proud of what we have accomplished to date, but the best is yet to come. We'll continue to work with our municipal partners to deliver world-class transit for the people of Ontario. We look forward to working with the city of Toronto on transit fare and service integration that will benefit Ontarians for generations to come.

I hope all the members of this House on both sides support this bill to make life more affordable and convenient for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened to my friends in the government intently, for both of those addresses. Thank you for those this morning.

My major concern as we looked through Bill 131, when it was given to us on Monday morning of this week, is that—the women and men who work in our transit systems do really difficult jobs, and they're very proud of the working conditions they've built up in those jobs over decades. They've contacted me this week with concerns that schedule 1 of Bill 131 is an unnecessary intrusion into their bargaining rights; that there is an aspect of their collective bargaining agreement that allows service integration to happen between transit agencies; that the government doesn't have to go back to this particular provision of making the contracting-out language of their collective bargaining agreements null and void, as it did under Bill 2. So my question to the minister and to the parliamentary assistant is, are you prepared, this week, to work with those transit partners who could help you get to where you want to go without going down that road?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. It is a fair one.

I think that all of us in this House deeply express our gratitude to the front-line workers, the transit workers who kept transit going during one of the most difficult times. Certainly, we recognize how many sacrifices they had to make in order to make sure that nurses could get to hospital and society continued to operate.

That being said, we are mindful and respectful of collective bargaining, which is why I think the intention of this bill that's before us is really to work with the city, to work with the TTC, in order to look for ways in which we can make transit more convenient for riders—and respectful of the collective bargaining that is occurring.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the minister and the associate minister, this having been his first opportunity to rise in this House and address the house as the new associate minister. Congratulations on a wonderful speech this morning.

When our government was elected in 2018 under Premier Ford, we embarked, led by Premier Ford, on a mission and a commitment to make historical investments and bring transformational change to public transportation here in the GTA, which is such an important part of our great province of Ontario. At every step along the way, we have made massive improvements—and I want to thank you for articulating in your speeches this morning just what they've done, because sometimes we take them for granted ourselves. We forget from time to time just how many advancements and improvements are ongoing. So I really appreciate that.

But what bothers me is, for everything we have brought forward to this province in public transportation, our friends on the opposite side vote against it. I'm asking you—maybe you understand better than me—why it is, when we are bringing forth such progress in—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Response?

Hon. Kinga Surma: From a member who doesn't represent a riding in the GTA—you're surely passionate about it, because it is extremely frustrating.

I am very proud to be part of a government that accomplished something that people didn't believe could be done: expanding the subway system after so many years, under Minister Mulroney's leadership, the Premier, Minister Cho's leadership and, of course, all of the local members from Scarborough, Etobicoke and the city of Toronto who really advocated for that.

The subway expansion will improve the quality of life for people. People won't be forced to buy a car, because they can hop on the subway. But we're not just doing that. Madam Speaker, we're building housing around our transit stations, as well, to provide a place for people to live, which will also include affordable housing options and other community amenities.

I want to thank the member from outside of the GTA for his passion. I really appreciate the comments.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a question for the minister. She references the transit-oriented development at Gerrard Street, in my riding. As far as I've been able to tell, so far there is no allocation of affordable units in those towers that are planned; the city of Toronto councillor I deal with can't find any evidence of it. I know that in my riding people support more housing, but if they can't afford it, if they are simply going to be locked out of it—it doesn't really help the people who are right now stuffed into basement units, not being able to afford anything else. So I want to know—in case that information is incorrect—how many of the units in those developments are going to be affordable, what is affordable defined as, and when will people be informed that they can buy or rent a unit in those places?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I participated in that community consultation, and those comments are very fair.

We are actively having those discussions with the city of Toronto in terms of what quantity, number of units, may exist within that particular TOC. But keep in mind that we are building housing, we are providing for a grocery store, and we are providing for additional public realm space within that community as well. It is my understanding that city planning staff are quite satisfied with the draft planning that has occurred to date. So we will continue to work with the city of Toronto, and we will continue to keep the local community apprised.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: To the Minister of Infrastructure: You touched early on in the hour leadoff this morning about some of the different experiences you've had when you've been overseas; namely, in Japan and some parts of Europe.

One thing I think we can all agree with here in Ontario—and, really, Canada, from a broader perspective—is that our rail transit is way, way behind, when you look at some of these other jurisdictions around the world.

I wonder if you could touch a little bit more on what you've seen in your travels, how that helps people get around a lot more efficiently, and what that will mean here in Ontario.

Hon. Kinga Surma: In my remarks, I mentioned that I led a mission to Japan in the early new year. I also want to thank the consul general of Japan, who was actually a stakeholder and a participant and a contributor to the development of the Transit-Oriented Communities Program, who provided for feedback here that I got to see when I went to Japan. Essentially, I think what's most important is that they're always building every single year. Their residents expect them to build. In fact, if they are not building more subways, more regional transit and bullet trains that are almost as fast as plane, their constituents get very upset. So I think it's really important that we take that back, in the sense that, we have to continue to build, because population growth will continue. We also can

learn lessons from their Transit-Oriented Communities Program that they have.

1010

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

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

This government has a growing list of broken promises.

The Conservatives' GO Transit pilot to London was doomed to fail from the beginning—the round trip nearly taking two times what it should, eight hours.

All morning, we've heard the Conservatives say GTA, GTA, GTA, completely neglecting rural partners.

On May 12, 2022, this government produced election ads promising to spend “an additional \$160 million to improve the speed and frequency of GO train service between London and Toronto.” After the election, this promise was broken. GO service to London will end soon.

When will this Conservative government get out of their Toronto bubble, improve regional transit, and support rural communities in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Perhaps the member opposite didn't have time to read the bill in full, because actually the whole purpose of this bill is to help build new stations predominantly outside of Toronto. We've done this in consultation with municipalities.

I would like to thank the region of Durham, for example, which was very pleased with our latest government announcement, led by Minister Mulroney and Minister Cho, for the Lakeshore East extension—eager to build four new stations along that GO rail line, which could quite possibly bring to fruition approximately 35,000 housing units within that area.

I would just kindly say that perhaps the member opposite should take a look at the bill one more time.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear ribbons in recognition of September 27 being Rowan's Law Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear ribbons today in recognition of Rowan's Law. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Ce week-end dernier, le 24 septembre 2023, j'ai assisté à une cérémonie de lever du drapeau dans la ville d'Aurora à l'occasion de la journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. J'ai

été invitée à prendre la parole par Lori-Ann Seward, directrice exécutive, et Jean Bouchard, président de la Communauté du Trille blanc.

J'étais privilégiée d'observer ce magnifique drapeau vert et blanc hissé. Sa présence en tant qu'emblème officiel de l'Ontario témoigne avec élégance du fait que nos rêves, nos espoirs et nos dynamismes exceptionnels flottent avec ceux de toute notre province.

Le président de la Communauté du Trille blanc, son équipe, ainsi que les résidents de Newmarket–Aurora ont en effet déployé des efforts considérables pour mettre sur pied des renseignements pour honorer ce drapeau. Merci.

Mais c'est tout au long de l'année que les équipes de la Communauté du Trille blanc et autres leaders associatifs, comme l'AFRY, se mobilisent pour nous proposer de multiples occasions de nous rassembler, d'échanger et de célébrer notre francophonie.

Je tiens à souligner et à remercier tous nos enseignants et éducateurs qui enseignent le français à nos enfants pour perpétuer notre patrimoine et notre culture française dans cette province.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: On Monday, the Ontario Health Coalition brought almost 10,000 people on the front lawn of our Legislature. The entire NDP caucus was present, but not one member of the Conservative Party came to hear their message. The thousands of people who came spoke with one voice. Their message to the government on behalf of millions of Ontarians is really clear: Stop privatizing our health care system. Many shared personal stories of being charged at private clinics for services that should have been free; of having to pay \$200 to a nutritionist in order to get a colonoscopy or \$1,000 for a lens that their ophthalmologist prefers to use but is not covered.

The Auditor General's outpatient surgeries report's findings are not pretty but not surprising. Her report shows private clinics overcharge, many double-bill, and there is no accountability for their actions. Yet the Premier and the Minister of Health continue to give more and more money to private clinics—clinics that poach staff from our public health care system, making the health care staffing crisis worse.

I am from the party of Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare, a program that defines us as Canadians and as Ontarians, where care is based on needs, not on ability to pay.

Ontarians are united. They want the government to stop the privatization of our health care system. We live in a democracy. I hope the government starts to listen to the people of Ontario, not just the donors who showed up at their fundraisers.

EVENTS IN KITCHENER-CONESTOGA

Mr. Mike Harris: The leaves are starting to turn, and you can feel that chill in the air. That can only mean one thing: It is time for fall fairs.

First, the community answered the call of “Come one, come all” for the 170th—170th, colleagues—Wellesley Township Fall Fair.

The New Hamburg Fall Fair took place earlier this month, with the theme of “Farm Gate to Dinner Plate.” Guests enjoyed midway rides, exhibitions and the ever-popular demolition derby.

Coming up, the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival famously starts this weekend. Come on out to Wellesley and enjoy a pancake-and-sausage breakfast, and be sure to visit the new hard cider tasting, which I’m sure, Mr. Speaker, you’re very interested in.

And Oktoberfest is back. The official keg-tapping will take place on Friday, October 6 in the Willkommen Platz Biergarten. Raise a stein, grab your lederhosen, and come join me for a polka at the world’s largest Oktoberfest outside of Germany.

There is plenty to see and do across the region of Waterloo and my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I invite all my friends, family and colleagues to come down and enjoy.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Chris Glover: Ontario Place is a scandal on the scale of the former Conservative government’s sell-off of the 407, which sentenced Ontarians to 100 years of paying unlimited tolls on what has become one of the world’s most expensive toll highways. It’s on the scale of the Liberals gas plant, Ornge and cash-for-access scandals and their privatization of Hydro One and eye exams. No wonder that Ontarians cannot afford housing, food, student debt payments and hydro bills. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have pillaged this province and given away our public assets and services to their donors.

Ontario Place is one of the most valuable public parklands in Canada, but this Conservative government is giving it away to a private, for-profit Austrian mega-spa for free and throwing in 650 million taxpayer dollars to boot. Every Ontarian is contributing approximately \$100 in tax dollars to this mega-spa company, even though most of us will never use it.

Last week, in the same week that he apologized for breaking his promise not to touch the greenbelt, Premier Ford broke his promise to respect the city’s planning process on Ontario Place. The Conservative government announced that they will begin obliterating the trees and wildlife on the West Island in defiance of the city’s planning process.

What does an apology mean if the Premier continues to break his promises? How can anybody have any trust in anything that Premier Ford says?

1020

BROOKE OVERHOLT

Mr. Matthew Rae: I rise today to recognize the amazing achievement of a local athlete in my riding of Perth–Wellington. Brooke Overholt, hailing from the

beautiful town of St. Marys, made headlines over the summer when she competed at the world track and field competitions in Budapest, Hungary. She is the first athlete from Perth country to compete on the world stage. The St. Marys athlete ran 56.20 seconds in her women’s 400-metre hurdles heat at the 2023 World Track and Field Championships, finishing just five spots back behind the qualifying run for the semifinals. Even before competing on the world stage, she made headlines when she earned a bronze medal at WOSSAA, OFSAA regionals, OFSAA, and in 2019 she represented Canada at the under-20 Pan Am Games.

Brooke is not one to rest on her laurels. She is a true embodiment of the relentless spirit of our athletes. She now sets her sights on the greatest stage of all, the Olympics. She is working to improve her times so that she can compete for a spot on Canada’s 2024 Olympic team.

Her teammates describe her as a paragon of confidence and humility. In victory and defeat alike, she remains a class act and a shining example for athletes everywhere.

Brooke, know this: The entire community and the province of Ontario is behind you as you strive to compete at the Olympics in 2024.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On Monday, the Premier claimed Ontarians are 1,000% better now than they were when he took office in 2018.

We have an affordability crisis, a housing crisis, a health care crisis, and an environmental crisis. We have a government that’s wrapped up in scandals while Ontarians are struggling to make ends meet. The Conservative government has had five years to make things better for Ontarians, but instead they are only working to benefit their rich developer friends and donors. Life has gotten harder and harder for everyone else.

This government is solely focused on selling off and privatizing vital land and public services: the greenbelt, Ontario Place, highways, health care, and social services.

The greenbelt giveaway was never about housing. This government’s own housing task force stated that the goal to build 1.5 million homes is possible without opening up the greenbelt.

We are all elected to serve the people of this province, to make their lives better, but the Conservative government is withholding billions of dollars for health care, mental health and addiction care, social assistance, women’s shelters, and the list goes on.

We need ODSP and OW income rates at least doubled.

We need profit out of long-term care and home care so quality care comes first and seniors, our loved ones, can live with respect and dignity.

We need better, faster and more reliable public transit.

We need to respect Indigenous voices, concerns and consent.

Better is possible, and as New Democrats, we’ll continue to fight for better, because we believe in putting people over profit.

EVENTS IN FLAMBOROUGH– GLANBROOK

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is great to be back at Queen's Park after the summer break, in the midst of one of the best times of the year in Flamborough–Glanbrook: fall fair season. It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the people who make the fall fairs such a memorable time of the year in our communities.

In the month of September, the people of Flamborough–Glanbrook enjoy both the Binbrook Fair and the Ancaster Fair.

This year was the 170th Binbrook Fair, and I'm proud to have sponsored the demolition derby for the fourth year in a row.

And as Thanksgiving is fast approaching, we are preparing for the annual Rockton World's Fair. Since 1852, the Rockton World's Fair has been a Thanksgiving tradition for many in not only Flamborough–Glanbrook but from surrounding areas as well.

These fairs are an opportunity for us to recognize our commitment to agriculture and to bring people together.

I encourage everyone to make your way to the Rockton World's Fair, October 5 through October 9, to support our community and to enjoy livestock shows, live entertainment, demolition derbies, a variety of vendors, and much, much more.

PROSTATE CANCER

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I rise today to advocate on behalf of the men we love—our grandfathers, fathers, sons, brothers, nephews, all of whom should have access to OHIP-covered PSA testing. As a female, I have access to early detection tests, yet Ontario refuses to alter the current OHIP coverage for PSA testing, allegedly due to national guideline recommendations, yet eight other provinces have managed to make this change.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer amongst Canadian men, and the PSA test is an early step in early detection. This government covers a PSA test for those whose practitioner suspects prostate cancer or those who have already been diagnosed. That's not the definition of early detection.

I was honoured to speak recently at the Ride for Dad, a charitable motorcycle ride with the mission to save men's lives—20 years of advocacy and nearly \$40 million later, and yet this government spins its wheels on the issue. On the day of the ride, we heard stories from survivors who were blessed with early detection, but also tragic stories from those who lost a loved one.

The cost to treat cancer is far greater than the \$3 million projected for regular PSA testing for men over 50.

Our colleague from Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie brought this issue forward last year, and today I am joining him in the fight to do the right thing.

I want the men in my life to be around for Christmas, birthdays and summer barbecues.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BURLINGTON

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise today in this House to celebrate a truly remarkable milestone in Burlington's history. This year, we celebrated Burlington's 150th anniversary. This momentous occasion allowed me to reflect upon the rich tapestry of my community's past.

Burlington has deep Indigenous roots that flow through the city's history, giving way to a present community that is strong, enduring, diverse, spirited, resilient and full of culture.

This milestone is not just about looking back at the early pioneers and visionaries who laid the foundations of this great riding; it's also a celebration of our accomplishments and a testament to how we've grown and how we will continue to evolve together to build a brighter future. From humble origins rooted in agriculture to the bustling commercial and cultural hub that my riding has become, the evolution continues as we forge an identity that is uniquely Burlington.

Call me biased, but Burlington is one of the best cities and ridings and is truly a wonderful place to work, raise a family and call home.

VICTIM SERVICES

Mr. Nolan Quinn: It is great to be back at Queen's Park after a busy summer with my constituents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

It was recently announced that the Ontario government is investing more than \$4 million in victim support grants to Ontario police services through the Victim Support Grant Program. I am pleased to share that three local police services in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—the Cornwall Police Service; the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry OPP detachment; and the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service—are each receiving \$100,000 to support victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, domestic violence, human trafficking, and child exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, this funding is extremely important to my constituents and law enforcement officers in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and across the province. I've heard first-hand from my constituents about their concerns about abuse and violence. These stories serve as a reminder of the important work that has been started by child abuse survivor Erin Merry, through Erin's Law, which educates on the importance of knowing the signs of child sexual abuse and ensuring children are taught age-appropriate content to protect themselves.

One week from today, my private member's bill, Erin's Law, will be up for second reading, with consideration to bring an additional level of education and support to our children in schools across Ontario.

1030

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jill Dunlop: This morning, I would like to welcome Jordan Falkenstein, who is the former director of

government relations to the Consulate General of Israel and the current head of Canada and Australia desk public affairs at Tel Aviv University.

Welcome back to Queen's Park, Jordan.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my honour to introduce some visitors from Windsor and Essex county.

We have Mike Kessler, a client of the Alzheimer Society of Windsor and Essex County, as well as an incredible advocate for people living with dementia, and his caretaker, Karen Kessler.

I would also like to introduce the CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Windsor and Essex County, Sally Bennett Olczak.

I also have other guests I would like to introduce. It's my incredible honour to welcome directly into Queen's Park the chief of Caldwell First Nation, Chief Mary Duckworth; Larry Sault; Councillor Ian Duckworth; and Councillor Doug Heil.

Welcome to your House.

Mr. Rick Byers: Colleagues, it's my pleasure this morning to welcome Benjamin Mubiru to the House. He has been my new EA for the last couple of months. Ben is a great fellow. He has worked in the Minister of Finance's office.

Thank you for your great service to the people of Ontario, Ben. Welcome.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's my pleasure to welcome, from the Ontario Autism Coalition, Michau van Speyk to the House this morning, along with a page from Ottawa West-Nepean, Kian Denissen. Welcome.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is my absolute honour to mention that today's page captain, from Brantford-Brant, is Ella Knill. And with us today in the gallery are Ella's family: parents Alycia and Steve, brother Charlie, and grandmother Kim. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome my constituency staff—Grant MacLean, Shelly Cameron, Elise Lewis and Samantha Moore—who are visiting us here today.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We are honoured today to have a representative of the Randolph College for the Performing Arts. She's the program coordinator for the youth dance program. She's also a professional dancer in her own right. Her name is Carmen Leardi, and she happens to be my daughter.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have the pleasure to introduce some folks from Oakville here today. I'd like to welcome and recognize them here in the Legislature. We have Shawn Fang, Larry Gong, Daisy Yao, Eric Zhang, Jing Wen, and Jeff Mo.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yesterday, this government tried to bob and weave on questions of their integrity, but people still have many questions.

On September 14, 2022, the chief of staff to the housing minister, Ryan Amato, was handed brown envelopes from speculators requesting greenbelt removals at the BILD dinner. The very next day, Amato sought clarity directly from the Premier in a meeting the Premier conveniently "does not recall." In fact, Ryan Amato texted a colleague that the Premier and his chief of staff were "very serious." Can the Premier tell us what happened at this meeting?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader and Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think that was addressed in the Integrity Commissioner's report.

I think the Premier was very clear last week when he said that opening up the greenbelt was a mistake. That's why we are introducing legislation that will not only protect the greenbelt but will ensure that it is protected for many, many, many years to come in a way that has never been done before.

Again, I draw the member's attention to the report of the Integrity Commissioner himself—page 135, page 140, page 141, and page 142—where the Integrity Commissioner was crystal clear that the Premier's office did not direct, nor was it responsible for, any of the lands coming out of the greenbelt.

You can't pick and choose which parts of the Integrity Commissioner's report you choose to believe. If you believe that the Integrity Commissioner has done a good and effective job, which I do believe, then obviously, the Leader of the Opposition should also accept those parts of the report where the Integrity Commissioner was clear that the Premier had no knowledge of what was happening with respect to the greenbelt.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the coincidences don't end there.

The people won't be satisfied with responses like that because one day after that meeting, which the Premier doesn't recall, Mr. Amato informed the Ministry of Housing that they wished to initiate a site-specific review where three priority sites were identified to be removed from the greenbelt. Two of those sites were in the packages delivered to Mr. Amato at the BILD dinner.

