

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 112B

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 112B

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday
21 November 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi
21 novembre 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

Tuesday 21 November 2023 / Mardi 21 novembre 2023

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman 6369

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Chad's Law (Enforcing Safer Passing), 2023, Bill 152, Mr. Bourgouin / Loi Chad de 2023 (pour des dépassements plus sécuritaires), projet de loi 152, M. Bourgouin

First reading agreed to 6369

Mr. Guy Bourgouin 6369

MOTIONS

Committee sittings

Hon. Michael Parsa 6369

Motion agreed to 6369

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Labour legislation

MPP Jamie West 6369

Nurses

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 6370

Alzheimer's disease

Ms. Laura Smith 6370

Entretien hivernal des routes

M. Guy Bourgouin 6370

Éducation en français

Mme Sandy Shaw 6371

Labour legislation

MPP Jamie West 6371

Labour legislation

Miss Monique Taylor 6371

Labour legislation

Ms. Sandy Shaw 6371

Labour legislation

MPP Jamie West 6372

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, Bill 151, Miss Surma / Loi de 2023 sur l'amélioration de la gestion des biens immeubles, projet de loi 151, Mlle Surma

Hon. Kinga Surma 6372

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu 6376

Ms. Jennifer K. French 6379

Ms. Laura Smith 6379

Ms. Jennifer K. French 6380

Mr. Graham McGregor 6380

Mr. John Vanthof 6380

Ms. Laura Smith 6381

Ms. Jennifer K. French 6381

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu 6390

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 6390

Mr. Graham McGregor 6390

Ms. Doly Begum 6391

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner 6391

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto 6391

Mr. Guy Bourgouin 6394

Mr. Graham McGregor 6394

Second reading debate deemed adjourned 6394

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Cost of living

Mr. Stephen Blais 6394

Mr. Lorne Coe 6395

Public transit

MPP Andrea Hazell 6395

Hon. Paul Calandra 6396

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, Bill 151, Miss Surma / Loi de 2023 sur l'amélioration de la gestion des biens immeubles, projet de loi 151, Mlle Surma

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 6397

Ms. Laura Smith 6400

Mr. Jeff Burch 6400

Mr. John Fraser 6400

Mr. Matthew Rae 6401

Ms. Doly Begum 6401

Mr. John Fraser 6401

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon 6401

Mr. John Fraser 6402

Mr. Jeff Burch 6403

Mr. Anthony Leardi 6403

MPP Jamie West 6404

Mr. Anthony Leardi 6404

Ms. Doly Begum 6404

Mr. Sheref Sabawy	6405
MPP Jamie West.....	6407
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho	6407
Ms. Sandy Shaw	6407
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	6407
Miss Monique Taylor	6408
Mr. Billy Pang	6408
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	6408
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	6411
Miss Monique Taylor	6411
Ms. Laura Smith	6411
Ms. Sandy Shaw	6412
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	6412
Ms. Sandy Shaw	6412
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho	6412
Ms. Sandy Shaw	6413
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6413
Miss Monique Taylor	6413
Mr. Will Bouma.....	6414
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6414
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	6414
Ms. Sandy Shaw	6414
Hon. Rob Flack.....	6417
MPP Jamie West.....	6417
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	6417
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	6418
Mr. Will Bouma.....	6418
Mr. Billy Pang	6418
Second reading vote deferred	6420

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 novembre 2023

*Report continued from volume A.
The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd like to take a moment to introduce Rolph Road Elementary School from my riding, who is visiting today, the grade 5 and 6 class—very energetic and curious minds; it was wonderful to see—as well as François Desmarais, who is the director of public affairs Canada from Alstom, who is working on building many of the great transit projects here in our province.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHAD'S LAW (ENFORCING SAFER PASSING), 2023 LOI CHAD DE 2023 (POUR DES DÉPASSEMENTS PLUS SÉCURITAIRES)

Mr. Bourgouin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit passing on a highway painted with double solid yellow lines / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue d'interdire les dépassements sur une voie publique avec une double ligne jaune continue.