In just three days, this government had moved from criteria-based selection to three site-specific properties accounting for 91% of the land that this government was trying to remove from the greenbelt.

Did the Premier ever discuss site-specific removals with ministers or staff prior to October 2022?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I refer the member to page 135 of the Integrity Commissioner's report: "In fact, I have found that the Premier's office staff were not providing such direction. The Premier's office was kept in the dark by Mr. Amato as to the process he drove for the selection of properties to be removed from the greenbelt until very near the end before the briefing of the minister."

On page 140: "I accept the purpose of the decision to remove lands from the greenbelt was to address the housing crisis."

The Integrity Commissioner was very clear.

Last week, the Premier was also clear that he accepts responsibility for a policy direction that was not supported by the people of the province of Ontario. That is why we are restoring those lands to the greenbelt. That's why we've added an additional 9,400 acres to the greenbelt. And that's why, very soon, I will be coming with legislation put forward to this House that will guarantee the boundaries of the greenbelt not in regulation but in legislation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, how can anybody believe this? The Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor General's report—they all make it very clear that the Premier is hand-selecting chiefs of staff to ministers. He's writing mandate letters. He has got a close interaction, and we see this repeatedly—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: There's a record of close interaction between political staff in the Premier's office and chiefs of staff to ministers. The Premier has had his hands in everything except this one meeting?

So I want to ask the Premier again: What happened at this meeting on September 15?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Leader of the Opposition can't have it both ways. She either agrees with what the Integrity Commissioner has said or she doesn't. If she does not agree that the commissioner has done his job properly, then she should stand in her place and say that she does not have confidence in the Integrity Commissioner. On page 135 of the report, the Integrity Commissioner was very clear. I draw her attention to page 140, to page 141, to page 142. She can't have it both ways. Either you agree with what the Integrity Commissioner has said or you don't.

That is why we have moved forward. The Premier was very clear last week; he accepts responsibility for a decision that the people of the province of Ontario were not in support of.

That is why we are restoring those lands to the greenbelt. That is why we're adding 9,400 acres to the greenbelt. That is why I am coming forward with legislation to codify the boundaries of the greenbelt not in regulation but in law—a protection that has never been afforded to the greenbelt before. We're getting it done. I hope they support us in that.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, Global News reported that shortly after the 2022 election, the Premier gave out his personal phone number to a packed room at the Empire Club. There were a lot of lobbyists there—a lot of lobbyists. The Premier told attendees that they could text him and that his chief of staff Patrick Sackville helps him

to manage the messages and requests he receives on his personal phone.

1040

Curiously, a request for the Premier's phone records during the same time period that the decision to carve up the greenbelt was made returned no records—no calls, no texts.

Is the Premier using his personal phone to conduct government business to avoid freedom-of-information requests?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member has been. In fact, the Premier gave out his phone number here in the Legislature in 2018; it wasn't at a dinner in 2022—he might have retold everybody again. He actually stood in this place, as Premier, and gave his phone number out to everybody. It's in Hansard; it's on the record.

Yes, he gets lots of calls from a lot of people, and it is a shocking concept for people when they can call and get the Premier on the telephone. Many of us in caucus have been on the opposite end of this—that you have to call somebody back, because he has been at Walmart doing some shopping, and he spoke with somebody, and they want some action from a minister or from a caucus colleague. That is the difference between this Premier and that member over there. We actually listen to people.

And it is exactly that type of leadership that saw the Premier last Thursday say, "I'm listening to people. We acknowledge we made a mistake. We're returning those lands, and we will move forward with building 1.5 million homes."

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Just to be clear: The Premier is using his personal phone to conduct government business—on the record.

Speaker, we may not know what the Premier was texting or who he was calling at that time, because he won't share that. But we do know that Mr. Amato was busy texting. On September 23, Mr. Amato sent a message to a fellow staffer: "I will call you in a bit. I have some clear direction ... On everything greenbelt and official plans bill. Just had an hour chat with Pat." And then he continued—"timelines aren't helpful but clear direction."

Can the Premier tell us which Pat this was and what clear direction he gave to Mr. Amato?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I think the Integrity Commissioner was clear on that. I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition has read the report—but if she does, I'll make it easier for her. She can start on page 135, where the Integrity Commissioner said, "In fact, I have found that the Premier's office staff were not providing such direction." That is in the Integrity Commissioner's report. She either accepts the report or she doesn't.

If she has lost confidence in the Integrity Commissioner, I invite her to put a motion in front of this House saying that. If not, then she can join with us in ensuring that we

put policies in place that build 1.5 million homes across the province of Ontario. In fact, she won't be alone on that, because this is what the member for University–Rosedale said: “Some pockets of solutions I see: One is around increasing supply. We do have a housing shortage and it will require”—wait for it—“our government to provide incentives to open up land and change zoning rules in order to build more supply.”

I'm not sure what land the member for University–Rosedale was talking about. But the land that we opened up, people were not in support of, and that's why—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Why don't I try to answer the question for the member opposite?

To the Integrity Commissioner, the Pat in question was Patrick Sackville, the Premier's chief of staff. So we've got the Minister of Municipal Affairs' chief of staff seemingly relaying a conversation to the Premier's chief of staff where he received clear direction on everything greenbelt just a week after receiving an envelope at a speculator dinner.

We know civil servants had proposed a criteria-based approach for removing these lands.

Back to the Premier: Who made the call to give these speculators preferential treatment instead?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I refer the honourable member to page 135. The Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner outlined the fact that the Premier and his office were not giving any direction. The report itself said that that direction came from Mr. Amato. Again, if she does not have confidence in the Integrity Commissioner, she should table that motion before this House and we can deal with that.

At the same time, the Premier said last Thursday that we made a mistake, we're putting those lands back.

He also said another thing—and this is where they can help. He also said that we will not stop in our quest to build 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario. I'm glad that we now have the support of the member for University–Rosedale to actually move on this commitment, like we are going to. I hope that the rest of the NDP caucus will follow the lead of the member for University–Rosedale and work with us as we move forward to build 1.5 million homes for all people in the province of Ontario and continue to grow our economy.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: This question is to the Premier.

Speaker, this government is refusing accountability at every turn. Yesterday, they denied our request for a Speaker's warrant to compel testimonies from developers we know had undue influence on government decisions. They have refused to request an investigation from the

Integrity Commissioner about ministers taking trips with developers with business before this House. But don't worry; we will get answers for the people of Ontario. But it does beg the question—it truly does—is the scandal worse than we thought?

Why is this Premier avoiding accountability at every turn?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I guess that's the difference between the NDP and our caucus and our team and our Premier. The Premier has responsibility to this House, but he also has a responsibility to the people of the province of Ontario, and last Thursday he showed that when he went out there, admitted that we had made a mistake in removing those greenbelt lands, and returned those lands to the greenbelt. He went a step further and ensured that the greenbelt will be protected not only in regulation but in legislation, and I will be bringing that forward.

There is also another commitment that we made to the people back in 2018, and that is to get the economy moving; that is to build more homes across the province of Ontario; that is to fix the infrastructure, to improve our education system, so that we can move forward to build a bigger, better province of Ontario. We're turning our backs on the policies of the Liberals and the NDP, the high-interest-rate policies that have put so many people out of the market for a home. We're not going to do that. We're going to get the job done for all families across the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, the people of this province deserve answers on a scandal that has lost this Premier three ministers, two senior staff, and the respect of the people of this province.

The Premier says he is very, very sorry and that the buck stops with him, but he continues to backtrack on any involvement he or his office may have had. They denied our call for a Speaker's warrant and refused to request an investigation from the Integrity Commissioner about his minister's trip to Vegas.

Why hasn't the Premier requested the Integrity Commissioner's opinion about his own minister's conduct on the greenbelt and on the Las Vegas trip—because it tells a different story than this government is sharing with the people in this province.

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It is very hard to take ethics advice from the only member of this Legislature who was found guilty of an ethics violation since I have been here.

Having said that, we are going to double down. Do you know what we're going to double down on? We're going to double down on building a bigger, better province of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Both sides of the House will come to order so we can continue with questioning and so that I can hear the member who has the floor attempting to respond to the question. If it happens again, I'll start calling you out by name.

Start the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had the floor.

1050

Hon. Paul Calandra: We are going to double down on making sure that we build a bigger, better province of Ontario that includes all of the people of the province of Ontario. We're turning our backs on the Liberal and NDP agenda. We're seeing the same agenda in Ottawa: high taxes, high spending, out-of-control debts and deficit, red tape, regulation, jobs fleeing. We're turning our back on that, because do you know what it has led to? It has led to increased interest rates. Do you know what increased interest rates mean? Thousands of people who could have otherwise owned a home in the province of Ontario can no longer own a home. That's what they stand for. We stand for something different. We stand for the people of the province of Ontario and giving them the homes that they deserve.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Since taking office, our government has recognized the importance of building a resilient manufacturing sector. That's why, in July, we added more manufacturing jobs to our economy than all 50 US states combined.

Interjections.

Ms. Laura Smith: Absolutely. And we've made sure that these jobs are being created in every region of the province.

Can the minister provide an update on some of the manufacturing investments we've welcomed since we last met in June?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, over the summer we were thrilled to welcome many job-creating investments across the province through our government's various regional development programs.

Numesh announced an almost \$40-million investment to build a brand new facility in Brantford. They are the largest Canadian manufacturer of welded steel and wire mesh used in concrete reinforcement. With nearly \$3 million in support from our government, the new facility is creating 56 new, well-paying jobs in Brantford.

Siltech Corp., a silicone-based chemical manufacturer, announced a \$100-million investment to build a new state-of-the-art facility in Fort Erie. The new facility was supported by a \$5-million investment from our government. That boosts Siltech's manufacturing capacity, and they've hired 50 new workers.

Speaker, these investments will strengthen our world-class manufacturing sector and create jobs for hard-working families in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for his answer and the great work. It's so positive to hear about the manufacturing jobs that are being created in places like Brantford and Fort Erie, after years of hearing about manufacturing jobs fleeing our province under the Liberals.

Our government recognizes how important the manufacturing sector is to the success of our economy, which is why manufacturing employment is now at one of the highest levels since December 2008.

Can the minister tell us and tell the House about other recent manufacturing investments?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we welcomed a \$15-million investment from Cavalier Tool and Manufacturing, a global manufacturer of molds used in several sectors, especially automotive. With \$2.25 million in support from the province, this investment will help the company increase production at their Windsor facility and create 30 new jobs.

Breadsource Corp., a family-owned company that produces absolutely delicious baked goods, announced an \$18-million investment to build a new baking facility in Scarborough. The new facility was supported by an almost-\$3-million investment from our government. It will triple the company's production and create many well-paying jobs.

Speaker, we are creating the conditions for job growth in every single region of the province by lowering the cost of doing business by \$8 billion every year. These game-changing investments are just the beginning.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. The greenbelt land along the proposed Highway 413 belongs to many of the same donors and developers the Premier's office favoured in his greenbelt disaster. The 413 is a mess, won't deliver any measurable benefit to drivers, is a project delivering favours, again, to developer friends, and will cost untold, undivulged billions.

Will the Premier scrap this terrible project and also return those greenbelt lands?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the NDP and the Liberals don't believe in building roads. They don't believe in building highways or infrastructure of any type at all.

We're going to continue our focus on infrastructure, building the 413, building the Bradford Bypass and Highway 7, and widening Highway 3. But guess what? I will guarantee you those same NDP members and the Liberals will be on that highway, driving on the 413 when we build the 413.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, to the Premier: The former Minister of Transportation has never come clean about the costs of the proposed 413. Ecologically, it's a terrible idea. Financially, best estimates put it at untold billions.

The "Friends with Benefits?" article by the Toronto Star laid it out pretty clearly: The highway is a gift to powerful, mega developers who each own land along the proposed route. The highway is for them and not for the people, but the people will be on the hook for these untold costs again.

Again, will the Premier scrap this terrible project and return those greenbelt lands?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to remind the members of the opposition that the people spoke loud and clear. Thanks to many of my new colleagues in the House today—the member for Brampton East, the member for Brampton North, and the member for Brampton Centre—we put this question to the people of this province, the people of Brampton, and they resoundingly told us loud and clear to build Highway 413.

Mr. Speaker, we've got one of the fastest-growing populations in the entire country. The Peel region is one of the fastest-growing regions in the entire province. We need to be able to build infrastructure. If it was up to the NDP and the Liberals, we would get nothing built.

We're going to build Highway 413. We're going to build the Bradford Bypass. We're going to build the Ontario Line and the Scarborough subway extension. And we won't let these members opposite stop us from building Ontario.

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Today, on Rowan's Law Day, we remember and pay tribute to Rowan Stringer's life and legacy. Rowan's Law, introduced and championed by the great member from Nepean, Lisa MacLeod, was named for Rowan Stringer, a high school rugby player from Ottawa who tragically died in the spring of 2013 from swelling of the brain as a result of experiencing three concussions over six days while playing rugby.

I'm pleased to join the members of this assembly by wearing a purple ribbon to honour Rowan's legacy, promote safer play in sports, and ensure that athletes and coaches have the information they need about concussion safety.

Speaker, through you: Can the minister please provide information on the measures implemented by our government to raise awareness about concussion risks, to make sports safer in Ontario?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you for the question. And I'd like to thank my colleague for all the work she does in her riding. I'm happy to support whenever I can.

Ontario is an international leader in concussion safety. Ontario is the first and only jurisdiction in Canada to pass concussion safety legislation. We've made important investments to support concussion awareness and prevention since 2018. Funding and other supports to the Concussion Legacy Foundation Canada, Coaches Association of Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association, and Special Olympics—they've all made a massive difference in working towards safety around youth and head trauma.

We continue to work with our partners and sport organizations to increase concussion safety and awareness, which I'll talk about a little bit more in the supplemental.

I'd also like to thank everyone in this House for their support around Rowan's Law, our working group, who have worked for years to get this right, and, of course, my colleague from Nepean, who championed the successful passing of Rowan's—

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

1100

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: As noted by the minister, Rowan's Law was passed in 2016 and has been strengthened by our government since taking office. Rowan's Law remains a piece of groundbreaking legislation that not only honours the legacy of Rowan Stringer, but has also changed the way Ontario's sport organizations identify and address potential concussions. Over the past five years, since Rowan's Law was implemented, we hear that there has been a considerable increase in the awareness, prevention, detection and management of concussions.

However, we know that educational programs, protocols and codes of conduct only go so far. These must be implemented and enforced in order to create a safer culture in sport across our province.

Once again, through you, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please provide an update on the effectiveness of Rowan's Law in fostering a safer sport environment for all participants?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Again, thank you for the question. One of the key words in that question was "culture."

Our government recognizes the importance of being able to measure the effects of concussions. That is why we are partnering with select sport organizations on a pilot program to collect and report concussion data on and off the field of play—or any surface, quite frankly.

Additionally, stakeholders are telling us that Rowan's Law is making a difference. I can tell you first-hand, at all levels, Rowan's Law is making a difference.

I have coached in the community of Burlington and Hamilton for a number of years. Just a couple of years ago, coaches were mandated to take a course, understand concussions and awareness and then, before players in my sport of football could take the field with equipment, they had to go through a full practice with the coaches understanding getting the head out of contact. It is helping in all sports.

Ontario Cycling is doing something. Any time a rider goes down and there is contact, they examine them before they get back into play. This is really important and—

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

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Premier.

Hamilton city council and the people of Hamilton voted overwhelmingly to meet our housing targets within existing urban boundaries, but this government forced an undemocratic urban boundary expansion on Hamilton. Just as we saw with the greenbelt scandal, the ministry's review of Hamilton's official plan gave insiders preferential treatment. The Integrity Commissioner's report revealed that developers were privately consulted on the urban boundary changes even before the city of Hamilton.

Instead of enriching favoured insiders, when will this Premier do the right thing and reverse the forced expansion of Hamilton's urban boundaries?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member ought to know that an expansion of the urban boundaries in and of itself does not necessarily mean that housing will be built on that expansion. The city still remains in control of the process. The city will determine when homes or if homes will be built in that expanded area. The city determines if the land will be serviced and when it will be serviced. That is the reality with an expansion of the urban boundary.

It really all comes down to the same thing—over and over and over and over again, it is “no homes.” The legion of doom and gloom over there have one thing in common: Neither one of them wants to work on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

We are going to continue to do our job for all of the people of the province of Ontario, because people deserve to get out of their parents' basements and live in homes. That is their dream, and we're going to make sure that they can have that dream come to a reality.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Back to the Premier: Last November, this government unilaterally added 654 hectares of land inside Ottawa's urban boundary. According to media reports, the main beneficiaries of these urban boundary expansions are donors to the PC Party. The forced expansions included land no one had even considered for development but had been purchased a year earlier by five people who had donated thousands to the PC Party.

Does the Premier support giving preferential treatment to insiders, or will he reverse this forced urban boundary expansion?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, as I just said, an expansion of the urban boundary in and of itself has no impact on when homes will be built.

The city of Ottawa is still in control of that decision. The city of Ottawa will still be in control of whether those lands will be serviced. The city of Ottawa is still in control of when homes will be built in that area. That is the reality—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Ottawa South, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I can hear the leader of the Liberal Party hollering and complaining. Of course, he's upset, because we're moving ahead with building homes. They failed. He was part of a failed government for 15 years. This is a guy who stood up and built, what, 611 long-term-care beds across the entire province in 15 years?

This minister has built more in your riding than you built in 15 years. That's your record. You closed hospitals. You didn't build—

Interjections.

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

The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The member for Brampton North will come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton North, come to order.

I will remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the House. I will remind members that all interjections are out of order.

Start the clock. The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Last December, I asked the Premier if the people who told him to pave over the greenbelt were the same people who stood to benefit. I didn't get an answer then, but we know now, thanks to the Auditor General, that that is exactly what happened.

This government's decision to finally accept the Auditor General's most important recommendation—to reverse the greenbelt land swap—is a welcome decision. However, it's not that simple. There are still lots of questions that need answers. What will happen now? Developers and companies that bought greenbelt land were expecting an \$8.3-billion payday from their close relationship with this government.

My question to the Premier: Will he assure this House and the people of Ontario that not one red cent of taxpayer money will be spent to make good on their \$8.3-billion payday deal with developers?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I've been clear on that, as well.

I will be bringing forward legislation in this House that will do what the Liberals never did, and that is codify the boundaries of the greenbelt in legislation and not regulation, so that we don't have what the Liberals did—going in and out 17 times under the cover of darkness and making changes. We're not going to do that.

We also are not going to be providing any compensation with respect to any potential changes that were contemplated. The Premier said very clearly it was a policy decision that the people of the province did not support. That is why we're returning those lands to the greenbelt, and that is why we're adding 9,400 acres to the greenbelt

as well. But there is no compensation that will be made available to any of the people who might have been building in that area.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Last week, we heard the Premier apologize that his government created “a process that moved too fast” and that he was “very, very sorry.” This apology followed the Auditor General’s report on the greenbelt which revealed, to put it mildly, a flawed process and an \$8.3-billion windfall for his developer friends.

Speaker, usually “sorry” means “I will do better,” and yet the Premier’s apology has not extended to other major files that the people of Ontario are concerned about. We have Ontario Place, where this government made a 95-year deal with an Austrian mega-spa, and the names of the people who own it are not known. We have the surprise decision to move the science centre, another flawed process with no public consultation.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: Is he sorry enough about the greenbelt’s flawed process that he will open the books on Ontario Place and the science centre and assure the people of Ontario know that he has put an end to brown-envelope backroom deals?

Hon. Paul Calandra: What do all of these things have in common? She talks about Ontario Place, an asset that they allowed to be run into the ground for 15 years and got so bad that it had to be closed and we now have to fix. The science centre that never got any repairs or anything done to it and that is on its last legs because they did nothing—it had to be closed.

We’re building subways. Why? Because they couldn’t build subways. We’re building roads. Why? Because they couldn’t build roads. We’re building long-term care. Why? Because they didn’t build long-term care. We’re renewing our hospitals. Why? Because they didn’t build hospitals.

1110

On every single matter that matters to the people of the province of Ontario, the Liberals failed. They drove away jobs. This minister is bringing it back. And do you know why? Because this Premier had a vision to restore the province of Ontario to the economic engine of the country, and 700,000 jobs and billions of dollars in investments show that it’s working. So will we turn our back on that? No. We’ll continue to move forward because that’s what—

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

HEALTH CARE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

September marks the beginning of a new academic year, and our post-secondary students are already well into their studies at campuses across Ontario.

With the continuing demand for professionals in the health care human resources sector, students enrolled in health care-related programs are needed in communities across the province.

Our government has a strong track record of making meaningful investments that prepare students to enter the workforce with rewarding, good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. That’s why our government must continue to prioritize measures that support students and prepare them for careers which will strengthen our entire health care system.

Can the minister please share what actions our government is taking to prepare Ontario’s post-secondary students to enter the workforce?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the important question. Also, I’d like to thank him for the incredible tour of his riding this summer.

I’m proud to say that because of our government’s unprecedented actions to strengthen the health care workforce through expanding education for those on the front lines, almost 2,600 students have started classes as part of the first ever Ontario Learn and Stay Grant cohort. This means that thousands of students have entered into nursing, medical lab technician and paramedicine programs in priority communities at over 20 institutions across the province, with full, upfront funding to cover the cost of tuition, books and other expenses in return for working locally and caring for the people in the region where they studied for a term of service after they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, we inherited a health care crisis thanks to the previous government, but through our work, alongside the Premier and the Minister of Health, our government is taking meaningful and concrete action to improve the health care system today.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the minister for her response, her dedication to our students, and her commitment to improving our entire health care system.

Financial supports available through this grant program are a positive step in building up our workforce. However, Ontario’s health care system is in desperate need of more health care professionals to provide this essential care.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, my constituents are looking for connected care and services closer to home. Our government must continue to take decisive steps to educate and retain more health care workers across our province—something I heard loud and clear at my health care round tables that were also co-hosted by the amazing member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Can the minister please explain how the investments made by our government into the Learn and Stay grant program will benefit communities across Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I am more than happy to provide the House with details on the uptake of this grant.

To the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington: I’m proud to say that in your region of southwestern Ontario alone, there are over 1,000 confirmed students beginning their studies as nurses and medical lab technologists—

students who will go on to make immediate impacts in local hospitals and health care facilities like Windsor Regional Hospital and Chatham-Kent Health Alliance.

In eastern Ontario, there are almost 800 enrolled nursing students across six institutions, like St. Lawrence and Algonquin College.

And in northern Ontario, there are over 700 students enrolled in nursing, med lab tech and paramedicine programs.

Speaker, this means that in regions ranging from Thunder Bay to Chatham-Kent to Ottawa, students are beginning to pursue critical degrees across Ontario, which will directly address the health care shortages felt in Ontario's underserved regions, the ones that need the support the most.

These outstanding numbers speak for themselves. Students are eager to begin lifelong careers in the health care sector, and our government is supporting them every step of the way.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Sarah Jama: This question is to the Premier.

Hamilton is currently exceeding its housing targets for this year despite the greenbelt fiasco. Hamilton city council and many organizations such as Environment Hamilton have been loud and clear in saying that we need both more homes in our urban centres and to preserve our farmland.

Will this government let Hamilton get on with its plan to build the new homes we need, stop creating chaos and enriching favoured speculators, and reverse the forced expansion of Hamilton's urban boundary?

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, I will say that at AMO, I had a wonderful conversation with Mayor Horwath. She was very gracious, and we talked about not only, at the time, long-term care but building homes in Hamilton. She agreed that we do have to get on with the job of building homes for the people of the province of Ontario, including in Hamilton. So I am very excited to continue to work with her.

This is something that the member for Flamborough-Glanbrook has been talking about since 2018, really. Since 2018, she has been talking about the need to build homes in and around Hamilton. She has voted in favour of removing obstacles to build homes in that community. That's what she has done. The members opposite have voted against every single one of those measures.

So I would say to the member opposite, I appreciate your support for building homes in your community. We now have the member for Hamilton Centre and we now have the member for University-Rosedale endorsing the work that we're doing to build more homes.

I see a trend happening here, Mr. Speaker. Who knows? By the end of this week, we might actually get the entire NDP caucus on board to build more homes for the province. This has all been done in such a short period—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Hamiltonians, the mayor and city council have been clear. We want you to reverse the urban boundary expansion and stop the sprawl.

Speaker, the Conservative government has no real solution to their housing crisis. We know that the greenbelt land grab was never about housing.

Hamilton has already exceeded its housing goals without touching the urban boundaries or the greenbelt lands; 134% of actual growth targets have been met within our former boundary.

Will the government respect our local autonomy and reverse their decision on our urban boundaries today?

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I said in an earlier question, the urban boundary expansion does not necessarily mean that homes will be built in that area. It is still up to the municipality to decide when or if homes will be built, when there will be servicing in that area.

But imagine this member getting up and asking a question about housing. When the Minister of the Environment was ensuring that we had clean steel being made out of communities in Hamilton and in Sault Ste. Marie, that member voted against it. When this minister and this Premier were signing big deals to return the automotive sector to Ontario and manufacturing to Ontario, that member and that party voted against it. Do you know who will be making the steel for those cars? It will be the members from Sault Ste. Marie and Hamilton—her riding that will be making the steel for those cars. That member votes against everything. It's not surprising to me that, unlike University-Rosedale and Hamilton Centre, that member is still not on board with building more homes.

But don't worry; you and I will work together with those—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Karen McCrimmon: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

My fundamental belief is that the key to our democracy—indeed, the guiding principle of everything we do here—is truth and integrity. There are still too many unanswered questions about how this government allowed a small group of insiders to obtain a significant financial advantage.

Not long ago, my colleague from Beaches-East York put forward a motion to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy asking for a full parliamentary investigation into the dealings of the \$8.3-billion greenbelt land deals. The motion called on government ministers and staff to testify before a committee and for a report to be tabled. It was an opportunity for this government to be fully transparent with Ontarians, but unfortunately, the government members defeated the motion.

Will the new minister do the right thing and allow a committee to investigate the entire truth?

Hon. Paul Calandra: First, let me welcome the member and congratulate her on her victory and thank her for her service to the country for many, many, many years as a member of the Armed Forces.

1120

Having said that, unlike Ottawa where, for instance, on an SNC or something like that, the Prime Minister's office directs his people on what they should do; here at the Legislative Assembly, a cabinet minister, a Premier, or other members of the executive council do not direct the work of committees. They make those decisions on their own. I would suggest to the member that that is the principle by which we will maintain ourselves here at the province of Ontario.

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

MPP Karen McCrimmon: Thank you to the honourable minister.

The government has admitted that mistakes were made, and I do appreciate that. But critical to making sure that these mistakes are not repeated and that individuals are held accountable is to thoroughly investigate everything that happened. Yes, the reports by the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner have helped shed some of the light on these issues, but there are still questions that are unanswered.

Ontarians deserve transparency from this government. If we really want to regain the trust of Ontarians, this government needs to hear testimony from those directly involved.

I will ask again: Will the minister allow the committee to discover what parliamentary processes and procedures were or were not followed, by whom and when, so that all Ontarians can learn the whole truth about the \$8.3-billion greenbelt land deals?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm not going to overrule a committee. That's not the job of the executive, and I don't think that is the job—that parliamentarians would expect how their committees would work. We'll let committees decide what it is they want to study and when they want to study it.

I know in the fullness of time, the report of the Auditor General will make its way to public accounts. That is the process that happens here. That will be studied, in fact, here at the Legislature. Public accounts does actually review reports of the Auditor General. They are mandated to do that work. They will do that work, regardless of whether there is a motion or not.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Over the last decade, the number of active wildland fires has increased in Ontario. Unfortunately, forest fires are unpredictable, costly and resource-intensive. These fires have devastating impacts on our communities, putting people, property and livestock in danger.

Wildfires also negatively affect economic activity and create unsafe conditions. That's why it's crucial for our government to continue to dedicate the necessary resources and planning measures to ensure community safety.

Can the minister please update the House on what steps our government has taken to enhance wildlands fire management?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for the question. Of course, this is an issue that we take very, very, seriously.

We have the very, very, best wildland firefighters here in Ontario. We are so very proud of them and the work that they do. They are internationally recognized. I want to take a moment to say thank you for the great work that they have done through this fire season and previous fire seasons—the men and women on the ground, those who are in the air, those who are doing all the logistics and supports to supply everything that is needed to keep communities safe, keep people safe.

We continue, as a government, to make the investments that are needed—\$135 million in base budgeting. That's a 92% increase from the previous Liberal government, to make sure that our communities are safe from wildland fires.

We'll continue to invest in the men, the women, and the equipment needed to get the job done here in Ontario every single year.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for his response on this important issue.

This year has been Canada's most severe forest fire season on record, with wildfires impacting many provinces and territories. We saw that our government worked collaboratively with other provinces and international partners to mitigate these fires and respond to crises quickly that occurred across our country.

I know that many people across the province are reassured to know that our government is making significant additional investments into Ontario's wildfire preparedness strategy. However, it is crucial that our government has a plan to deploy sufficient resources and supports to ensure that Ontario's fire rangers and our communities are safe.

Can the minister please inform this House about the additional measures that our government is implementing to ensure preparedness for future national wildland fires?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Again, I thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for the question.

I had said we are internationally recognized, in my previous answer, for the great work that we do. That's because our firefighters have been to other countries and other provinces to provide assistance when needed. Sometimes we provide that assistance, and sometimes we require that assistance. That's the great thing about wildland fire prevention—we all work together.

I want to thank Minnesota, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and the great firefighters from Mexico who have assisted us during the 2023 season.

I also want to say thank you to our firefighters for being in Nova Scotia when they needed help, being in the Northwest Territories when they needed help, being out in Alberta to help our friends there, being in British Columbia to help citizens there.

We all work together to make sure that people and communities remain safe.

We have a new agreement with Portugal coming online to provide mutual aid assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work together to keep people in Ontario and other jurisdictions safe from wildland—

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

AMATEUR HOCKEY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

We learned this week that the CRA is investigating the GTHL for conducting questionable backroom deals that benefit insiders. These deals are so sketchy that the CRA is investigating possible tax fraud.

In the spring, I asked the minister if he thought the GTHL's actions were worth investigating. His response? No.

So I'll give the minister another chance, Speaker.

Will you commit to a public investigation to hold the GTHL to account?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

To reply, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you for the question.

I don't believe that was my answer. I believe my answer, when we talked about the GTHL, was that there was an independent study going on and an investigation being led by a retired judge and a retired police officer who was involved in investigations throughout his career. That's where we were going on this.

My answer to that is, I'll wait for that report to come back. We will talk about what that report says, and we will stop suggesting and making allegations when we haven't got the facts. Facts are important. If we're going to step out and do something about anything—anything—then we're going to make sure we have the facts. It isn't about timing; it is truly about the information and the facts, and that's what we'll react on.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I hope the minister isn't suggesting that the CRA is not giving facts, because they are taking this quite seriously.

The GTHL is the largest amateur hockey organization in Canada, and it's worth protecting. The stakes are too high for passive oversight and protecting backroom deals.

When organizations like the CRA, Hockey Canada, the federal government and sponsors like Nike face issues in amateur sports, they take decisive action. Why won't this

minister do the same and initiate a public investigation to restore trust?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: The GTHL falls under the Ontario Hockey Federation and is recognized within that—but I do like where the member opposite is going, because I think the information is important. Getting the facts is important. I have yet to see anything that would suggest otherwise, other than conversations and allegations. I'm a big believer, like I am in sport—if you want to make a change and you want to make a difference, do it on fact-based information, whether you're on or off the ice surface, or not.

The GTHL is the largest amateur sport or hockey in the world, I believe, and I've got a number of people, some in my staff—their kids play there, and they're enjoying their opportunity to play within the GTHL.

Back to the point: We will find out when we get information, and we'll examine it when that information comes. There is no flopping on this. This is about facts and information coming to us so we can respond—

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

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

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

Notre gouvernement doit soutenir la population franco-ontarienne. Celle-ci représente un atout inestimable pour notre province, et notre détermination à soutenir la francophonie ontarienne ne doit jamais fléchir, notamment en mettant sur pied des initiatives permettant de pérenniser leur succès pour les années à venir.

1130

La ministre évoquait l'importance de la prospérité économique pour assurer la vitalité et le bien-être des communautés francophones de l'Ontario. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous informer de la progression et des retombées de cette stratégie au niveau de l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des francophones ontariens?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question. Depuis notre arrivée au pouvoir, notre gouvernement sait que la prospérité de l'Ontario est intimement liée à la vitalité de notre communauté franco-ontarienne. C'est pourquoi nous avons mis sur pied le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne.

Depuis 2017, ce ne sont pas moins de 283 organismes à but non lucratif et des petites entreprises qui ont reçu un soutien dans le cadre de cette initiative, dont l'objectif est la livraison de produits et de services à la clientèle franco-ontarienne. Nous assurons ainsi la promotion et la vitalité de la langue française, ainsi que de la culture et de l'économie francophones. Cette initiative se démarque notamment par son caractère structurant, puisqu'elle répond à des besoins du milieu et que la réponse à ces besoins est articulée par des organismes du milieu que nous soutenons.

Monsieur le Président, nous sommes très fiers de bâtir une communauté franco-ontarienne forte et dynamique.

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

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Merci à la ministre pour sa réponse. Je suis très heureuse d'en savoir davantage à propos des réalisations de notre gouvernement au niveau de l'appui à la communauté francophone de la province. Il est crucial d'épauler le développement économique francophone dans différents secteurs pour contribuer à la prospérité de l'économie ontarienne.

Tout récemment, la ministre annonçait que 51 nouveaux projets ont été sélectionnés pour recevoir un soutien dans le cadre de l'édition 2023-2024 du Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne. Valor et Solutions, qui se trouve dans ma région, figure parmi les organismes et entreprises dont le projet a été retenu. Une somme de 49 000 \$ leur a été accordée aux fins de la formation aux groupes et organismes qui offrent des services en français dans l'est de la province et à travers l'Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la ministre pourrait donner à cette Chambre un aperçu des autres réalisations anticipées grâce à la présente édition du programme de subventions?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question complémentaire.

Deux millions de dollars sont consacrés à l'édition 2023-2024 du programme, et 51 projets ont été retenus, dont 45 sous le volet communauté et culture et six au niveau du développement économique. La liste des organismes et des petites entreprises récipiendaires serait beaucoup trop longue pour énumérer ici, mais elles ont en commun de renforcer les communautés francophones. À cet égard, chaque projet retenu doit avoir un impact mesurable et positif sur la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

La francophonie est un atout économique indéniable et important pour la province. C'est pourquoi nous misons sur l'entreprenariat, l'innovation, une main-d'œuvre qualifiée bilingue et des outils efficaces de promotion de la francophonie ontarienne. Monsieur le Président, les francophones savent qu'ils peuvent compter sur notre gouvernement pour poser les jalons d'un avenir prometteur et florissant, et nous allons continuer de travailler sans—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The next question.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier.

Report after report has stated that there's more than enough land within existing urban boundaries to build the housing that we all know we need, yet this government is forcing those urban boundaries to enlarge. Do you know what's going to happen then, Speaker? Some of the most fertile farmland in North America is going to be exposed to exactly the same speculators who are going to profit from the greenbelt.

It took two investigations and the resignation of high-profile ministers to make the Premier realize the importance of the greenbelt to Ontarians. What is it going to take to make him realize the importance of all farmland in this great province of ours?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I said, the expansion of the urban boundaries in Ottawa and Hamilton, in and of itself, does not make any changes. It is up to those two councils to decide what happens in those expanded urban boundaries. It's up to those councils to decide if those lands should be serviced. It's up to those two councils to decide when that should happen. It's up to those councils to decide if it should happen. I trust that our partners will always work collaboratively to ensure that we have housing.

I can say very clearly to the member opposite that we are going to do everything in our power to make sure that we do build homes in those areas where land is available. We have recommendations through the Housing Affordability Task Force. I have written letters to each of the mayors, and I've asked them to double down and to ensure which of those recommendations we can move on very quickly.

You can bet your bottom dollar, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to be going in every single riding across the province of Ontario and we're going to be saying, "We need you to build up, we need you to build better, and we need to get the job done."

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Expanding urban boundaries does put much more pressure on municipal governments to allow sprawl. We all know that. Let's be clear about what's going on here. Report after report has said we don't need to expand those boundaries to build the housing we need.

I would like to thank the farmers of Ontario for uniting and telling this government how important farmland is.

When is the government actually going to realize that we need farmland to feed the cities? The people who are coming are going to need farmland. It's the greatest gift we've ever been given.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I agree. That's why, of course, not only has the Premier said we made a mistake on the policy decision; we're restoring those lands to the greenbelt. That's why we're protecting an additional 9,400 acres. That is why we are solidifying the boundaries in law and not in regulation.

I say to the member opposite that he can actually help, because right now his federal partners in Ottawa are supporting a Liberal plan that would reforest farmland. The NDP in Ottawa are supporting that. What they're talking about is removing farmland and reforesting it. The NDP are supporting that policy, like they did when the

Rouge National Urban Park was created—class 1 farmland. The NDP position was that it should be reforested and that land should be taken out of production. We know that the Liberals actually did it. They're the only government to actually evict farmers from the lands in the Rouge Park to build a park.

I can guarantee you that we'll always stand up for farmers, but help us. Have the federal Liberals and your NDP partners there turn their backs on that policy, which would—

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

DEFERRED VOTES

WSIB COVERAGE FOR WORKERS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES AND GROUP HOMES ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA PROTECTION À ACCORDER AUX TRAVAILLEURS DANS LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS DE SOINS EN RÉSIDENCE ET LES FOYERS DE GROUPE PAR LA COMMISSION DE LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET DE L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

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

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

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

On September 26, 2023, Mr. Fraser moved second reading of Bill 54, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Jama, Sarah	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Todd
Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Quinn, Nolan	Yakabuski, John
Gill, Parm	Rae, Matthew	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 36; the nays are 67.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The motion is lost.
Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.
The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SOUTH SIMCOE DEVELOPMENTS INC. ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive South Simcoe Developments Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RENEWAL IN THE NIAGARA REGION ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 VISANT À SOUTENIR LA REPRISE ET LE RENOUVEAU ÉCONOMIQUES DANS LA RÉGION DE NIAGARA

Mr. Gates moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Tax Act, 1996 to exempt certain wines from the basic tax on wine / *Projet*

de loi 132, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 1996 sur la taxe sur l'alcool et à exempter certains vins de la taxe de base sur le vin.

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. Wayne Gates: This bill would eliminate the 6.1% basic tax on all 100% Ontario VQA wines sold at Ontario winery sites—at the winery—on the retail sites.

I want to say the Ontario wine sector supports 23,000 jobs in the province of Ontario, protecting small and medium-sized wineries. I put this bill forward twice before.

There's a new report that has come out, the Uncork report, that says how important the Ontario wine industry is, not only to Niagara where 90% of the grapes are grown, but also right across the province of Ontario. I'm hoping my colleagues support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to keep the explanation of their bills as brief as possible, ideally reading the explanatory note.

KIDS' ONLINE SAFETY AND PRIVACY MONTH ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE DES ENFANTS EN LIGNE

Madame Collard moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month / Projet de loi 133, Loi proclamant le mois de septembre Mois de la sécurité et de la protection de la vie privée des enfants en ligne.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member, if she'd like to, to briefly explain her bill.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The Internet is an integral part of the daily lives of Ontarians, providing numerous opportunities for learning, communication and entertainment. However, it can also be used for cyberbullying, online grooming, exploitation and trafficking—those are just a few examples.

By proclaiming September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month, we prioritize the need to raise awareness about online safety and privacy for children.

HILLSDALE LAND CORP. ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive Hillsdale Land Corp.

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

First reading agreed to.

GERANIUM (HILLSDALE) LIMITED ACT, 2023

Mr. Saunderson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Geranium (Hillsdale) Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GENDER EQUALITY WEEK

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Colleagues, I'm delighted to see everyone here again for the fall legislative session.

Today, I stand before you to recognize Gender Equality Week, which was marked last week in Ontario and across Canada.