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 like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Chad's Law (Enforcing Safer Passing), 2023: Section 148 of the Highway Traffic Act is amended to prohibit passing or attempting to pass another vehicle going in the same direction on a highway if doing so would require the crossing of double solid yellow lines painted on the roadway. Every person who contravenes this prohibition is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of \$400 and three or more demerit points.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Parsa: I move that the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy; the Standing Committee on the Interior; the Standing Com-

mittee on Justice Policy; and the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet during the winter 2023-24 adjournment of the House at the call of the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Parsa has moved that the Standing Committee on Heritage—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: I'm very pleased to read this petition on passing anti-scab labour legislation. I want to note that it was signed by the incoming president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Laura Walton; the vice-president, Jackie Taylor; the secretary-treasurer, Ahmad Gaied; and the outgoing president, Patty Coates, and vice-president, Janice Folk-Dawson.

This is "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, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023”—which will be debated on Thursday.

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Emma for the table.

NURSES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to read this petition on behalf of Christine Johnson.

“For Fair and Equitable Compensation for Nurses.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government has a responsibility to ensure safe and healthy workplaces and workloads for nurses by enhancing nurse staffing and supports across all sectors of the health system;

“Whereas the RN-to-population ratio in Ontario is the lowest in Canada and Ontario would need 24,000 RNs to catch up with the rest of the country;

“Whereas there are over 10,000 registered nurse vacancies in Ontario;

“Whereas nurses are experiencing very high levels of burnout;

“Whereas registered nurses have experienced real wage losses of about 10% over the last decade;

“Whereas the government of Ontario needs to retain and recruit nurses across all sectors of the system to provide quality care for Ontarians;

“Whereas the Ontario government needs to retain and recruit” nurses “to meet their legislative commitment of four hours of daily direct care for long-term-care (LTC) residents;

“Whereas wage inequities across the health system make it particularly difficult to retain and recruit RNs to community care sectors, such as long-term care and home care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement evidence-based recommendations to retain and recruit nurses, including fair and equitable compensation that is competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States.”

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and pass it to page Chloe to deliver to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Laura Smith: I’m proud to rise today to read the following:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease affects over 250,000 people in the province of Ontario;

“Whereas it is estimated that approximately 400,000 individuals will be diagnosed with dementia by” the year “2030;

“Whereas by the year 2050, more than 1.7 million Canadians are expected to be living with dementia, with an average of 685 individuals diagnosed each day;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is not a normal part of aging and is irreversible;

“Whereas 69% of LTC residents are living with dementia;

“Whereas 45% of care partners providing care to people living with dementia exhibit symptoms of distress. This is almost twice the rate compared to care, partners of older adults with health conditions other than dementia, which is only 26%;

“Whereas caregivers of those living with dementia decrease their participation in the economy;

“Whereas upstream investments in dementia, prevention, and care are needed to reduce the strain on capacity and resources;

“Whereas strategies to mitigate stigma and combat ageism should be at the heart of the strategy;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to build on the progress” of “this government ... on building a patient-centred home and community care system.”

1510

I support this petition wholeheartedly. I’ll affix my name and give this to page Peter to bring to the table.

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

M. Guy Bourgoïn: J’ai une pétition intitulée « Pour améliorer l’entretien hivernal des routes du Nord.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Je supporte pleinement cette pétition. Je vais la soussigner et la donner à Angela pour l’amener à la table des greffiers.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: J'ai une pétition intitulée « Soutenez le système d'éducation francophone en Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les enfants francophones ont un droit constitutionnel à une éducation de haute qualité, financée par les fonds publics, dans leur propre langue;

« Attendu que l'augmentation des inscriptions dans le système d'éducation en langue française signifie que plus de 1 000 nouveaux enseignants et enseignantes de langue française sont nécessaires chaque année pour les cinq prochaines années;

« Attendu que les changements apportés au modèle de financement du gouvernement provincial pour la formation des enseignantes et enseignants de langue française signifient que l'Ontario n'en forme que 500 par an;

« Attendu que le nombre de personnes qui enseignent sans certification complète dans le système d'éducation en langue française a augmenté de plus de 450 % au cours de la dernière décennie;

« Nous, soussignées, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de fournir immédiatement le financement demandé par le rapport du groupe de travail sur la pénurie des enseignantes et des enseignants dans le système d'éducation en langue française de l'Ontario et de travailler avec des partenaires pour mettre pleinement en oeuvre les recommandations. »

Je suis tellement en accord avec cette pétition. Je vais la soussigner et la donner à la page Chloe pour mettre sur la table.

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 ... 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" Mike "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, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023."