Gender Equality Week, marked every fourth week in September, is an important opportunity to celebrate our progress in advancing gender equality as well as the significant achievements of women and gender-diverse people, recognize the barriers to gender equality that still exist and highlight Ontario's action to identify and remove those barriers and create more social and economic opportunity for women and girls.

While Ontarians value diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity for all, women and girls in Ontario continue to face disproportionate barriers to achieving their full potential compared to their male counterparts. While women make up almost half of Ontario's workforce, they are more likely to be employed in minimum wage and part-time positions, having represented nearly 60% of Ontario's minimum wage workers and nearly 25% of Ontario's part-time workers—almost double the proportion of men—last year.

Women continue to be under-represented in higher-paying sectors like the skilled trades and STEM. While women account for nearly 40% of enrolments in post-secondary STEM programs, they make up less than a quarter of the STEM workforce.

Women also continue to be under-represented in management. In 2022, men accounted for 62.7% of senior and 64.2% of middle management roles. In comparison, women only accounted for 37.3% of senior and 35.8% of middle management roles.

As Ontario's Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, I am determined to see these

statistics improve. I am determined to see this not just because it's good for women but because it's also good for business and good for Ontario. A McKinsey and Co. report found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity in their executive teams were 25% more likely to experience above-peer average profitability than companies in the bottom quartile.

Women entrepreneurs also continue to face challenges accessing financing to grow their businesses. In 2020, only an estimated 19% of small and medium-sized enterprises in Ontario were majority women-owned, and these women entrepreneurs find themselves having to launch with 53% less capital on average than men.

In 2022, women earned 87 cents for every dollar earned by men—a 13-cent gender wage gap, 11 cents of which is due to wage inequality within the same occupations. These statistics are even more pronounced for Indigenous, Black, racialized and immigrant women, as well as women living with a disability and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

1510

That's why, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are taking a whole-of-government approach to increasing women's participation in the workforce to support their economic security and prosperity, especially in sectors like the skilled trades and STEM, where the need is greatest.

Our actions include signing a historic \$13.2-billion agreement with the federal government to lower the average child care fees to \$10 per day for children under the age of six by September 2025, allowing nearly 100,000 more women to enter the labour market and countless others to stay—and thrive. I am so proud to share that we are already seeing positive impacts of our agreement. Last year, labour participation rates for Ontario mothers reached the highest on record since 1976, and the labour participation rate for mothers with children under the age of five increased by 2.4 percentage points.

Our government has also modernized the curriculum, increasing exposure to STEM, skilled trades and apprenticeship pathways at an earlier age to better prepare students to succeed in the labour market and lead the global innovations of tomorrow. In fact, the Minister of Education is positioning Ontario as a leading jurisdiction in this area. Changes include mandatory learning on coding, scientific innovations and emerging technologies and how they are enhancing trades as early as grade 4; de-streamed high school science and math course, an improved computer studies curriculum and a new technological education curriculum. These will ensure that more girls are considering and prepared for careers in sectors that they have not been historically encouraged to pursue and where they are traditionally under-represented.

We are also making workplaces safer and more welcoming for women in the skilled trades by requiring employers to provide access to at least one women's-only washroom on construction sites, as well as properly fitting equipment like safety harnesses and PPE.

Colleagues, our government is on the right track. Last year, Ontario achieved a historic increase in skilled trades

apprenticeship registrations, including an almost 30% increase in registrations amongst women. We are also offering targeted training, skills development and employment opportunities for women experiencing social and economic barriers, including poverty and gender-based violence, in high-demand, high-reward sectors that feature competitive benefits and pay equity. This includes programs to train more women for careers in trucking and construction, to name a couple.

One of the initiatives I'm most proud of is the expansion of the Investing in Women's Futures Program through my ministry to 33 service delivery locations across the province, as well as our continued support of the Women's Economic Security Program, which features general employment, information technology, skilled trades and entrepreneurship streams.

Over the next three years, we are investing \$30 million in these programs to help more women facing social and economic barriers increase their wellness and gain the skills, knowledge and experience they need to enter or re-enter the workforce, achieve financial security and independence and provide for their families. And these programs are backed up by real results. In 2022-23 alone, the Investing in Women's Futures Program helped 1,300 women secure employment, start a business or pursue further training and education.

Finally, our government also recognizes that women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and firmly believes that no person or community should experience violence because of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. That's why, last year, we invested more than \$250 million in violence prevention initiatives and supports to help survivors rebuild their lives.

We know that Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage in generations. Every day, roughly 300,000 jobs are going unfilled in Ontario, costing the province billions in lost productivity. But we also know that women are a part of the solution, and that's why we are taking such decisive action to increase their participation in the workforce and make great strides towards achieving greater gender equality in Ontario. Because when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement.

Since 2018, the fourth week of September has been recognized in Canada as Gender Equality Week, a time to celebrate progress and recommit to reducing barriers that prevent women and gender-diverse people from full participation and inclusion.

For college and university students in Ontario, this week is a critical time. Data shows a significant increase in sexual violence on campus during the first six weeks of a new academic year, rooted in the pervasive rape culture that results in disgusting "daughter drop off" and similar banners during orientation week. The more we can do to raise awareness of the meaning of consent and the accountability that it involves, the better we can protect

young people from the devastating, lifelong impacts of sexual violence. Unfortunately, this government has refused to pass Bill 18, the NDP bill to formally declare the third week of September as Consent Awareness Week, which would be an important step forward in creating a future for women and gender-diverse people free from the trauma of sexual violence.

Of course, Speaker, sexual violence does not just occur on campus. It is a reality for women across this province. The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres reports an 18% increase in sexual assaults every year since 2016, with 81% of sexual assault centres experiencing an increase in crisis-line calls in the last year alone. According to the most recent femicide report from OAITH, there have been 42 femicides—the most deadly form of sexual violence—in the last nine months. Of note, of the four femicides recorded in August, three were Indigenous, revealing once again the over-representation of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people within Ontario femicide data. While they account for 12% of femicide victims, they make up only 3% of Ontario's population.

Speaker, the urgency has never been greater. Yet rape crisis centres, sexual assault centres and women's shelters remain starved by this government for the funding they need to support women and families dealing with violence and to compensate their workers fairly. The calls for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls have yet to be implemented by this government. The government is ignoring the first of the Renfrew coroner's inquest's 86 recommendations to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario, even as 47 Ontario municipalities are showing leadership by issuing such a declaration. And finally, the risk of harm faced by gender-diverse Ontarians, especially vulnerable trans students, has been increased by this government through their stoking of fear about indoctrination in schools.

Achieving gender equality involves more than ending gender-based violence, however. It also requires removing barriers to the participation of women and gender-diverse people in the workplace. Despite some progress, women in Ontario still earn far less than the average salaries of male workers, especially if they are racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+ or disabled. As costs of living soar, more and more Ontario women are struggling to afford the basic essentials to support themselves and their families.

As we saw during the pandemic, Ontario's economy and our society have been built on women's unpaid, underpaid and undervalued care work. Women make up 80% of typically low-paid voluntary sector workers, and when COVID hit, it was women in front-line, female-dominated jobs like nursing, child care, PSWs, education, crisis counselling and more who held us together. Most of these are public sector jobs, where wages have been suppressed by this government since 2019, and while the courts have ruled on the unconstitutionality of Bill 124, this government is showing how little they value or respect these workers by appealing the court decision.

1520

Speaker, achieving gender equality means taking real action to end gender-based violence in Ontario. It means

investing in strong public services and paying the wages and benefits that public sector workers deserve. It means providing all workers with paid sick days. It means doubling social assistance rates that force people with disabilities, especially women, to live in legislated poverty. These are the actions that will truly move Ontario forward.

PETITIONS

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled, "Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;...

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

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

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

I support this petition. I'll affix my signature and give it to page Justin for the table.

SCHOOL BOARDS

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: "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’m happy to sign my name to this petition and provide it to Huzaifa.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled, “Develop an Ontario Dementia Strategy.” I want to thank the good people from Kapuskasing for mailing this in.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition, and I hope that you all join the Alzheimer Society today at their reception.

POLICE FUNDING

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to thank the good people of Essex for this petition; I think it’s an excellent one.

“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 fully endorse this petition, will sign it and give it to page Erin.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s my honour to present the following petition entitled “Bring Back Rent Control.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the average rent has increased by over 50% in the past 10 years;

“Whereas nearly half of Ontarians pay unaffordable rental housing costs because they spend more than a third of their income on rent;

“Whereas all Ontarians have a right to a safe and affordable place to call home;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass the Rent Stabilization Act to establish rent control that operates during and between tenancies, a public rent registry so tenants can find out what a former tenant paid in rent, access to legal aid for tenants that want to contest an illegal rent hike and stronger enforcement and tougher penalties for landlords who do not properly maintain a renter’s home.”

I could not support this petition more. I will deliver it with page Sofia to the Clerks.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: “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 endorse this petition. I've affixed my signature there too, and I'll hand it to page Ella to deliver to the table.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd like to present a petition before the Legislature entitled “I Support the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we're seeing an alarming rise in road accidents involving drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, road worker or cyclist;

“Whereas currently, vulnerable road users in Ontario are not specifically protected by law. In fact, Ontario's Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, often only facing minimal fines;

1530

“Whereas this leaves the friends and families of victims unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government's responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to their loved ones;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

—reduce the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;

—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible; and

—pass Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.”

I'm happy to submit this to the Clerks' table with my friend Minuka.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Chris Glover: My petition is entitled “Bring Back Rent Control.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government cancelled rent control on units built after November 2018;

“Whereas the cost to rent a home has never been higher;

“Whereas people are being forced to leave their communities because decent, affordable homes are increasingly out of reach;

“Whereas the Rent Control for All Units Act, 2022, will ensure tenants are not gouged on rent each year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect tenants from predatory rent increases and pass the NDP's Rent Control for All Tenants Act today to ensure renters can live in safe and affordable homes.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to page Kian to take to the table.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to read this petition into the Legislature and was very pleased to host the MPP from Ottawa Centre on his #SafetyRide when he met with folks from Oshawa. I wanted to share appreciation for this petition and initiative.

“I Support the Moving Ontarians Safely Act

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we're seeing an alarming rise in road accidents involving drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, road worker or cyclist;

“Whereas currently, vulnerable road users in Ontario are not specifically protected by law. In fact, Ontario's Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, often only facing only minimal fines;

“Whereas this leaves the friends and families of victims unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government's responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to their loved ones;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

—reduce the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users;

—create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users;

—allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person in court by the driver responsible; and

—pass Bill 40, the Moving Ontarians Safely Act.”

Of course, I support this petition. I'm going to affix my signature and send it to the table with page James.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to present a petition that has been signed by many residents of London. It's entitled “Say No to Train and Trial Areas.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas penned dog-hunting facilities are cruel and inhumane to the wild animals who are confined for the purpose of training dogs to hunt and kill them;

“Whereas this deplorable and unethical practice is prohibited in every other province; and

“Whereas Ontario stopped issuing new licences in 1997 to phase out train and trial areas, and issuing new licences after 25 years is a massive step backward on animal rights and wildlife protection in our province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to accept applications and issue new licences to operate train and trial areas in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page James.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to read the following petition into the record. It's entitled "Develop an Ontario Dementia Strategy." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

"Whereas a PET scan test approved in Ontario in 2017 which can be key to detecting Alzheimer's early, is still not covered under OHIP in 2022;

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Sophia Rose to the Clerks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Right to the second. That's all our time for petitions.

I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: On a point of order: Pursuant to standing order 9(f), I wish to inform the House that there shall be no business during tomorrow morning's meeting.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The deputy House leader, pursuant to standing order 9(f), wishes to inform the House that there shall be no business during tomorrow morning's meeting. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION
FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2023LOI DE 2023
POUR UN RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT
ORIENTÉ VERS L'AVENIR

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to enact the GO Transit Station Funding Act, 2023 and to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 131, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur le financement des stations du réseau GO et modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I rise today as the transit critic in this House for the official opposition. This is my first one-hour lead in response to transit legislation proposed by the government. Before I get into the substance of my remarks about Bill 131 and its two schedules, I have a few people to thank because I needed to be a quick study this week. I found out about the bill on Monday and I am blessed, as the transit critic, with some great resources both inside this caucus and inside this great province, and I want to take the moment to thank them first.

First of all, I want to thank the member for University-Rosedale, who did incredible and impressive work on transit policy for this caucus through the current Parliament and in the previous Parliament. I want to thank her very much.

Secondly, I want to thank the hard-working people at Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113, who get Toronto's folks moving, who move people around all over this city—13,000 people.

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: Yes. Come on, let's hear some applause for them.

I want to thank, in particular, ATU 113 president Marvin Alfred and strategic consultant Ian Fellows. I want to thank ATU national president John Di Nino. I've had occasion to have many conversations with them, Speaker, and I've learned a lot about what happens every single day on the public transit system in this great city of Toronto and, through John, right across the whole country.

Before I jump into the substance of my remarks, Speaker, if you'll permit me a little sidestep. Someone important in my life passed away four days ago, a professor I studied with at York University: John Saul, one of Canada's experts on human rights in the continent of Africa. He spent a lot of his time supporting the freedom struggle launched by the global giant Nelson Mandela as an American and Canadian citizen. I know a lot of us who were graduate students who worked under John were blessed to have Africans come to York University, where I trained. I want to thank him, and I want that to be read into the record of this place. There are many human rights champions in Ontario and John Saul was one of them. So I'm thinking of you, John, when I'm reading out this speech today.

1540

Let's get to the substance of Bill 131, and its two schedules, and what it does. I had occasion this morning to listen to the Minister of Infrastructure, who I'm glad to see here today. I also had occasion to listen to the Associate Minister of Transportation's remarks supporting this legislation.

As I understand it, this bill is attempting to do two things. On the one hand, it seeks to align service integration between transit agencies. It's amending the City of Toronto Act, as the government purports, to make sure that the Toronto Transit Commission is simpatico in its relationships with other transit authorities from outside the TTC's boundaries, because the TTC has a monopoly in providing transit service for within the TTC's boundaries. That's what I understand the first schedule of this bill to do.

The second schedule of the bill is about building more GO Transit stations, which, for those folks—like my friend from Oshawa—who come to this place representing communities outside the downtown core, is a really popular thing. This is something I have heard in my short time as transit critic in this place. The government is proposing a mechanism that municipalities would have to defray the costs of them themselves, taking on the responsibility of building provincial infrastructure. That's what I understand this bill to be doing, the specific task.

But, Speaker, I feel it important to talk about Bill 131 in a much bigger context than those two things, although I will get into them in great detail this afternoon. I have heard members of this House often say that public transit and active transportation are priorities for Ontario. I heard it from the Minister of Infrastructure this morning and the Associate Minister of Transportation. Making transit and active transit a priority is certainly something that bears repeating, and why? Let's get to the context. Speaker and friends in this place today and folks watching at home: We are living in a climate emergency. That is not hyperbole. It is proven by science. We must take bold steps to put our province on a sustainable path for our children and grandchildren. That's the context for a conversation about public transit.

We saw it this summer—didn't we, Speaker—all over Canada, in the historic wildfires that happened here. If you can believe it, there's been a study done to measure the impact of those wildfires. Over two billion—billion—tonnes of carbon dioxide was released into the atmosphere as a consequence of those wildfires, and some are still raging. As Canadians, we like to get out into the wilderness to find peace and solace and to reconnect with nature. Those trees that we reconnect to, that land we reconnect to, are a giant carbon sink that is supposed to provide that role of helping balance off the benefits of industrial modern life. But as a result of those wildfires this summer—which are linked, according to scientific efforts, to lack of progress in our country on the climate emergency—we released three times the value of that carbon sink, two billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. It bears mentioning.

We know—and the Minister of the Environment, previous and current, has mentioned—that extreme weather is linked to these things. We celebrate the first responders who run to those communities to help people. But we also know that our climate action plan has to include public transit. Public transit is part of that. It's part of our focused effort to reduce emissions.

We know that one third of Ontario's emissions comes from our transportation sector. Anyone who has braved a commute on our major highways has seen what that looks like, the congestion, the smog and, let's face it, the frustration on our roads. Many people are hurt by the violence that results often from that frustration. I want to name, for the record, sadly, a tragedy that happened not far from my community in downtown Ottawa yesterday. A 63-year-old German cyclist, a tourist to our country, was critically injured on Highway 17, south of Pembroke.

When I recently had occasion to ride my bicycle from Ottawa to this great city of Toronto and stop along the way, I met with people in big communities and small communities who were telling me the same thing as vulnerable road users: They do not feel safe. But at the same time, they are trying to do their part for the climate crisis.

Let me be very clear, Speaker: By taking the bus, the train, the streetcar or some mode of active transport like a bike, a wheelchair, a walker or even a good old pair of shoes, you're taking action. It's an act of hope for our future, notably our children's future. This House, by encouraging public transit, as I understand the Minister of Infrastructure is purporting in this bill—we have to support that choice. We are obliged to support that choice. We have to make public transit and active transportation much more attractive and viable for a greater number of people. So that is my departure point for my comment on this legislation today.

When I think about that, I think of the great Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho, the author of *The Alchemist*, who once said, “The world is changed by your” actions, “not your opinions.” We've had a lot of talk about public transit in Ontario. I've occasioned to learn thanks to the member for University–Rosedale about a lot of the research she had done that she shared with me in my preparation for today. We've had a lot of visions, but we haven't necessarily had enough follow-through, and I'm going to be talking about that this afternoon.

Four years ago, Matt Gurney, who's a columnist who frequently comments on public transit, summed up Toronto's transit woes this way: “Elections,” Mr. Gurney said, “come and go, politicians are elected and serve out their terms,” Toronto “and its sprawling suburbs keep growing—but precious little transit ever” gets built.

That's why, Speaker, this opposition supports efforts to broaden access to public transit—we do—to improve service levels and to improve the quality of the transit we have by supporting the operating funding of those systems. And I have good news for you, Speaker. It's important to talk about good news today because some of these challenges we are talking about are serious. This is what the city of Toronto has just accomplished under the leadership of their new mayor, Olivia Chow. The city of Toronto was dealing with a massive deficit in its operating infrastructure for the TTC. Transit systems all over the world have been struggling during the pandemic to recover. And I'll acknowledge the government has done its part to make moves in helping transit systems in this province recover.

But what Mayor Chow just committed to was to put the TTC on a path to 91% of pre-pandemic service levels. That's a big boost. The way that her team is doing it is by utilizing funds that were otherwise allocated to manage the failing Eglinton Crosstown system.

So we have a civic leader managing the urban community around this great building who has taken a purposeful decision to make significant investments in the operating lane—not necessarily new visions and ribbons to cut and all of that important stuff—I'm talking about helping those trains, those streetcars, those buses show up on time and respecting the people who drive and fix them. So it is possible to do better.

The Premier said this in question period yesterday: "We have to find ways to get people out of cars and into other modes of transportation." I want to say off the top, if that is what Bill 131 is intended to do, that is a worthy goal. But I'm going to explain this afternoon, Speaker, that I find aspects of Bill 131 need work if that's the goal. I'll outline these now and I'll get into more detail as I go through them one by one.

First, the responsibility to build and operate transit at the moment, in my opinion, is not being appropriately shared between provincial and municipal governments, and Bill 131 has the potential, although it doesn't have to, to make that situation worse. Schedule 2 of this bill, as I mentioned, allows municipalities, pending approval of the Minister of Transportation, to assume the financial risk of building GO Transit stations, which is provincial infrastructure normally built by Metrolinx. So they assume the debt for the infrastructure, but they charge, as the minister said this morning, a station administration fee to recoup that cost. They charge that fee to developers who are seeking to build housing—which, I take the point, we urgently need, particularly affordable housing—and other amenities around GO Transit stations.

But this option being offered by the government through this schedule in this bill is coming at a time when the government has also dramatically reduced the revenue capacities of municipalities through its controversial Bill 23. Bill 23 withdrew a billion dollars of potential revenue for municipalities across Ontario, and it was one of the reasons why the Association of Municipalities of Ontario said loud and clear at their most recent meeting that they wanted to see those powers restored. It's also the reason Mayor Chow proposed to the Premier that Toronto have some new revenue-generating powers to pay for some of those needs She has yet to persuade the Premier. AMO has yet to convince the government to walk back some of the moves it made under Bill 23.

1550

The 440-odd municipalities in Ontario are short a billion dollars, and they're being told, "If you want to build a new GO station, a provincial piece of infrastructure, you take on the costs and we're going to give you the tool to defray that cost after the fact." It's voluntary, my friends in government are saying, but, Speaker, I want to submit to you, that's rather like telling an asthmatic that their puffers are voluntary. You know? Because we need public transit.

For a community like Bowmanville that has had occasion to go through—they are so excited for the prospect, and the member from Oshawa can confirm this better than me, of their new GO station. There are other communities that want them too. Let's dispense with that—it's not voluntary. I said earlier, about the context, we have to build public transit. There's no choice. But we're asking municipalities to do it with dramatically less revenue. We're asking them to shoulder more debt after having gone through legislation previous to this bill that reduces their revenue.

The other thing that concerns me, Speaker, on a related note—and I'll get into more detail later—is that the government has said, without a lot of detail, that municipalities can charge these station administration fees to developers building housing projects and other amenities around GO stations, provided some kind of an incentive is given back to the developer for the privilege of using this incentive.

This morning in debate, I heard the minister say it could involve being flexible with municipal requirements for parking for large buildings, because, as the minister said—and I take her point—we want to be building infrastructure not premised upon the single occupancy vehicle or single vehicles. We want to encourage people to utilize the transit that's right at the new building. Okay, I could see a rationale for that case, but what is the scope of other incentives that are proposed by this bill? What's going to be determined in regulation? Often what we're dealing with, when we're talking about the developers who will be building these amenities around GO stations, are some of the most profitable companies in the home-building industry and commercial building industry in our province. I'm not necessarily convinced that we need to bend over backwards to reduce their cost. We certainly need to work with them. We certainly need to work with them, but I'm worried about the scope creep of this particular thing, and I'm going to be talking about that today.

Thirdly, Speaker, I want to persuade the government—and this is where I would like everyone's focused attention because it's an urgent priority—that schedule 1 of this bill needs to be repealed because I don't think it's necessary. I don't think it's necessary because it concerns an amendment to the City of Toronto Act that would render the contracting-out provisions of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113's collective agreement null and void. It would basically say that when the TTC collaborates with another transit agency, there is no complaint that could be brought to bear based upon the negotiated achievements of those transit workers around reciprocity of service, around wages, around standards of vehicles that could be used.

I can tell you, my phone has been burning up a bit today and yesterday, Speaker. People are concerned. The leadership of ATU 113, Marvin Alfred and the gang, are in Alberta right now, visiting some of their colleagues and talking about transit policy for the country, but they found time in their schedules today and yesterday to talk to me and our leader at length about this.

There's good news here, Speaker, and I was mentioning this to the minister earlier today. There is a provision within the ATU 113's collective agreement with the TTC and the city of Toronto that allows for service integration between the TTC and other transit agencies. It already exists because pilot projects have already been started because riders want it; workers want to collaborate and be flexible; and the massive achievement that people in this place have fought for, on all sides of the House, the notion of eliminating double or triple fares that the Associate Minister of Transportation was talking about this morning, bringing down those costs for transit riders. Everyone has agreed on that, and this is the service end of that, but—and this is a big “but,” Speaker—we can't, from this place, from this House that our grandparents built, open up the collective agreement of a transit union whose responsibility is to negotiate not with us but with the TTC, and ultimately the leadership of the city of Toronto. That can be construed as interference in the collective bargaining process. And I'll tell you something, in the time I've had to get to know transit workers, I wouldn't want to mess with them. I wouldn't want to get them angry, because their jobs, every single day, is dealing with conflicts. Sometimes our neighbours are in their worst position when they jump on the bus or the subway.

Can I just look around the room today and see, have people had that experience? When you've been on public transit, you see someone is having a really hard time. They could be homeless, they could be dealing with an illness—there could be any number of issues that require our attention. I have risen in this place, and I've spoken about the violence on public transit. This is what the women and men who work for the TTC have to deal with every single day, and they do it with dignity and they do it with honour, but if they get a sense that, from this building, we're going to diminish the integrity of decades of work at the negotiating table—the member from Sudbury has lived his life doing this sort of work, and other people here have. They are not going to respond terribly well.

The good news is, we don't have to go the road of schedule 1. We don't need it. If the government's objective is to merge service agreements between transit jurisdictions as the Associate Minister of Transportation said this morning—riders don't care what the colour of the bus is. They just want to get on in Durham and get off in Oakville or get off in Markham, wherever the case may be. I take the point, but we want to make sure that all the hard work that's gone into making sure that bus is in good shape, runs on time, is driven by a competent professional, is repaired by a competent professional—we want to make sure that all of that work is maintained and there is no backsliding, because safety comes first. Safety for everyone comes first.

I'll also just mention for the government that there has been a recent interest arbitration ruling by Justice William Kaplan, who said very clearly, and I will pull out my weapon of mass distraction here to read out the words. This is the award that Justice Kaplan mentioned—because the TTC management had been pushing for this particular

flexibility. He said, “Having carefully considered the proposals of the parties and with the foregoing observations being borne carefully in mind, I direct that a note be added to the collective agreement called E-27 pilot project. This will allow the parties, in the limited time remaining during the term of the current collective agreement, to test the cross-boundary integration. The pilot project will provide that the TTC may implement cross-boundary integration on any or all of 50 Burnhamthorpe, 105 Dufferin North, 49 Bloor West and 25 Don Mills.” These were the nodes being proposed for inter-jurisdictional transit. “I note that these routes were identified by the TTC involving roughly equivalent service hours to the number of hours some TTC buses”—and again, identified by the TTC—“are currently being driven outside the city. These, or equivalent cross-boundary routes will continue so long as this pilot project is in effect.

“There will be no layoff or termination resulting from the pilot project. The TTC will not directly engage in any third-party contracting for the provision of vehicle operation. Actual language of the provision will be remitted to the parties.” That is to say, if you want to change it, change it in bargaining. “The parties are further directed to regularly and jointly monitor any cross-boundary staffing operational matters that arise when these corridors are established so that they can be fully informed by the actual implementation of this pilot project, and thus addressing the issues that may arise in the next collective bargaining round, including expansion of the number of corridors. No finding, needless to say, is made about the best manner of general implementing reciprocity, which will undoubtedly continue to be a feature in future cross-boundary service integration.”

The conclusion line reads: “At the request of the parties, I remain seized with respect to the implementation of this award.”

What Justice Kaplan is saying is that the legal reading of the collective agreement is, we can have pilot projects around service integration, but we can respect the collective agreement at the same time. That strikes me as a very good path. It strikes me as a path that doesn't require schedule 1 of this bill.

1600

I also want to say, fourthly—and this is based upon information I received as recently as an hour and a half ago—that something not covered by this bill are the partners provincially we are continuing to work with in building public transit in Ontario. Phil Verster, the CEO of Metrolinx, just got up before the province of Ontario—the people of Ontario rely on those services—and told us that there remains no deadline for the completion of the Eglinton Crosstown project. This is a project that is going on three years late. Speaker, it's over a billion dollars over budget. There have been lawsuits between the consortium building the project and Metrolinx that now exceed over \$500 million. But meanwhile Mr. Verster's salary has increased from the \$200,000 range to now almost a million dollars a year—a million dollars a year.

Speaker, when my friends in government campaigned in the 2018 election and they said, rightly, that under the

Liberals the \$6-million man ran our hydro system into the ground and criticized the governing Liberals of the day for that, I thought there was a lot of credence to that. One of the first things the Premier did was let that executive go, because you couldn't have a situation in Ontario where people had to choose between heating—if they had electric heat—or eating, and it was obscene that we would have at the top of our power authorities someone making that kind of money in that kind of context of energy poverty. Well I would submit to you, Speaker—and I will get into details this afternoon—that Mr. Verster's time should be up too. It's time for him to go. The official opposition has said it clearly this afternoon; the people around the Eglinton Crosstown who have been dying for this transit service deserve it.

Let me get into some comments that I made—because I think it's related—at committee to the transportation minister of the day. I went over two different reports from the Auditor General into the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. I noted that Metrolinx as a company has 59 vice-presidents—59 vice-presidents. I noted, in fact, that there are 19 C-suite executives—the “C” being the CEO, CFO, the C-whatever-O. The amount of executive bloat in this organization truly defies belief. So I asked the minister at the time, does she think that Metrolinx needs 19 C-suite executives and 59 vice-presidents to deliver a project that, at that time, was not operational and was a billion dollars over budget? I didn't get an answer to my question.

I also asked—because this concerns this bill, Speaker. It concerns who we're working with to build public transit in Ontario, these GO stations we want to build. I also asked because, as you know, in Ottawa Centre we had a very strong community movement to fight for a public inquiry into our own failing light rail system, and I was glad that the Premier decided to listen to us, respond to our call and declare that public inquiry, and Justice William Hourigan's report is now public. But a name that keeps coming up in that report, Speaker, is Brian Guest. It keeps coming up, and it's because this fellow, who lives in Ottawa, had never, before the Ottawa LRT phase 1, been involved in building a transit system anywhere in the world, let alone Ontario. Mr. Guest had not only played the critical role in stage 1 of our LRT, he had gone on to advise Metrolinx as a vice-president in the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown.

So you can imagine, Speaker, my reaction, and the reaction of people in Ottawa. We have been through the wringer, most recently with our LRT, if you can believe it—we have a fantastic music festival in the summer; it's called Bluesfest. Part of what we encourage people to do—patrons of Bluesfest—is to not travel with their cars into the downtown. Utilize the LRT. But guess what, Speaker? We had a 28-day shutdown, because engineers told us the station was over-utilized. The Ottawa police told the community not to use our LRT station on Canada Day because the police assessment of the major stations was that they were not appropriate—get ready for this, Speaker—for high volumes of people. That is the level of deficiency with the Ottawa LRT, and the architect of the

Ottawa LRT was spreading this madness to our friends here in the city of Toronto with the Eglinton Crosstown.

So I asked the minister—given that Mr. Guest's name keeps popping up across these Metrolinx projects and that Mr. Verster has overseen all of this at the executive level—in this place in question period and I asked at committee, “Are you going to investigate Mr. Guest?” At the time, if you remember, we pushed hard enough that the minister let Mr. Guest go under a cloud of suspicion. But that's not enough. For our friends here at the Eglinton Crosstown, who are relying on that transit project to be viable, we wanted to know what decisions were made. We wanted to know what was going on.

We asked the minister responsible, “Have you done an investigation into Mr. Guest and what he has done or not done for the Eglinton Crosstown project?” We were told—let me find it for you, Speaker—on two separate occasions at committee: “An internal review was done.” On another occasion, the minister said, “A review was done internally, and it was concluded that everything with respect to the procurement that you are discussing of those services was fair and competitive.”

So we, as the official opposition, did a freedom-of-information request for any records pertaining to the minister, the minister's staff, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Infrastructure about any investigation of Mr. Guest. What came back to us was a field that said “zero records.” That doesn't inspire confidence for me. It doesn't make me think that Mr. Guest was held to account at all, and it makes me seriously worried about what the good people of Toronto are about to experience because frankly, Speaker, I have seen this movie before.

What we learned—not at today's press conference that Mr. Verster stumbled through—at his last press conference was that there are 260 deficiencies at least with the Eglinton Crosstown project and that some of those deficiencies relate right to the rails that are put into the system. If we think about the virus that has spread from Ottawa to Toronto—and I hope it's not the case, but I worry that it is—this is precisely what we're dealing with in our city. There is a stretch of the track for stage 1 of our LRT from the Tremblay Road station that crosses the Rideau River that if you stand by that river and you listen to the trains go across the track, the screeching of the wheels is piercing to listen to.

The engineers I've had occasion to speak to off the record privately, who do not want to talk publicly for fear of their own employment, will tell me that for a working light rail system, the wheels of the undercarriage of the trains have to be bespoke to the rails. They have to be absolutely perfect, like a perfectly fitting suit. But what I was hearing, the engineers told me, was a lack of fit between wheel and track.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They need a better tailor.

Mr. Joel Harden: They need a better tailor—the member from Waterloo is right.

What I was hearing was an improperly designed light rail system. That's what the engineers told me.

And worse, what I was told on one occasion at the doorstep—we were just doing a community canvass to see

how people were doing and check in on health care concerns—I was told by an engineer that normally, you replace those wheels, the undercarriage of the trains, about every 90,000 kilometres. But in the maintenance shop for the consortium now running stage 1 of our LRT, they're being swapped out every 12,000 or 13,000 kilometres. It dramatically increases the costs of operating the train.

It's posing some fundamental questions back home. Do we have to rip up this track and start from square one again? Why did we hire these public-private partnership consultants? Why did we hire Mr. Guest? And I guess by "we" I mean the decision-makers at the time at the city of Ottawa and the province of Ontario. Let's be fair to the current government, Speaker: This goes back to the Liberals. This doesn't go to the current government. This decision with Ottawa's LRT goes directly to the Liberals. Why did we believe they could deliver a transit project in Ottawa, a light rail project we desperately need, for \$2.1 billion? It was by far the lowest bid of the bids available.

1610

So the good people of Toronto right now, having heard that absurdity of a press conference earlier this afternoon, are furious. My social media is filling up. I don't check it; I'm blessed to work with people who look at the social media. That's not my job. But the people who represent transit riders in this city, the people who represent the folks working in the system, are furious. So it falls to this government to seek accountability. And if Mr. Verster still has a job when I get back here next Tuesday, I will be very disappointed, because I don't know anybody who can fail upwards better than this guy right now. I don't know anybody who can have a salary expand by a factor of five while presiding over failing transit systems.

MPP Jamie West: It's known as "falling up."

Mr. Joel Harden: Falling up.

Speaker, the Ontario Line the government has proposed that would end up at its science centre, with its world-leading spa run by this Austrian company, is now costing, according to experts like Steve Munro, who is one of our country's experts on transit, up to \$1 billion a kilometre. The Spadina extension that was approved before came in at about \$370 million a kilometre. Now, I know, people will tell me, "Oh, well, the war in Ukraine, the commodities crisis, global supply chain issues"—a tripling of cost per kilometre? A tripling of cost per kilometre presided over a company—let's face it, Metrolinx, in my opinion, has not assumed its role as an agency responsible for the well-being of our transit infrastructure—

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: They have.

This is an agglomeration of managing consultants supervising other consultants. Perhaps—I'm just speculating here—they don't want transit projects to be complete because then the gravy train stops. But the hard-working people who have suffered and made sacrifices—because that's what construction is; you've got to put up with disruption until your project is complete. You're from Hamilton, Speaker, you're familiar with this debate.

Let me talk about them for a moment, because I think that will help the government understand what this looks

like at a community level. I want to talk about Dane Williams. Dane Williams, a wonderful community leader I had the occasion to meet, is the co-founder and director of partnerships at Black Urbanism Toronto. He has seen the impact of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT project on Black-owned businesses in Little Jamaica in and around this area.

We did a round table, and these were the words that Mr. Williams submitted to that round table: "Metrolinx has shown gross negligence in the way they operate on the ground, and this has impacted small business owners' ability to thrive and grow. There have been barricades on the roads, debris blocking business establishments, lack of parking for patrons. Many of the business owners in Little Jamaica who were in operation in 2011 when the project started are no longer operating. This LRT project has been at the expense of business owners who have been in operation for 20 to 30 years before it.

"There must be a policy change that requires a more fair economy. This means implementing a system of compensation directly to the small business owners affected by any LRT construction project. This would not only provide support for the impacted business owners, but also build more accountability into LRT construction projects"—that makes a lot of sense to me.

Further down the road, I want to cite the words of Dante Thorne, who is a lead building operator at the Holy Blossom Temple. He's been working in Eglinton West for six years. He's a daily commuter that uses transit, and these were his observations about Metrolinx—who is our partner for bills like this one—and their capacity to build transit. Mr. Thorne says, "There's a reason people feel disconnected from the political process. People know that those who are responsible and making money from this are not facing consequences and will just move on to the next project.

"When I first moved here, I saw huge rats running around Yonge and Eglinton because this project and its surrounding space were not treated with respect"—the detonations. There were warnings about this, but it was unsettling to see.

"There is a stretch on Eglinton where the concrete barriers came out so far into the street that there is insufficient space for two TTC buses to safely pass each other. This is another example of negligence and the right hand not knowing what the left is doing on this project.

"The LRT project is funded by taxpayer dollars and lacks an incentive to finish on schedule, as there is no punishment or consequence for delays. The longer they take, the more paycheques come in."

Speaker, I think I want to return to the positive aspects of where I began. There's no person in this House that doesn't want to see more public transit and more rapid transit. I'm taking that on faith. There is no person in this House that doesn't want the people who operate our transit systems and encourage people to use active transit to be supported. We all do. But the conundrum happens when we think about who we rely upon to make these things come to be. That's missing from this bill.

Let's return, on a lighter note, because my friend from Kiiwetinoong is here and I've heard you, my friend, say this in the past—let's acknowledge that public transit and what this bill will do will help some communities, but not all communities. The member for Kiiwetinoong has often joked that there are no subways that service the 28 fly-in communities he serves. There are limitations on what we can do with this bill in encouraging public transit in the rural areas and the wild areas of Ontario.

But the fact remains, Speaker, that 80% of people in Ontario do live in metro areas and there are 107 transit agencies operating in this province, according to a recent estimate. And believe it or not, there's been a lot of innovations in smaller towns. Some towns I had occasion to visit, like Brighton, Ontario, on my bike ride down here from Ottawa, are coming up with different busing initiatives for seniors and persons with disabilities to help them get around because they don't have access to their own vehicle and they want to stay living in a beautiful town like Brighton where they are. So public transit takes many different shapes and sizes, and I think the case for encouraging it remains incredibly strong.

I want to cite from a recent report by the International Transport Forum. I'm going to quote directly from it so people will have a sense of what public transit can do to help us become more sustainable and to help us create jobs: "Buses and trains can release up to a fifth of emissions per passenger kilometre" as opposed to "ride-hailing and about a third that of a private vehicle. Simply put, public transport, along with bicycling and walking, is a climate solution staring us in the face. Embracing it in this next decade will be a determining factor in reaching climate goals." This is a global assessment.

"Public transport," they also write, is "key to an intersectional approach to addressing climate change in the transport sector—connecting with equity, health and economic development. When done well, it can provide more equal access to jobs, education, services and other economic opportunities, particularly to those without private vehicles and in underserved areas—all at a lower cost to consumers" than if they had to deal with it on their own. "The transit industry also provides millions of jobs globally that are important to local economies."

There are other health challenges addressed through public transit, Speaker. I am a booster this afternoon. "Cities with good public transport have fewer traffic fatalities. Transit riders tend to have more active lifestyles," like walking home from a station or rolling home from a station or on their way to work, "and cleaner buses carrying more people than private cars can improve air quality and reduce exposure to dangerous pollutants in traffic." So the next time you're stuck on a 400-series highway, let's return to that collective mission we have in this place to encourage public transit, because that's one critical way we can work together.

In the time I have left, I want to go back to schedule 1 of this bill, because I talked about the labour rights dimension of this, which I expressed to the ministers responsible. I think there are good moves this government

can make this week to resolve that. We don't need a conflict. But let's just quickly talk about what could happen if we let it fester—if I come back next Tuesday and we still have the incompetent management of Metrolinx and if we still have a potential major conflict with the people who operate our transit systems.

The law has been pretty clear on whether or not Legislatures can interfere in the collective bargaining process. They said very clearly that section 2(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees collective bargaining as a right, and it's not a right that can be suspended or massively interfered with by legislation that we put in this place.

1620

I will point to a ruling for Bill 28, that the government introduced, in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, which said they "accepted the applicants' position that a governmental measure, such as legislation, will interfere with the collective bargaining process if it:

"(1) prevents or denies meaningful discussion about working conditions;

"(2) prohibits provisions from being dealt with in collective agreements;

"(3) prevents employees from having their views heard in the context of a meaningful process of consultation and discussion; or"—and this is important—" (4) imposes arbitrary terms on collective agreements."