I support this petition. I'll affix my signature and provide it to Angela for the table.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Miss Monique Taylor: I also have a petition entitled "Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"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 wholeheartedly support this, will affix my name to it and give it to page Shahan to bring to the Clerk.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers' collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the with-

drawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I, of course, support workers in Ontario and I support this petition. I will add my name to it and give it to Harris to take to the table.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: Third time’s a charm.

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 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;

1520

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the” Mike “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, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Emma, again, for the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IMPROVING REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR L’AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION DES BIENS IMMEUBLES

Miss Surma moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux infrastructures.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to Minister Surma for debate.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I’d like to share my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

The first includes proposed changes to our four statutes and the outcome of one bill, so the ability of certain organizations to hold interests in land, buildings and structures is subject to the limits imposed by the new not-yet-in-force section 11.0.1 of the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011.

I am pleased to rise today for the second reading of the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023. If passed, this legislation would serve as the next step in our government’s plan to build a stronger Ontario by providing a more coordinated and strategic approach to managing our province’s real estate portfolio, the largest portfolio in Canada.

Taking a more centralized approach would allow Ontario to manage real estate more efficiently to support the priorities that Ontarians need, like building more housing units, including affordable housing options and long-term-care facilities, faster and more cost-effectively. Streamlining the authority for real estate is part of our government’s plan to improve economic growth and save taxpayer money.

Before summarizing the details and benefits of this proposed legislation, I want to outline how this bill fits into our government's broader plan of building Ontario and how we are continuing to take action to bring this plan to life. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are building a stronger and more prosperous Ontario. From Windsor to Ottawa, Toronto to Thunder Bay and every community in between, our government is making smart, targeted infrastructure investments that are laying the foundation for economic growth and prosperity now and for generations to come.

Building essential infrastructure to keep pace with the demands of a rapidly growing population is more critical than ever. Ontario is the fastest-growing region in North America. In fact, in 2022 alone, Ontario grew by more than 500,000 people, and by 2041, Ontario's population is expected to grow by approximately 30%. In the greater Golden Horseshoe alone, the population is expected to grow by almost one million people every five years over the coming decades, reaching an incredible 15 million by 2051.

This growth is excellent news. More people are moving to our beautiful province to build a better life for themselves and their families. But to ensure our standard of living remains high and that we continue to create good-paying jobs, we must innovate and efficiently manage our infrastructure to ensure it meets both existing and growing demands so that Ontario remains the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

Infrastructure is crucial to supporting the quality of life that all Ontarians deserve. It is the foundation of our success. It brings us together, connecting us to our families, friends, workplaces and schools every single day. When a new road, highway, or transit line is built, we are helping hard-working residents get home to their families safely, conveniently and on time. When new high-speed Internet infrastructure is installed, we give families the opportunity to work and educate their children in their own communities and help support businesses to grow and succeed. When we build hospitals and long-term-care homes, we're ensuring our most vulnerable have access to the care that they deserve. When we invest in new and affordable housing, we're addressing the housing crisis by increasing the housing supply and providing attainable housing options for hard-working Ontarians and their families, while also bringing our government one step closer to meeting its goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Through the proper oversight and management of the province's real estate portfolio, we're ensuring that taxpayer dollars aren't being wasted because of uncoordinated or unregulated real estate decision-making. By modernizing and centralizing Ontario's real estate portfolio, we are opening up more resources for the services and infrastructure that matter most to Ontarians, like building those hospitals, affordable housing options, long-term-care homes, highways and public transit. Simply put, we are making life better for millions of people.

I'm incredibly proud to be a part of a government with a clear plan to build a stronger Ontario and an innovative

strategy to get the job done fast. In fact, we are moving forward with the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history by investing over \$185 billion over the next decade, including \$20.7 billion in years 2023-24, to build roads, highways, transit, hospitals, schools and long-term-care homes to support growing families, businesses and communities across the province. Our investments are laying the foundation for Ontario's economic growth, while supporting critical services for everyone.

But it's not just about bricks and mortar, or steel and glass. And it's not just about large dollar figures or numbers of projects. It's about families. It's about workers and businesses. It's about all of us.

Earlier this month, Minister Bethlenfalvy released Ontario's 2023 fall economic statement. This statement represents our government's responsible, targeted approach that will help us navigate through ongoing economic uncertainty while building the critical infrastructure our growing communities need. Our government understands that Ontario taxpayers cannot, and should not, pay for the infrastructure the province needs alone. We must find new ways to attract trusted Canadian institutional investors to help build essential infrastructure that would otherwise not be feasible, while also ensuring that we reduce the burden on taxpayers.

As part of our plan for building a strong Ontario together, we announced that we are creating the Ontario Infrastructure Bank, a new arm's-length, board-governed agency that will enable public sector pension plans and other trusted institutional investors to further participate in large-scale infrastructure projects across the province. Under our proposal, our government will provide \$3 billion to the Ontario Infrastructure Bank in initial funding to support its ability to invest in critical infrastructure projects in Ontario. The bank's initial investment will support critical projects such as building new long-term-care homes, energy infrastructure, affordable housing, municipal and community infrastructure and an expanded transportation network.

The mandate of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank includes support for infrastructure projects for Indigenous communities that advance community and economic well-being. Our efforts will accelerate the development and completion of essential projects, addressing the most pressing needs.

1530

Our government also continues to advance major infrastructure projects across the province using public-private partnerships. This is another way we employ innovative approaches, such as progressive models, to provide more collaborative project planning and consultation.

To adapt to the changes in the construction sector and market, we continue to work with key stakeholders to identify solutions to today's challenges, such as staging major infrastructure projects that align with market capacity to build the province's assets, including highways, public transit and hospitals. Projects like the opening of 18 kilometres of newly expanded lanes on Highway 401 from the Credit River in Mississauga to Regional Road 25 in

Milton last year, the busiest highway in North America, demonstrate the success of our partnerships with industry to build a transportation system that improves economic productivity by getting goods moving and gets people where they need to be faster.

Our well-rounded strategy will attract investments while addressing critical infrastructure needs, fostering economic growth, and promoting responsible fiscal management.

Madam Speaker, to achieve our ambitious goals, we must continue to think outside of the box. This includes implementing new ways to better maintain and manage government real estate, to help us keep pace with the growing demands placed upon the province's infrastructure.

Many people may not realize this, but Ontario's general real estate portfolio is the largest portfolio in Canada and one of the largest in North America. This portfolio consists of 43 million rentable square feet of space. It also consists of over 4,300 buildings and structures, buildings that are used every day, like offices, courthouses, laboratories, detention centres and more.

Despite the great importance of this resource, previous governments refused to take action to implement a centralized approach to managing and making decisions about real estate, which ultimately came at the cost to taxpayers. Under their watch, existing legislation and regulations left ministries and organizations to make their own real estate decisions independently. Different processes and protocols meant real estate decisions and transactions were being made without a strategic, holistic approach.

Madam Speaker, our government has seized the opportunity to deliver Ontario's real estate portfolio more efficiently by creating a framework for centralizing certain real estate authorities and decision-making processes. This is part of our promise to make life better for Ontarians by working harder, smarter and more efficiently.

As many of you know, government surplus properties fall under our purview. My ministry, in partnership with Infrastructure Ontario, has been developing a process to review and evaluate government surplus properties. We want to make sure that lands that are no longer required by government are put into good use. We want those lands to be used for government priorities like building more homes, including affordable housing; long-term care; and economic development opportunities. By doing so, we're not only addressing a need, we are also generating revenues and reducing liabilities.

To ensure government's real estate assets are maintained and can continue to operate, our ministry has invested an additional \$75 million for capital repairs along with \$4 million for accessibility improvements to address funding gaps. We are also continuing to optimize and centralize the provincial office real estate portfolio, which supports the workplaces of employees of the Ontario public service and associated organizations. We are supporting new ways of working in the office and designing modern workplaces to unlock and increase the value of

government real estate assets. This includes projects in Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa to optimize government-owned office space and minimize third-party leased office space across the province. These projects will drive workplace transformation and reduce costs to improve the effectiveness of the Ontario public service and associated organizations. Our efforts have led to a reduction of over 400,000 rentable square feet across the government's real estate portfolio.

Meanwhile, our Community Jobs Initiative will help distribute a greater portion of the provincial agency workforce by relocating agencies from Toronto to lower-cost communities. As part of this initiative, our government recently announced the new location of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's head office in London, Ontario. The relocation will result in \$70 million in annual savings for the WSIB, reducing costs by 40% compared to its current head office in Toronto. The new office will open its doors in 2025 with at least 500 workers and is expected to generate at least 2,000 jobs in the London area over the next five years.