Speaker, I read from the arbitrator's ruling, Mr. William Kaplan, who very much affirmed this. So I know that sometimes governments can say, "Well, we're elected. We want to drive policy. We don't share the concern that ATU 113 has. We think that the TTC has their best interests at heart, and we're not going to concern ourselves with operating any way other than opening up the City of Toronto Act and saying, 'Your contracting-out provisions for your collective agreement don't apply.'"

With benefit for my colleagues here, let me just share an anecdote I had in commuting back home to Ottawa once in the midst of that massive labour uprising that happened around Bill 28. I'm taking the VIA train—which has a lot of issues; we'll talk about it another time. I've complained to the federal Minister of Transportation several times—but I'm taking the VIA train home, and I'm getting past Kingston, where the cell reception is working relatively well. A text comes across my phone from taxi drivers I know in the city of Ottawa, because I've done a lot of work with them over the years about their working conditions. And they write, "The plan is to take the road in front of the Ottawa airport." I immediately respond by saying, "I'm an elected official. I'm not a member of your union. Please take me off this chat."

But what I found striking about that was that they were seized with what they perceived as the injustice being brought to bear on low-paid education workers in the public school system in Ontario. The 55,000 people who are ECEs, EAs, library technicians, receptionists, custodians—as I saw in the text stream, which they looped me into, and then I looped myself out—were incensed and had family members who worked in these occupations.

And they said, “Look, these people make some of the lowest wages. Our union, which isn’t even party to the negotiation, out of sympathy with the negotiation, is going to shut down the airport parkway in” my city. That would have an enormous impact on transit coming in and out of Ottawa. It would shut the airport down, probably.

And I put the phone down after getting myself off that, and I said to myself, this could really be a galvanizing moment for the labour movement. I spent many years in my life, blessed, learning from people who have organized unions, people who have negotiated collective agreements, doing research for them, and I’ve met people in all different sectors, in all different places in this country. And what I always remember is their lives are so busy. They’re like politicians; their phones are tied to their head. They are always trying to figure out ways to help members with their problems to address grievances, but when bargaining comes up, to make sure the union is as well represented as it can be at that critical, critical, critical table. It’s a sacred place, the bargaining table.

But here are unionized taxi drivers in the city of Ottawa telling me that, in a fight that is not their direct fight and a labour negotiation that is not their direct negotiation, they are prepared to blockade the airport parkway in solidarity with education workers—55,000 of them across Ontario. And they indicated, before I jumped off, that this wasn’t just an Ottawa thing. This was going to happen everywhere. And anecdotally, when I started talking to people—and you remember those times, Speaker, I’m sure; we had a lot of people visiting the Legislature, upset and rallying and such—I heard that story from other employee groups.

I have lots of Conservative friends back home. One gentleman rung me up and told me I shouldn’t be supporting the strikers. We had a good conversation. He said, “Well, the government has introduced a bill, Bill 28, Joel, that will levy \$4,000 fines on those people if they decide to strike and defy the law, and a \$500,000 fine on their union. They will absolutely back down. That’s the power of the province there. They’ve got to listen to the people who were elected.” This is what the neighbour told me. And I said back to the neighbour, “Well, who do you think levies that fine on the striker? It’s an OPSEU member. It’s somebody working for the Ministry of Labour.” How motivated do you think that person is going to be to walk up to an EA, who works eight months of the year, and makes an average of—what was it, member for Sudbury, the average wage—

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: —\$39,000 a year?

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: Oh, goodness. Suffice it to say, to my friend opposite, it is a fraction of what members make here, to look after the well-being of students in schools.

So I said to the neighbour, the Conservative neighbour back home, “I understand the province is a powerful entity. I understand they can introduce back-to-work legislation. They can legislate a collective agreement. They can threaten fines. But, ultimately, they require the compliance

of the working people responsible for administering that fine.” And I told him, “I don’t know how many people are going to be motivated to walk up to a low-paid education worker, who spends their day working with people with disabilities, and say, ‘Here’s a \$4,000 fine.’”

What I’m saying with this particular bill is if you open up transit workers’ collective agreements and they are faced with the prospect of their working conditions dropping, when these are the people, during the pandemic, that made sure we could get safely to work or to the hospital, that took risks of getting sick and getting hurt on the job—I don’t know where this is going to lead, but it won’t lead to a good place, not a good place. As my friend from Sudbury will say and has said many times, you come up in the labour movement by demonstrating your capacity to listen to members and fight for them. You don’t hold on to your job as an elected representative or a staff member in the labour movement if you do not rise to the occasion.

Let’s hope, in our country, unlike other places around the world, it doesn’t have to get to that. But in November 2022, we almost got there. We almost got there. When I was a university professor, Speaker, I used to have to teach about labour history in this country. We would recall moments like the Winnipeg General Strike, and the students would say to me, “I can’t even imagine what that would look like.” Then, of course, we went through the convoy movement and have a heckuva better idea of what throttling a city looks like.

But the fact of the matter is I don’t want and I don’t think—I hope no one in this place wants to pick a fight with transit workers. I don’t think we want that. I think what we want to do, as I began, is build public transit.

If the government wants to work with willing municipalities who would administer a transit administration fee to build GO stations in their communities—places like Bowmanville or elsewhere—it sounds like a great idea, provided the regulations make sense and we’re not favouring people like Mr. De Gasperis, who, as I understand from my friend from Spadina–Fort York, purchased the land across from the Ontario Science Centre a month before the Ontario Line announcement. Or the \$450-million, now \$600-million, subsidy we are putting into a parking garage for an Austrian spa, at a time when, if we were all to go together and go down under the Don Valley Parkway, we would see people living under bridges, and we would see, as we have said in this place, young people trapped in their parents’ basements, looking for housing—and we have \$600 million to give to an Austrian conglomerate to build a luxury spa at Ontario Place? And we have a transit authority like Metrolinx, which has increased the price of building subways to \$1 billion a kilometre?

Alarm bells should be going off in the Premier’s office. Alarm bells should be going off, Speaker. We need to clean a little house, as my grandmother used to say. We need to get our act together.

The good news is, we’ve got people—smart people—who know how to build public transit. We’ve got a public

desperate for more public transit. We've got workers who are ready to operate and build public transit. But who we work with matters—who we work with really, really, really matters.

My colleague from University–Rosedale once said in this place, on October 29, 2020—her words—“Toronto is a graveyard of failed transit” plans. To quote from what she said, “It’s an absolute graveyard.”

1630

She says, “The Eglinton West project”—that was, you know, the Crosstown that we are discussing ingloriously today—“which has a lot of merit, would have been built right now” if then-Premier Mike Harris hadn’t filled in the holes that were being prepared to build it then. It might have been built 20 years ago, according to my colleague, had we followed previous progressive mayor—previous to the progressive mayor we have in Toronto right now—David Miller’s Transit City plan. We might have had a line “from Pearson to Kennedy.” The Sheppard extension could have been built back then. The Finch West extension could have been built back then. The Eglinton East extension could have been built back then, but, according to the member from University–Rosedale, what seems to be the recurring theme—and we heard Matt Gurney talk about it before is—idea after idea, vision after vision, and the consultants’ meter starts running, but the product does not get built, or in our case, in Ottawa, when it does get built, it does not operate terribly well.

So here is what we can do. We can commit, as a Legislature, to recognize that transit is critical and valuable, that active transit is critical—let me go into some more positive notes, Speaker. Something I love to use, in the city when I have to take a plane—I try not to, but when I have to take a plane—is the Bike Share program that Metrolinx offers. That’s a success story. Let’s say something positive about Metrolinx for a moment. All you got to do is put an app on your phone, you tap it, and a bike pops out of its docking station. You don’t have to bring your own bike to Toronto. You jump on it and you head to wherever you need to go at a very, very, reasonable cost. In my case, I’ll go all the way down to Billy Bishop, if I have to. It’s fun. I don’t drive fast. I need to remember to bring my helmet, but it’s a great way to get around the city; it’s a fun way to get around the city. So that’s a positive thing. It’s a pilot we have.

Down the road from me—I see the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell over there, so it’s down the road for both of us into the province of Quebec—is the city of Montreal, which may be the foremost cycling destination right now in all of North America. They have a plan from 2023 to 2027 to build an incredible amount of bike infrastructure.

Commuters with cars love it, because the streets are less congested. Cyclists, wheelchair users, walker users and pedestrians love it, because they’re protected. Montreal is currently in a boom. It works, but here sadly in our city—the run-up to the last mayoral by-election—we had many mayoral candidates presenting themselves as anti-bike-lane warrior and divisive. That’s not going to get us far at all.

I don’t believe in the war on the car. I don’t believe in the war on the bike lane. I don’t believe in that language at all when it comes to how we get around our cities, because the obligation instead is for us to all keep each other safe. It’s for us to all keep each other safe.

On my bike ride that I just did to Toronto, before I left, I had occasion to talk to a mom, Anita, whose daughter Serene, 14 years old now, will have a brain injury for the rest of her life. She was struck with her brother when she was crossing Fisher Avenue. The driver, if you can believe it, fled the scene and later tried to sell the car to avoid being detected by the Ottawa police. I give the Ottawa police full credit, because they did a full publicity campaign, a picture was found and they ultimately found this guy. But that was the level of malevolence that that person exhibited behind the wheel.

If you are a young person trying to get around your community—going to school, doing groceries for the family, meeting up with your friends—what’s going through your mind? Because what happened to this fellow two weeks ago is before a justice of the peace, he was levied \$1,000 fine and had his licence suspended for a year—and that is the exception to the rule. That is more penalty than normal. The maximum fine normally is \$500, but only because he fled the incident was the penalty worse, was the licence suspension in effect. In the beginning of the sentencing, the guy showed no remorse. He was smirking, in fact—smirking. I was talking to Anita, the mom, and she was just saying, “It’s really hard for us to live through that moment and to know for our other kids and for Serene that there is no justice.” So what would any parent do? You’re going to put that kid in a car, which you deem to be a safe place, and you’re going to drive them where you feel they need to go. But now we’re moving in the direction, as we talked about off the top, that we don’t want to go.

I talked to a lovely fellow named Randy when I stopped in Brighton, Speaker, who was one of the coordinators for the cycling groups out in Brighton, Ontario. I talked to Minister Piccini before getting there and got a sense of the different groups to contact before I got there. But Randy tells me that, out there, it is all too common, when they have those group rides and they’re doing them safely, that someone will buzz them within like six inches, that people will be swiped off the road.

I’ve talked to dump truck drivers, construction workers who don’t feel like cyclists or pedestrians or other drivers have a sense of how poor their sightlines are. I’ve sat in the cab of the truck and I’ve tried to imagine, could I see someone down there? The dump truck driver had told me, “You know, when I’m on a construction site, I’ve got a flag person following me around everywhere to make sure people are safe, but when I leave the construction site, that person’s not there and I’m just expected to figure it out.”

There’s so much we could do with this legislation, with the companion pieces of legislation to make the province safer. I really, really do think, as critical as I have been of aspects of this legislation, that there’s a lot here that we can come around and work together on: expanding public

transit, GO stations. There's a lot here we'll agree on. The notion of people being safe, getting to work, getting home—we're going to agree on that. These should not be partisan issues. They should be political priorities of this place. We should be able to come behind it. We should be able to give parents and kids and everyone out there confidence that this House will design laws that will make sure people can get around this city and other cities, that people can do that safely and, moreover, to return to the context, that we'll do our part for the climate crisis.

Thirty years from now, you and I, Speaker—I don't think I'm ever going to retire, it's just the nature of my hyperactivity, but whatever I'm doing 30 years from now, I'll be able to say, "You know what? I did my part. I worked across the aisle. I worked with my caucus. We were active in our community. We made sure that you had the opportunities that I was lucky to have." Let's hope we can make Bill 131 like that. I welcome questions.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: A couple of things: Obviously, filling an hour, you've got a lot of leeway, moving back and forth with parts of debate, but there is one thing that struck me, which is the lack of movement on previous governments. You mentioned my father's government. We can blame them for this too. I'm with you on this one. There wasn't enough foresight, I think, for a lot of previous governments to really see how big and how quickly Ontario was going to grow over the last 20 to 30 years and how far behind we truly were with transit.

I was a former small business owner—the member from Waterloo will know this well—in Waterloo region, and I actually had to close a business because of transit construction delays on King Street with our LRT, and it was tough. I've been through it. I understand what it's like and how disruptive it can be. But could you imagine, if we aren't getting shovels in the ground now and trying to really bridge the gap and really catch up, how much worse it's going to be in another 20 years, when we have even more exponential growth?

I guess my question is—I know you don't want to stand in the way of transit projects and moving things forward—will you support this bill, and can we expect you to work with us on trying to make transit better here in the province?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thanks for that context. I had no idea that that happened to you. That's really rough. When your dream has to go up in smoke because of something you didn't account for, that's rough.

I'm going to see what bears out in this debate, quite frankly. We've had a caucus discussion already. We want to see what you guys are putting on the table.

But I will say again, for the record, the notion of building in laws here that would intervene in other people's collective agreements is a red line. It's a red line for anybody who believes they want to stand up to help working people. The good news, as I tried to communicate today, is that you don't need to do it. You do not need to do it. There are provisions within the collective agreement that would allow the government, I think, and TTC to do that transit service integration.

1640

So I'm cautiously optimistic—let's put it that way. But on Tuesday, I would like to see schedule 1 out of this bill. Any help you could provide in persuading your colleagues on that front would be great.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre. I think that many of us, if you've been paying attention to Metrolinx, have some genuine concerns around that agency. I feel like they have completely and utterly forgotten their mandate, which is to construct and improve public transit in the GTHA. There's a lot of work to be done on that front, and I wish the new Minister of Transportation well in that job.

I am concerned about this new station contribution fee. Kitchener is desperate for a new GO station. Under this schedule, the original idea was for Metrolinx to negotiate deals in which developers would fund a new GO station in exchange for development rights. This government's relationship with developers is a little dicey right now, and so now they evidently expect municipalities to assume funding responsibilities. We have no idea what sort of funding agreements the government has in mind or how the risks will be allocated. Municipalities may be required to assume risks and cost overruns. This is a pretty serious issue.

If we're serious about building transit infrastructure, can the member address these concerns that municipalities have?

Mr. Joel Harden: This is what I tried to mention. The aftermath of Bill 23 is a lot of those municipalities are a lot more cash-poor when it comes to the idea of major infrastructure projects. That's where I worry about consultants playing a role of saying, "Well, do you know what? You don't have to put all your money from your community down in one go. Fund us on a rental basis as a consortium for 30 years, and we will pull this off for you." It didn't work out very well for us in Ottawa. It didn't.

I will say to Metrolinx—I'm just reading between the lines, and a member of the government can clarify if I'm right—it's almost like this bill is kind of a vote of non-confidence in Metrolinx, because we're talking about a station administration fee for municipalities to build infrastructure that Metrolinx should be building. It is absolutely astounding.

Again, I really hope to not see Mr. Verster in his role by next week. I would really like to see the Premier barge into that office and say, "Hey, it's time for some change here."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Next question?

Mr. Mike Harris: Just a quick follow-up on that labour piece: It's my understanding that there had to be a tool implemented for municipalities to have those cross-border conversations, if you will. This isn't necessarily intended to infringe on anyone's bargaining; it's actually to allow that to happen. For example, if Wheel-Trans in Toronto was going to drop somebody off in York region, there

wouldn't be an ability for York Region Transit to then link up, or they have to stop at the Steeles border, if you will, because they're not allowed to operate in another municipality.

Again, let's take the politicization out of it, which I know for you and I sometimes can be a little challenging. I just want to offer that this isn't something malicious. This isn't something that the government—you guys use the term "poison pill" fairly often; this isn't something that is that. This gives municipalities the ability to then go ahead and negotiate those types of contracts. I think that's an important piece that we need to be able to do to have that more seamless transit for people here in the province.

Mr. Joel Harden: To use the analogy the member made, the good news I brought into this place is that I believe—we both rely on advice here, don't we? We rely on researchers to get us ready, we rely on legal advice to give us a sound idea of the law. The best legal advice I got before coming here, in the three days I had to prepare, was that the government doesn't need to do this. There is a provision of the collective agreement that allows for pilot projects in inter-jurisdictional transit travel.

In the Wheel-Trans example, going to York region, as long as there is reciprocal availability of that service and it doesn't rely on service differences or quality differences, it's kosher according to the collective agreement. Somebody is telling the government otherwise, and we're going to have a discussion this week about what ends up—but the objective we share is the same. We want someone to get on a bus in Durham and get dropped off in Scarborough and not at the border.

The member from University–Rosedale told the story about a baggage handler at Pearson that used to have to sleep in their car because couldn't afford the double fare. I mean, that's ridiculous. We can fix that.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his comments today. It's really enlightening.

I will say that in my riding, I'm deeply concerned about Metrolinx and their continuous failures. We've had P3 projects in Ottawa, in Hamilton and now the Eglinton Crosstown—it was just announced today that they do not have a finish date. They started that project in 2011. It's now \$4 billion over budget. The Liberals started it as a P3 project, even though the Auditor General says that P3 projects cost 28% more and do not deliver on time and on budget.

My big concern is this Ontario Line is breaking ground in my riding right now. Metrolinx's Eglinton Crosstown debacle has bankrupted 400 businesses along Eglinton. I'm concerned that this government refuses the NDP request for an inquiry into what's happening at Metrolinx. If you were in government, what advice would you give to this government so that we do not have another debacle with the Ontario Line?

Mr. Joel Harden: I mean, the concerning thing I mentioned in debate is that we're up to a billion dollars per

kilometre for construction near the end of that line, my friend. That's a lot of money. It's a ridiculous amount of money according to Steve Munro and according to other transit experts I've spoken to. So I do think that we need to have an investigation into what's happened at the Crosstown. What we fought for in Ottawa Centre, the people of this city deserve too.

There's something we can do right now and that's change the chair at the top. The leadership really matters. All of the other consultants in that building, if they want to work for the province in good faith to build things, and I want to believe in my heart most of them do—having a new leader at the top, signalling, "We are going to get this done. It is going to be safely built."

But 260 deficiencies at the Eglinton Crosstown, all the way to the rails being improperly installed, station platforms being broken up and taken away in bulldozers? The Premier has to get these consultants in line. The Premier has to start cleaning some house at Metrolinx and getting to the bottom of this mess. That can happen right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's all the time we have for questions and answers.

Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: You know, it's interesting: an act called the Transportation for the Future Act is right up my alley as a civil engineer. Even though Metrolinx and GO Transit really don't touch upon my constituency of Windsor–Tecumseh, certainly I see a lot of potential in this bill to make things better for the people of the GTA, improve transit connections to surrounding communities and get us out of the infrastructure deficit that I know we have province-wide.

The main things are, number one, GO Transit stations will be built faster. Adding more capacity to the ability to pay for a station through the station fee gives that opportunity to implement the changes needed as they are needed, not 30, 40 years behind, and that's something I will get into in a little bit.

Incentivization of housing around transit stations: We can best leverage density in those locations and the available services. The greater Toronto area is legendary for its congestion. I make that trip often enough; most of the time, I do take the train, and I'll elaborate a little bit on that further in the debate. But really, I've driven in Los Angeles on the 405. It doesn't compare to the 401. There is so much traffic here that keeps families from getting home.

We have to start addressing our capacity issues. This bill brings us down that path. In fact, I think it was data from transportation group Inrix—they did a study recently—that noted that Torontonians lost 118 hours waiting in traffic just last year. That's about a 60% jump between 2021 and 2022. In 2021, the city was in 22nd place for congestion; in 2022, it was in third place. We can definitely combat this by making transit and the broader travel network more convenient and give more options for the residents of the GTA.

As noted, this bill doesn't apply to the residents that I represent in Windsor–Tecumseh, but certainly applies to

the goods and services that my constituents buy. A lot of them originate here from distribution centres. They're manufactured here. Services are predominantly hosted here.

1650

Down in the southwest, we don't have a lot of the professional services. We have, certainly, a strong manufacturing base, but when we are reliant on banking, insurance and other matters, we need those people at work to answer our calls and to actually make the decisions that will facilitate our livelihoods. We know, in Windsor, that delays mean costs, and delay after delay could mean the difference between a shop opening and a shop closing. Just-in-time delivery is a necessity for local competitiveness. I don't see why it would be any different for Toronto.

Our rights of way are not infinite. There's only so much widening you can do of a freeway. Investing in public transit is certainly a tool in the tool box to help make sure that our lands are used well and that we use the best possible assets to bring people from point A to point B. Shifting modes of transportation is truly vital. It's one of the things I do appreciate about the time I spend here in Toronto, where I get to walk from where I live. And really, supporting public transit is a tool that we have to support our goals, and the most recent Ontario budget had an ambitious capital plan. I believe it's the most ambitious capital plan in the province's history.

We know that gridlock on highways and roads costs the economy more than \$11 billion a year in productivity, including the time that was lost to commuters and drivers—the higher costs of doing business if your employee doesn't show up for work because they're stuck in traffic, or your delivery is stuck. Hey, someone has got to eat that cost. It means that things become more and more expensive for us and it keeps people, more importantly, from getting home to their families faster.

To support this growth, the Ontario government is investing \$70.5 billion over the next 10 years for transit. Building our province through critical public transit projects is vital to supporting Ontario's economy, to get people home faster and alleviating gridlock, connecting people to their jobs and to housing, creating thousands of terrific jobs—I know there are a lot of terrific jobs. In fact, I remember when I was canvassing for my municipal election for the first time, I wanted to identify all the people I knew in town—bad for me. I looked at my voters list, and I just wrote every name on there of someone that I knew or grew up with who had moved out, moved away. Yes, they're on the voters list; they did not reside locally anymore because they could not find work in my region, in the Windsor-Essex region. They came here to Toronto because this is where the job opportunities existed.

We do need to invest, as a government, to catch up, but the demand for service that is created from land development very much ought to be satisfied through the land development projects. This is where we see lots of local issues, and I'll certainly get to go through them and I'll mention a couple.

Development charges do exist to help pay for the capital costs of infrastructure to support new growth. If we

want to avoid the mistakes of the past—we heard earlier in the debate, a lot of assumptions were made in the past that growth would be more static than it is realistically—we need to have foresight and to plan for that growth, and that means capitalizing the projects. We need to set a good path for the future. The GO station contribution fee is an appropriate measure in which to ensure we have the funds that we need and avoid having to play catch-up later.

The consequences of unrealized investments in my area are visible every single day. During a 1983 public meeting, as I found published in the Windsor Star, the Ministry of Transportation advised the local community that an interchange, the freeway, at Banwell Road and E.C. Row Expressway, would need to be constructed within a decade. An environmental assessment of the expressway 10 years later in 1993 confirmed that the traffic volumes were set to be reached in 1994.

Forty years after that mention and 30 years after the stats showed we needed that interchange—and this key interchange is located right where the NextStar Energy battery plant is being built—there is no interchange. The intersection has not changed. This is the result of not enough capitalization of our infrastructure projects. E.C. Row Expressway turns into County Road 22 at its east limit, where Windsor meets Tecumseh, and it's still a controlled-access road. In 2005, it was determined that grade separations at Lesperance Road and Manning Road would be warranted as the 2005 level of service was E. In traffic engineering parlance, that is a step away from failure. The 10-year level of service was failure. That was 10 years ago. We have been in failure for 10 years.

These projects are supported by property taxes; they're not supported by development charges. The funding is planned for between 2034 and 2037. But truly, think of the cost of a highway interchange. They're running about well north of \$50 million these days—probably closer to \$80 million. Given that Essex county's capital budget was \$43.6 million for the entire county, every single project combined, the chances look pretty challenging, to say the least, that those two interchanges will come online in the 2034-37 time frame.

This situation that I get to face back home in my own neighbourhood speaks to why development charges for regional arterial roads and transit infrastructure are terrific tools in the tool box that can help accelerate infrastructure investments. Development charges are discretionary fees. Sometimes they're the right tools; sometimes they're the wrong tools. But municipalities can choose whether to use development charges, and if they are used, which services or infrastructure they want to include from the services that are listed as being eligible in the Development Charges Act. Truly, there is no greater opportunity for the province of Ontario than to further develop GO Transit to move our people quickly and safely.

Speaker, my father often told me that in order to pursue his career in his company, moving to the GTA was the only option. It was the only opportunity for promotion because the headquarters were here in Toronto. Then they moved to Mississauga and, ultimately, they ended up in

Hamilton. But for the sake of myself, my brother and our whole family, he would forgo those career opportunities because it meant that approximately 90 minutes of his day in each direction likely would be spent in traffic. And that's away from us, his family. He worked 12 hours a day, as it was, often longer. My own commute back home when I worked in downtown Windsor was 30 minutes on a bad day from the eastern limit of the town of Tecumseh, the far east of my riding. Happily, we're in a better, more nimble world now. Those choices aren't as necessary.

But having lived here in Toronto during our legislative sittings, I have benefited from the connectivity that transit provides. I can get on board the Walkerville VIA station in Windsor. It's right in my riding; I'm very proud of that. I can then take the train, which takes about four and a half hours, transfer onto the TTC subway and then get off at Wellesley station and walk two blocks to where I get to sleep while I'm here—and, truly, finish that walk here to the Legislature each and every day.

You know what? I know there's always room for improvement. Certainly, I'd love to get home earlier than I in the morning after House duty tomorrow. But I'm truly happy that this service exists for us. There are tremendous benefits that go to those communities where these stations are built, and access to transit is something I truly appreciate having here. We can unlock so, so much opportunity for our people by having the capitalization to respond to those stations being built.

Even back home, when I was on municipal council, public transit service was offered on a loop basis, but it only connected at one point in Tecumseh Mall. That's the unfortunate byproduct of a dispute over inter-jurisdictional coverage, which is also another part of this bill. But they truly did rely on transit to get to and from work, to go shopping, to find stores that carry clothing. Living in a suburb, there aren't a lot of options, to be honest. We had a time in the 1980s when residential was the only type of development that was built, and so the mix of communities is not always there in the built environment. That's why it's important that we have that connectivity to go between communities.

1700

I remember also at the University of Ottawa, I often took the 95 and the 97 on the Transitway, and it certainly gave me access to all the services I needed. I did not bring a car up to Ottawa. I often took the train. Sometimes I flew out of Detroit, actually, to get to Ottawa; it was the shortest way. But the 95 and 97, which have now been somewhat supplanted by the LRT, truly provided me an opportunity to access the services, the stores and the various things that I needed while living, including access to recreation.

I truly commend the foresight that the city of Ottawa has put forward in its broader network to develop its transit system. I know there were almost certainly good intentions with the LRT and, undoubtedly, I hope we all learn from their experience. It's truly a shared responsibility to make sure that we are where we need to be.

Municipalities may have goals to accelerate construction. I'll give one example: The city of Windsor

does require developments to pay for their arterial roads. There was a time, though, when the developer didn't want to build. There's an arterial called Wyandotte Street, and it crosses the entirety of the city, really. It doesn't quite reach the eastern limit at the town of Tecumseh, but it comes darn close. For many years, there was a gap because the land developer was just truly not ready to build. Still to this day, the lands are vacant where that gap in Wyandotte Street was.

The city council took the initiative to use its development charge fund and complete that road so that it's unbroken from start to finish, with one small block in the east still remaining. Having that ability to be nimble, have access to funding and to be able to not only assess from our existing financing methods but also have the municipalities be able to collect as well through the station fee is something that I know will turn the corner and ensure that we're not always playing catch up on infrastructure.

The other part of the bill spoke to the cross-border connectivity of the systems, and the city of Toronto had requested that they be given this permission. Transit disputes between jurisdictions are pretty common. I mentioned Tecumseh and Windsor; Windsor didn't want Tecumseh operating in the city. There is a connection point at Tecumseh Mall; they had to go to the transportation board to get that. But in an ideal world, we would all work together, Speaker, and we would put transportation and opportunity front of mind, but sometimes life is not like that. This paves the way for an opportunity to open the discussion between the city of Toronto and its neighbouring municipalities to consider the cross-border transportation options so that someone doesn't reach a barrier or a wall that's unnecessary at the municipal limit. There are many people who would like to go in both directions to visit, to shop, to see family. This is an essential part of life, connectivity.

Years ago, I had the chance to go to Ghana and Burkina Faso—no public transit to be had in either of those countries that I could tell. But everyone had a cellphone—actually, multiple cellphones. The reason why they had those cellphones is because it was the only way they could talk to their families. Cellphone coverage was so expensive because each network had high roaming charges. But that phone is a lifeline. We're blessed that we don't have that in Canada, that we have the opportunity to actually find a way to go see our families. They are often expensive, but there are methods to do that here that we can leverage.

I look to the interoperability of systems in different municipalities. In York region, the Viva system is one that—honestly, routes have come and gone, but it's had a number of operators. It demonstrates you don't really need a consolidated operator within a given network.

Looking at Metrolinx and the fare integration that has already been attempted, really, that's going to be a game-changer. As I mentioned, in Windsor–Tecumseh, you still have to pay several fares when you hit the municipal border—or, actually, at the last stop. You get off, and the transfer is not recognized, and that's unfortunate. I'd love

to see a consistent fare to encourage public transit and to ensure that we have the opportunity to go access what we need to have a great life here in Ontario and to make those journeys as seamless as possible and as hassle-free as possible.

I'll conclude by going back to my time in Ottawa: The STO, which is from the province of Quebec, operates somewhat in the city of Ottawa, with a transfer station at Eaton Centre—or the Rideau Centre, rather. There was Eaton's there, but no longer. Now it's Simons. We also have that in Windsor-Detroit. We have the tunnel bus that crosses into the United States. It opens up a world for those that cannot afford a car to go see pro sports, go see the fabulous Detroit Institute of Arts and the different amenities. The architecture there is phenomenal. It's such a quality of life improvement for us in Windsor and Essex county to have access like that, but it's made possible because of the investments in infrastructure. So this bill provides the opportunity for that investment, to capitalize those projects and making sure that the services can exist, that we're not always playing catch-up, as many municipalities have experienced.

I'll conclude there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): We're going to move to the member from Sudbury for questions.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you as well to the member for Windsor-Tecumseh. I had a question, and it relates to the member for Ottawa Centre, in his debate. Schedule 1 really looks like it's going to interfere with collective bargaining rights. There's been a history with the Conservative government bypassing collective bargaining rights and it costing the taxpayers a lot of money. Bill 28 is a perfect example. Bill 124 is another good example where the government is just spending a countless amount of money fighting these battles, often losing these battles. Knowing that there's a clause in ATU's collective agreement that might allow for this anyway, doesn't it make sense to the member to remove schedule 1 so we don't have the taxpayers paying this needless battle?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member for Sudbury for his question. I will add, doing finance committee, I was so pleased to visit your lovely city. I really had a great opportunity to be there and appreciate that you were there, supporting the different organizations of your community.

Really, the TTC and the ATU are the parties to that collective agreement, and I understand that there are ongoing discussions, given that the TTC did make the request for this cross-border service. So, implementation details are a necessary next step, but the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is not a part of those discussions between the TTC and ATU, so the city of Toronto might be able to better answer your question on that.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, member from Windsor-Tecumseh, for that wonderful presentation. He spoke from the heart because he came from the municipal world. Thank you for sharing your Windsor experience

and how we can improve transit, and the transit-oriented communities we can build in this wonderful province.

I have to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and also the Minister of Transportation for their wonderful vision, and our Premier for bringing this transit-oriented development, building transit-oriented communities across the province.

My question to the member: Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the quality of life for all walks of life of Ontarians. So please explain, how will the station contribution fee enable transit and building more houses in the province?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you very much to the member for Markham-Thornhill. I look forward to visiting your beautiful community, too, in the near future.

Truly, we know that building high-density communities around transit has always been the goal of the transit-oriented communities movement. I know I witnessed it in my many discussions, being a member of the engineering staff of the city, with the planning staff of the city. By expanding the design and construction of these new stations, that station contribution fee can help the province meet its goal of building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031.

1710

But we don't want the new fee to slow down new housing development, so this tool will include a requirement that municipalities demonstrate an offset to the costs, and this requirement will be outlined in the subsequent regulations for this bill.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for his comments today.

The section of this bill that causes me a lot of concern is schedule 2, which downloads the cost of building the GO Transit stations onto municipalities. The former Conservative government downloaded the cost of roads and bridges and housing onto municipalities, which has pushed municipalities almost to the brink of bankruptcy in many cases and caused this infrastructure to decline over the last 25 years. Bill 23 was a download of a billion dollars a year onto municipal governments.

Why is this government now going to download the cost of GO Transit stations, which is under provincial jurisdiction? Why are you downloading that onto municipalities?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, member, for your question. I definitely don't see it that way. This fee is a voluntary charge by the municipality to help it achieve its specific goal. If it wants the station built sooner, the capital will be there to do so.

The reason why this tool is to be made available is really to expedite the process to build new stations. When it's not used, the province continues to fund the way it funds today: It uses the market approach to develop new stations. But ultimately, that takes time, and just as in my example of Wyandotte, you have to wait for the development to happen before you see the service. This is the kind

of thing that maybe the service needs to be brought in ahead of time.

So it's a completely voluntary tool, one that the province will not allow to be used unless the municipality can demonstrate its financial capacity to do it using the station contribution fee approach and, certainly, the municipalities can benefit from the regional connections that this opportunity brings forward.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Earlier today, the new Associate Minister of Transportation spoke, and I do want to officially congratulate him on his new role. Today, he spoke so eloquently about my riding, because in the town of Aurora, we have amazing things going on with our transit, specifically with the GO train. I think we are a prime example of the investment that's happening in that station and how all of my constituents in Newmarket and in Aurora are going to benefit, and even further out. I say all of that because I have constituents who do call in and send emails. They're so excited. They can't wait for that two-way GO all day long to Aurora.

All of that to say, my question to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh is, why are we trying to pass this legislation, and why now?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her question. Coming from the municipal world, that funding piece has always been paramount. Where's the money to do the things that we want to do?

Really, this proposed legislation is in response to requests from the municipalities locally for a new optional funding tool that truly enables them to raise the revenues needed to build the much-needed transit and housing. This tool, the station contribution fee, allows municipalities to fund the design and construction of new GO stations and recover those costs over time as transit-oriented communities are built around these future stations. Some municipalities do that for stormwater retention ponds, for example, or for oversizing of sewers. They want that development, and so they're willing to play the banker, so to speak, to make sure that happens. It really does speed up the construction of these GO Transit stations, and it creates opportunities for mixed-use communities around those stations. So by expediting the design and construction of these new stations, the station contribution fee can help the province meet its goal of building 1.5 million homes, at least, by 2031.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, because I was sitting there and I had to, but it was good. And you had such empathy for municipalities. I was like, "Okay, so this guy understands the situation that municipalities are in." And yet, with this new station contribution fee, the municipality must first complete a background study, meeting prescribed requirements. They can only do this with the consent of the minister. The station contribution fee is payable upon receiving a building permit, so there's a little red tape mixed

in here. A transit-station-charge bylaw is not appealable to the Ontario Land Tribunal, unlike development charge bylaws. So you're putting the responsibility onto an already stressed municipal level. This actually has the great potential to slow down transit in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: No, it's a tool in the tool box to ensure that municipalities can take the actions they feel are needed to take care of the people they represent. Thank you for the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): And that is all the time we have for questions and answers.

Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very glad to be able to take my place in this Legislature for the first time since the summer session. And while there is a lot to talk about, I am pleased to stand to discuss a bill that we've only had in front of us for a couple of days.

So I know that the government is eagerly wondering, will we or won't we support it? But we do have questions for this government, and we're still working with the folks out in the community to have a better understanding of what lies beneath, so to speak.

What we have here is Bill 131, which is the Transportation for the Future Act, and it has two schedules. The first one would make changes to the City of Toronto Act, and it would allow for transit service integration between the TTC and other local transit agencies but may affect provisions in collective agreements. We have questions around that, and we are working with partners in the community and want to make sure that while we're talking about fare integration—and I think this Legislature has been talking about fare integration for decades—there's an opportunity to do things well, and this government seems to never take the opportunity to do things well. They do things fast or they do things in ways that I would be called unparliamentary if I were to identify them, but not often well. So we would like to be reassured by this government that they have the best of intentions when it comes to the unions and respecting collective agreements.

Schedule 1 of the bill re-enacts an unproclaimed schedule 1 of Bill 2, which is the Plan to Build Act, which would allow the Toronto Transit Commission, or TTC, to enter into service integration agreements with neighbouring transit agencies. It adds a new provision that clarifies that these agreements do not constitute contracting out for the purposes of that collective agreement.

When it comes fare integration, I had a really—oh, here it is. This is a piece from not too long ago, March 2023. It says: "Is It Finally Time for Transit-Fare Integration in the GTA?" This is a piece by John Michael McGrath. I'm just going to read this one section:

"Take transit-fare integration, the notion of allowing transit passengers to pay a single fare when they get on a bus in, say, York region, move onto a GO train, and then board a TTC subway. The Hansard at the Ontario Legislature says that the words 'fare integration' were first uttered by an MPP in 1986—though, even then, it was a member saying, 'This has been discussed on and off for the past 15

years or more,' so we can say with some confidence that it's an idea that MPPs have been talking about for about a half-century."

So, just a little bit of background.

I think any one of us who meets with folks in their community, anybody who rides public transit, we have heard from them loudly and clearly that they just want to get to where they're going, that the cost can be prohibitive. We've talked to students, we've talked to workers, and we know that it doesn't matter to them, as we have heard, what colour the vehicle is; they just want to go where they need to go—not necessarily GO, but TTC where they need to TTC.

1720

We do encourage the government—and as we've worked with TTC riders and various other groups, there is a right way to move forward with this. We have to respect collective agreements. Of course, we support transit fare and service integration, but the impact of schedule 1 on existing collective agreements is unclear. I'm going to hazard a guess here: I can imagine that the union would regard amendments to the City of Toronto Act and contracting out language in ATU 113's collective agreements as a pretty definite move. You know, is that an attack on collective bargaining rights and their charter rights? Is the province trying to sidestep workers as a partner in ironing out how transit service agreements can be integrated without diminishing TTC working conditions or TTC service standards?

Looking forward to answers, and I don't do well with the government standard, "Just trust us." We would like a little more to work with there because these are issues that need to be sorted out at the bargaining table. It's my understanding that this is a change that was sought by John Tory. That's fine. Every idea has an origin story. But the future—as you have named this bill the future of transportation, let's do things well.

Also, ATU 113 already has a provision of their collective agreement that allows the TTC to negotiate service integration agreements with other transit authorities, provided reciprocity of service standards are maintained. There was an arbiter's ruling that confirmed this union right. There's room for discussion and pilot projects, as my colleague—where are you from? Ottawa Centre; so sorry; my colleague from behind me—just gave an important one-hour speech on this and he laid this out, you know, that there is room for the pilot projects. I hope that the government is going to put our concerns to rest here today.

I'm going to move on, though, to schedule 2 because schedule 2 is of particular interest to me, and I know that I'm among seven elected MPPs that represent the Durham region and that all of us have an interest in public transit, transportation challenges across our interconnected communities and the issue of the Bowmanville GO extension. That is a long-standing issue.

What I would be glad to do is take us back in time a little bit. In fact, here is an article from September 25. What's today?

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The 27th. So, you're going to think, "Oh, that's a recent article," except that it's from September 25, 2009, and it's entitled "Let's Get GO-ing on Train Extension into Clarington." This piece by the Oshawa This Week 14 years ago says, "The extension comes with a \$500-million to \$600-million price tag, but it's a timely initiative that dovetails perfectly with increased Durham growth and the need to reduce congestion, smog and greenhouse gas emissions caused by commuting vehicle traffic." It goes on to say that the then-Premier Dalton McGuinty—we remember him—was "ensuring construction starts as planned, by 2011." So, this is a project that has been waiting to happen for a long time and it has not—well, it's 2023 and we still don't have it.

Another piece from June 2016: "The GO train is finally being extended to Bowmanville." This is when then-Premier Wynne announces GO train extension to Bowmanville, and there's a flashy picture here that says, "Future site of the Bowmanville GO train station," and I remember when those billboards went up. It says, "The GO train is finally being extended to Bowmanville. Premier Kathleen Wynne made the announcement on Monday morning alongside Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca"—I've heard of him—"Durham MPP Granville Anderson, Clarington mayor Adrian Foster and Durham regional chair Roger Anderson."