Looking ahead, the Community Jobs Initiative will continue to help reduce rental costs while fostering economic growth in communities outside of Toronto, and it will allow us to tap into a talented, first-rate workforce that can live and work in their communities. We continue working with oversight ministries to explore other opportunities to relocate other agency offices under this initiative.

Earlier this year, this Legislature also passed the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, which would allow the province to improve real estate management, once proclaimed into force, and bring efficiency changes to the class environmental assessment process. The passage of the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, represents the initial framework of our government's efforts to streamline the authority for real estate.

If passed, these amendments would establish an initial framework to remove and/or modify the real estate authority of certain organizations and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the authority over real estate.

It is only with the initial framework set out in the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023, that we are able to propose some of the changes we are here for today through the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023. The proposed amendments, if passed, would centralize or realign the real estate authority of 10 provincial organizations and one proposed organization, allowing the government to act as one holistic organization to manage real estate while, in part, also meeting highly specialized service delivery needs of these organizations, such as museums, science centres, convention centre corporations and an art gallery.

Specifically, the province is proposing two main areas of change. The first includes proposed changes to four statutes and the outcome of one bill, so the ability of certain organizations to hold interests in land, buildings and structures is subject to the limits imposed by the

new—not yet in force—section 11.0.1 of the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011. The four organizations and one proposed organization impacted by these changes would include: the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Ontario Health, the Centennial Centre of Science and Technology (Ontario Science Centre), Niagara Escarpment Commission and the proposed Ontario Health atHome.

Secondly, this bill also proposes a tailored approach to realign the realty authority for the following six organizations: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp., Ottawa Convention Centre Corp., the Royal Ontario Museum, Science North, Algonquin Forestry Authority.

1540

Under this proposed tailored approach, these organizations would be prohibited from undertaking specific realty activities before obtaining necessary government or ministerial approvals and/or comply with potential regulatory requirements in order to acquire or dispose of freehold real property.

These organizations will retain authority for realty management of certain properties as applicable. This would mean, for example, that the Royal Ontario Museum is not permitted to sell its freehold interests in real property, including its valuable location just north of us at the corner of Bloor Street and Queen's Park, except with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council and if regulations have been made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in compliance with those regulations. It also would mean that the Algonquin Forestry Authority would not be permitted to acquire or dispose of freehold interests in real property without the approval of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

If passed, this legislation would create a more responsive, agile and accountable system designed to address the complex nature of Ontario's real estate governance, recognizing that one size does not fit all. It is about refining our approach to better serve the diverse needs of our province, ensuring that our real estate decisions contribute not just to economic growth but to the well-being, prosperity and world-class standard of living that Ontarians deserve.

As we embark on this next phase, let us remember that this legislation's true impact extends far beyond this chamber's walls. It resonates in communities we serve, in the organizations that depend on sound real estate policies and for the individuals who will benefit from a government committed to efficiency, accountability and progress.

Since 2020, the Ministry of Infrastructure has consulted with key stakeholders as part of our government's ongoing efforts to optimize the use of real estate, including 14 oversight ministries, representing up to 39 organizations. Of the 39 organizations, 10 organizations and one proposed organization will be impacted by the proposed legislative amendments under the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023.

Throughout these consultations, I was pleased to hear support for our proposed plan to revitalize the manage-

ment of real estate that aligns with their ongoing efforts to optimize and increase efficiencies within their organizations, and this comes as no surprise to our government.

The benefits of a more centralized real estate model to optimize decision-making capacity have been reiterated in numerous third-party reviews. All of these include the recommendation to have the government act and direct as one holistic organization to help identify opportunities for enhanced business outcomes. For example, in 2017, the Auditor General's annual report outlined a series of recommendations to help ensure properties in Ontario are well managed and maintained efficiently and economically. The report urged the Ministry of Infrastructure to study and implement improvements to the management of government properties. It identified that the Ministry of Infrastructure's general real estate portfolio could be operated more efficiently through centralized authority and decision-making.

The 2018 Ernst and Young line-by-line review of government spending, titled *Managing Transformation: A Modernization Action Plan for Ontario*, was conducted to ensure that the Ontario government was making good on its promise to restore trust and accountability while improving value for the taxpayer. The report found that with respect to real estate, each ministry could manage its capital assets, either directly or through a contracted arrangement, with the support of Infrastructure Ontario.