Mayor Foster said, "It has been an exceptionally long journey. There are newspaper articles that go back to the early 1900s about Bowmanville being excited about a train to Toronto. We've had public consultations on what stations might look like, we've known where the stations are going. It has been years and years and years of work."

Again, that's a piece from 2016. Speaker, I tell you that to tell you this: The folks in Durham region are looking forward to this train. And since I've been elected, which was now nine years ago, it has been right around the corner. As it has evolved and as the plans have evolved, it has taken more shape. In fact, I've got a pretty snazzy map here that shows the four proposed stations. Where the existing Oshawa GO station is, that won't be one of the four, but it's going to be Thornton's Corners East station, Ritson Road station, Courtice station and Bowmanville station. And those four stations are pretty exciting and the people in this community are eager to have this happen. The business plan lays out peak and off-peak and all of that. We're looking forward to this happening.

I'm not here to rain on that parade at all. But, as the opposition critic, I have been eagerly chasing the details, and I will say to you that it was a fascinating meeting that I had had with the Metrolinx folks just in June. When I talked to the folks from Metrolinx in June, I said—well, I'm paraphrasing—"In the budget, there's money for the rail. The government has budgeted it; they're going to build the train. We're going to have rails." And then at the meeting with Metrolinx, when I said, "Tell me more about these four stations," they were like, "Everything is on the table." And if I heard that once, I heard it half a dozen times. Because at that point in June—and I understand things can change—they could tell me that the four new

stations would be delivered through transit-oriented communities programs; that they were going to be owned and operated by Metrolinx; that the station would reflect a GO station; the naming rights would be a separate program, but they were talking about investment from third parties.

And so at that point, I understood from them that these stations will be integrated into the community, into the neighbourhood, making sure that folks walking there or cycling or wanting to shop in the area—that all these things were factored in. Well, this sounds fine. This sounds good. But where would the money come from? And that was the question at the time. The station would function as a GO station, but as they had told me, everything was on the table in terms of what it could be and who was going to pay for it and all of that. So if there wasn't a developer or if there wasn't an investor eager to invest in that location—and, you know what? Those four spots along that line? Exciting and interesting spots. But if they didn't have investors—and back in June, they didn't have anything committed for those four stations; there wasn't a magic unicorn investor who said, "I'm going to pay for these." There still isn't, is my understanding.

I was worried because the funding had not been secured for any of the stations. They're looking for third-party investors; they said that the conversations were ongoing and that funding is separate for the line, that in the 2022 budget, Metrolinx had received stage 2 Treasury Board approval at that point. Okay.

So I went from that conversation into estimates. I see that the Minister of Infrastructure is here. She remembers estimates, when we were at the committee before the summer intersession, the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, and I had the distinct pleasure of being able to grill both ministers—well, I say "grill." Some of it was grilling and some of it was conversational. But I was able to get questions on the record about the government's numbers, both to the Minister of Infrastructure and the then Minister of Transportation. I'm going to just focus on that one section since we're talking about the stations.

1730

At estimates, I took the last 30 seconds that I had and I asked the then Minister of Transportation—and I'll just read from Hansard here: "I had a conversation with Metrolinx about the Bowmanville GO extension, because there's no money for stations whatsoever on that line, and they're working with partners and hoping that they have the investment to build the stations. Will the province help us out if they can't find that magical investor to build all the stations? Will the province put in a platform and a bridge or whatever would make it safe so folks can get off the train if there's no station money?"

The then Minister of Transportation assured me, "Our Transit-Oriented Communities Program and our development program is a big part, but we will make sure that" they "can get on and off the train."

I was relieved, Speaker. It's unusual and so it seems a bit absurd, but governments, historically, when they're building public-provincial infrastructure for folks, pay for

it because they have a lot of revenue tools, and that's what they do. They provide what is needed in communities.

When you have a train that has been promised, people assume stations come included, but there's a little asterisk that's like, "Buy the battery separately as well as the stations," and that was not part of the original deal—so, surprise.

Anyway, what we have here is, the government has budgeted the train line. The stations come separately—assemble yourself. You could have communities—and I don't know how it is in the Kitchener and Waterloo area, but I know you guys are excited about GO trains. If you have a small or developing community or a place that maybe you don't have that excited investor yet, who builds the station? Well, here we have this bill. We have this bill that is, as we've heard from the government, giving tools to municipalities so that, basically, they can pay for the stations, but they can recover, I hope, all of it, and that means that the stations get built faster.

My question is, how come you're not paying for it and building it? This seems like a pretty significant policy shift, right? You used to build provincial infrastructure; now it's like, "Just kidding. Pay for it yourself."

Plan A would be the government pays for our public infrastructure, and builds it. I mean, we pay for it, but they make sure that it gets built. They put the money in, build it. I guess plan B, where municipalities have a tool to ensure that the stations get built, is better than not having stations, but I'm going to stick to: The best solution would be if they didn't have to pay for it. We know municipalities are strapped. I know that Durham region—I was at the annual business excellence awards for the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce last night and was glad to see folks from the economic development part of the region, the regional chair. I know that Durham is relieved that they're going to have their stations, that there is a mechanism for them to have stations—well, me too. We want stations. We don't just want the rail to go all the way to Bowmanville and back, where people wave at where they want to get off and just jump.

This is something that I know the region is relieved that there is an opportunity for those stations to all happen at the same time, and for that, I am glad. I know that the government has been working with Durham region and hopefully with others who are excited about GO trains to ensure that these stations happen, but this is totally unusual. This is not how the province has historically gotten things done or built things. This is a whole new policy shift, and I'm wondering if it is a whole new policy shift and if you're actually going to own up to that, that you're not building infrastructure anymore.

Speaker, I can't believe that I'm almost out of time, although really does it surprise any of us? Okay, I will wrap it up a little bit.

This bill is called the Transportation for the Future Act, and I think as many members are in this room, there would be that many thoughts and ideas about what transportation could look like in the future, what it might look like in the future, how we plan for that, how we're excited about that,

how we're fearful of that—all of those things. But one of the things that I would highlight is that, today, Phil Verster, the CEO of Metrolinx, dropped a bomb on us again that, folks, there is no deadline for the Eglinton Crosstown. There's no deadline for completion of the Eglinton Crosstown. Folks in that community are so fed up. It's over three years late, over a billion dollars over budget, and Metrolinx—anybody I have talked to in the engineering world or the construction world are so fed up with dealing with some of the folks at Metrolinx.

The government, MTO and IO and all those folks: You should probably do a little in-house talking to those folks, because when the engineers don't have access to Metrolinx, we all have a problem.

When you have a CEO whose salary went from \$200,000 to \$1 million a year, and he's not delivering? I don't know who he's friends with and I don't know, you know, whatever—all that stuff. I don't know what measurables and what deliverables you are using to keep him.

I know that the NDP today, in the wake of that announcement, have called for the government to get rid of him. So look at why you would keep him. If you're not willing to listen to us and you're not willing to fire Mr. Verster, figure out why on earth you would keep him, and hold him to some kind of account.

Mr. Mike Harris: Wow, tell us how you really feel.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, no, that is so how I really feel. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, that's how I feel. When I'm dealing with folks in the construction industry and the engineering world who can't—it's one of the worst agencies for them to deal with. That's a problem for this province.

So, transportation for the future: Let's do things in the right way. I will leave it there and take questions. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: One of the things that we're dealing with right now in Waterloo region, specifically in the community of Breslau, is something that you touched on: looking at ways to kind of shape thinking and create a new station in that area. It's something that our community is really looking forward to. It's something that I've been working on for quite some time. Even the member for Waterloo, I know, has—and I'll give you some credit where credit is due; it's okay. You banged the drum loudly, and we appreciate that. It's something that's coming, but it's been slow. There's been a lot of talk as to why that is.

But I think something that's been really important that we've done as a government is we've tried to bring everybody together to have a little bit of skin in the game. I think that that is really the way of the future and looking at how we're going to keep people accountable. Obviously we've got Metrolinx, we've got the province, we've got the upper-tier and lower-tier municipality involved and some of the developers in the region that are very keen on seeing this get done.

I'd just like to hear some more of your thoughts—obviously, Bowmanville, we've got the GO train coming

out there—and just kind of what you're hearing from your community and how you think that's playing out.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, and I hope that we actually have more of a chance for back and forth because I have lots of thoughts on what you just said. I do recall, actually, that we had both been sitting at estimates and had this conversation about Breslau, about Oshawa and the areas along the Bowmanville GO extension, because every community sees its growth and sees its need and wants to ensure that they have strong public transit that they could actually count on being built, and not just the rail but also the stations.

So, a little bit of skin in the game: I take your point. But at the same time, when you have Bill 23, that withdrew a lot of the skin in the game, withdrew revenue from municipalities—I know this isn't downloading per se, but it feels like it. It is giving them another thing that they have to pay for, should they so choose. But if they don't choose to, what happens? Can Breslau afford to build this station? What does it look like if they can't?

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Oshawa for her comments. She started out by saying that it's not just that the government does something, but that they do it well. We have seen a lot of examples from this government where things have not gone well, and I wanted to share the experience of London with the GO Transit pilot that was announced two years ago by Metrolinx.

There was going to be a GO train connecting London to Toronto. Now unfortunately, that train left London in the wee hours of the morning. It spent four hours on a meandering route to get to Toronto. And after two years—guess what, Speaker?—Metrolinx determined that the pilot showed that it wasn't viable to have this service because people weren't taking that four-hour option to Toronto.

1740

So I want to ask the member, is there anything in this bill that would address the transportation needs of communities like London and southwestern Ontario?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That's a good question. Frankly, I'm not entirely sure, because this second schedule of the bill that lays out basically a fairly drastic policy shift for the government about who pays for provincial public transportation infrastructure is going to change things for municipalities. Will they factor that into their plan and save up all of their ducats for one day they could build a station too? I don't know. I think a lot of places are looking to the government for leadership but also for that commitment to help them as they are growing communities with growing and changing infrastructure needs. This would be a sign to them that the government doesn't seem to be in the game of building public transportation anymore. And I would love clarity—because I'm not just trying to scare people, but it does seem like a pretty significant policy shift, so I don't know what this says to London.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The province will be posting legislation to the regulatory registry for public comment. Also, if the station contribution fee is approved, the Ministry of Infrastructure will conduct broader engagement with the development community to inform the design of regulations and implementation. This being the case, my question to the member from Oshawa: Would you not agree that these are great, transparent moves to ensure that this tool is used effectively?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don't know, because I don't know what effective use of this tool is going to look like and I don't know that municipalities do either. It's too soon to tell; it's been a couple of days. I know that the government has been connecting with Durham region, for example, and, I'm sure, some of the others. But for those who have not been in those conversations, I think they're going to look at this with interest and wonder what it will mean for them. So I don't know.

But when the government is suggesting, "Don't worry, there's going to be a consultation period," that means nothing to me, because your consultation periods are often—you take information in, and then that's the end of it. So if it doesn't shape what you do—and when I hear from engineers that they weigh in and that they give opinions and then the government goes ahead with things anyway and says, "Thanks for your comments, but we're doing it anyway," I don't have faith at all. Prove me wrong, though, please.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: To my friend from Oshawa, thank you for those remarks. I wanted to follow up on something given the skepticism you expressed and others have expressed about Metrolinx's capacity to build transit. It would seem this bill itself, as I mentioned earlier in debate, is a vote of non-confidence in Metrolinx if we're asking municipalities to take on this risk burden.

I also note, from the Auditor General's 2020 report on the Eglinton Crosstown, my friend, that Metrolinx was continuing to work with an agency, Crosslinx, despite the fact that Crosslinx has over 380 rejected designs. They were continuing to build in a capacity called "building at risk," which meant they were building with designs that had not been properly approved by people required to scrutinize them.

So, my friend from Oshawa, what the heck is going on at Metrolinx?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Perhaps we could ask one of the 59 vice-presidents or the 19 C-suite executives. We can't ask any of the engineers, because there are zero. There are none of them on staff that they consult with, or so I have been told. When you take it to the other side and you talk, though, to the engineering firms and groups out there, they're very worried about things in the province, and they have a safety obligation, but it would seem that they are shouting into an abyss. I don't know how it's being received on the government side, how Metrolinx is taking it or not. Reputationally speaking, Metrolinx has, unfortunately, taken a bit of a hit since Mr. Verster joined

them, and maybe it's not just him, but I think that they've got some proving to do to make sure that they can indeed be trusted to build. But when the government doesn't fund them either, when the government doesn't give them money for stations and says, "Figure out a plan to bring money in, but we're not going to pay for stations," we're in a mess that the government can't just wash its hands of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Final question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I really do appreciate the comments by the member from Oshawa. I mean, we're really at a tipping point here with Metrolinx. They've abandoned their original mandate. They are essentially leaderless. Phil Verster once told me in a briefing that, "Catherine, trains run on tracks." I mean, that's the level that we're working with here. What do you think is moving forward for Metrolinx?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Sorry, you took me down an interesting rabbit hole in my mind here, because I remember being at an infrastructure dinner when the former Minister of Infrastructure gave a speech, and I went over to talk to Mr. Verster and he literally ran away from me.

Your question—I don't remember it. Are we at a tipping point? Where do we go from here? Something like that? I don't know. I would have thought that with a bill called Transportation for the Future Act—I mean, it's fine that there are these two pieces that we're debating. I look forward, though, to both this Minister of Infrastructure and the new Minister of Transportation hopefully working with not just Metrolinx but with other agencies and partners to re-up some of the confidence and actually build the transportation infrastructure that is needed in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill 131. I do want to congratulate the member from Oshawa, because it was such a good metaphor: "shouting into the abyss." I don't think I will ever forget that. I haven't heard that before; I probably should have. Let's hope I'm not doing that right now.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Fifteen years, you did that.

Mr. John Fraser: Sometimes it feels that way, folks. Sometimes it feels that way. I'll tell you about my inaugural speech one day. Anyhow—even my own side wasn't listening.

Here's the thing: Schedule 1? Yes, it makes sense. Good idea; I can support it. Schedule 2? It's kind of hard to understand why we're collecting development charges for provincial infrastructure. GO trains, GO Transit is provincial. I don't know when we started collecting DCs for stuff that we fund here as a government. That's another issue. So that's one issue with schedule 2.

The second one is collecting development charges for infrastructure that we pay for. The simplest way is to just build the station, pay the money, like we do with the other stations. So something has changed.

Number two: development charges. I have this vague recollection—I don't know if anybody can help me. In Bill

23, we eliminated development charges because we said, “You know what? This is making it hard for people these days. It’s making it harder for them to buy a house. It’s making it harder for them to rent. We can’t get stuff built, so we’ve got to eliminate DCs.” Now we’re putting them back on. At a time when people are just struggling to pay the bills, we’re making housing more expensive by adding DCs. I don’t understand. I think they call it cognitive dissonance. It doesn’t make sense. They don’t add up.

In the first place, to compare the DCs, is that with Bill 23, if we thought the DCs were actually going to be saved on the cost—if anybody here thought that was actually going to happen and it was going to make things more affordable, no, it wasn’t. I know builders. We all know builders. The DCs will go down, but it’s not going to change the price of the house. They’re just going to gobble that up. They’ve got space. That’s what’s going to happen. We all know that. Bill 23 actually removing those DCs was more about doing something for the development community and the people who were building the houses than the people who were owning the houses or renting the houses.

1750

Then you would say, “Okay, now that we’re collecting DCs to build this provincial infrastructure, who is it benefiting?” Developers again, right? If they get a station built below the thing, they can go up 30 storeys. Who’s going to make the money? Developers. I’m not against people making money, but right now, we’ve got a problem with people not having enough money to be able to afford living.

The other piece is you won’t allow cities to collect DCs for things like, oh, fire stations, community centres, pools, kids’ playgrounds, but you will let them collect money for something that we pay for here. It just doesn’t make sense to me. It doesn’t sound like this is a decision that’s benefiting everyday Ontarians. It makes it hard to support.

I’m not going to support DCs going on the price of rental housing or the price of a house in my community—it’s not going to happen in my community, because I don’t have GO Transit, but in other communities in Ontario—because that’s going to make it harder for people. We’re actually asking cities to collect money for stuff that we already pay for. It’s just that we don’t seem to want to pay for it anymore.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It’s a tool, John.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, and the tool benefits us and benefits the developers. But the poor person who’s buying the house or renting the house, well, they’re out of luck—and I will lose the front word on the beginning of that sentence.

That’s what this looks like to me. It sounds good. It sounds great—and I’m sure cities are excited about it, because they will get an uplift, because they will get more property taxes when, instead of being 10 storeys, it goes 30 storeys. They will be able to up their tax base over 10 or 15 years, we’ll give it—that’s not going to help the people who can’t pay their bills right now. I thought the

most important thing before us was the people who can’t pay the bills and afford life right now. That’s why it makes this bill hard to support.

Schedule 1? Excellent, A+. Schedule 2? Not so good, D-.

My suggestion: Take out schedule 2. Pay for the infrastructure like we always have for GO, and it will make life affordable for everyday Ontarians who are connected by GO Transit.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I’m just curious; the member opposite has sat in this House as government. And if he says it’s so easy to just go ahead and build these types of transit stations, why did they consistently let GO Transit, consistently let TTC crumble and put us into a position now where we’re trying to pick up the pieces?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, if you take a look at the investments in public transit, if you look at Ottawa and Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo and here, they didn’t magically appear in 2018. I know you guys would be there to cut the ribbon, just like Mackenzie hospital: “Yes, it started before, but it’s ours now. We’re going to cut the ribbon.”

GO Transit is provincial infrastructure. It should be paid for by the province, not by the guy renting the house or the woman buying a condo. That’s my point. I think that’s fair. I think you’re concerned about affordability too, and this part of the bill is going to make it—well, maybe not for your community, but for the communities around Toronto, it’s going to make it more expensive.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Ottawa South, I think that we are aligned on some of the challenges that are associated with schedule 2 and this new station contribution fee. There is an acknowledgement, I think, from the member that municipalities are hurting right now. There’s been a number of downloads from the provincial government at the local level. Their municipal budget cycles this year are going to be very tense. Some are looking at a double-digit—14%—property tax increase just to pay for the basics, just to hold the line.

So if GO expansion now depends on local funding, then communities that need transit but can’t attract private investment for new development may be sent to the back of the line. Do you think that this bill will actually streamline and fast-track transit, or will it slow it down with all of the red tape and the hurdles that the government—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I think it will buy the government time from having to invest in GO Transit stations while municipalities struggle to get that done through DCs. But I think the thing that sticks with me is it’s not making life any more affordable. It’s making it more expensive. And the message is, “Yes, if you want to build a GO station, we’ll let you collect DCs. But if you need a fire station in that new community? Not so much. Or, if you need a

playground for kids, just a little playground? No, you're not going to do that. Or a sports field? Or a library? No, you can't do that. But for something that we paid for, you can collect money." Does it make sense? I don't think so.

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Just to be very clear to the member opposite: DCs do exist and municipalities today continue to collect them to be able to build critical infrastructure in their municipalities. The member opposite, being in government for so long, I would assume recognizes the fact that development charges actually cannot pay for provincial infrastructure and that is not permitted.

And so, therefore, when we have so many municipalities in the greater Golden Horseshoe who are so extremely eager to provide more transit options for their constituents, are you saying that you are opposed to a new voluntary tool that they would have to pass through their council? And are you saying that you are against providing the supply of housing around transit stations?

Mr. John Fraser: What I'm saying is—here's the thing: Who built Oshawa GO? Does anybody know? The province. Hamilton GO? The province. I won't go through all the GO stations. So you tell me one that a municipality has built. It hasn't happened.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Kitchener doesn't have one.

Mr. John Fraser: Kitchener doesn't have one. My point is, you're going about it the wrong way. Yes, we need more transit. Yes, we need more density. But the way you're going about it is not the right way. Build the station; increase the density; pay for it. Don't make the person who's renting that unit pay for it because life is not affordable. That's my point.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): And that is all the time for questions and answers.

Seeing that it is close to 6 o'clock, and there being no private members' public business, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 tomorrow, September 28, 2023.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
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	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	