Key findings from the report also revealed that a centralized approach to real estate property management and a more effective asset management process had numerous benefits. These benefits include significantly reduced government spending, a more structured and effective asset management life cycle process, and a better alignment of policies, allowing for a more efficient government-wide decision-making process.

In addition, the 2018 PricewaterhouseCoopers assessment of the general real estate portfolio operating model identified the way MOI, ministries and Infrastructure Ontario manage real estate as a barrier to transformation, particularly for office space, and it could create challenges like complexity, confusion, duplication and overlap. This assessment determined that maintaining an enterprise view for government real estate could create more transparency, while improving decision-making capabilities and reporting. It would also create a more integrated planning process with ministry programs. A 2019 Deloitte report also determined that governance and final decision-making made through a centralized real estate entity would likely achieve the best balance of strategic alignment, while minimizing risk, complexity and investment.

Speaker, the benefits of a streamlined, holistic real estate model are clear. In fact, third parties, such as McKinsey and Co., highlight the benefits of focusing on real estate holding and operations. McKinsey and Co. reiterated that governments could use the value of their real estate assets through better management or rethinking its use, which can be done through a centralized model to enhance accountability.

I also want to highlight a review by the Samuel Zell and Robert Lurie Real Estate Center, established by the

Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, that promotes excellence in real estate education and research. This review found that organizations that hold, manage or maintain real estate should assess real estate as a core business function to align it more tightly with their overall organizational mandate. This ensures the right size, time and location of real estate for optimal leases, acquisitions and sales pricing.

By analyzing a series of companies, this review found that those companies managing real estate in a decentralized fashion saw underperforming assets and produced significant waste, often creating high vacancy rates. Siloed approaches to real estate expertise within these companies resulted in decisions lacking a strategic and holistic vision. In the end, many companies opted for a centralized, enterprise-wide model to offset the negative impacts associated with a more decentralized model to more efficiently and effectively manage infrastructure.

One company succeeded after implementing a central organization to identify property types, geographical locations, standard policies and guidelines. For that company, a more holistic approach paved the way for consistent, accessible and reliable data regarding their real estate assets, and it enhanced the organization's ability to plan and pivot, as required.

Madam Speaker, the research has demonstrated the benefits of a centralized real estate model—the same model we are proposing, in part, through the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023. Simply put, it helps increase efficiencies by allowing organizations to plan better, and maintain and manage realty property. It allows organizations to act in a clear, focused way, enabling them to take an enterprise-wide approach when making decisions. It reduces costs by eliminating duplication of responsibilities and by providing clear guidelines, and it improves the quality of processes and services.

If passed, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, has the potential to unlock these benefits like cost savings, accountability, government-wide planning, program benefits, increased efficiencies, and more.

1550

The proposed measures within this bill would ensure real estate is used in the most optimal way, while finding innovative ways to revitalize the real estate portfolio of certain organizations. Communities across Ontario will benefit from a more strategic use of real estate to support priorities that people need—like building more housing, including affordable housing options and long-term care. This will positively impact people's lives by addressing urgent housing needs and improving community infrastructure, while also boosting economic opportunities and promoting the province's overall well-being and sustainability.

Madam Speaker, I stand before this House today with great optimism as we witness the transformative power of a government committed to working more innovatively and efficiently. In this era of rapid change, we recognize that the challenges our province is facing demand a forward-thinking approach. By implementing innovative

and efficient solutions to improve the management of the province's real estate, we are investing in future-focused infrastructure that creates an environment where businesses thrive, job opportunities flourish, and economic growth becomes more than a statistic—it becomes a reality experienced by all.

Together, we will push Ontario toward a future where real estate is managed and optimized to support the services and infrastructure that hard-working people and families rely upon now and in the future.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the member for Brampton West.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm happy to rise today for the second reading of the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023.

I would like to begin by giving a big shout-out to the Minister of Infrastructure for her incredible leadership and for getting things done for the people of this province.

As Minister Surma mentioned previously, if passed, the proposed legislation before the House today is the next phase in our government's plan to build a stronger Ontario by providing a more coordinated and strategic approach to managing real estate, one of the province's greatest resources.

We're implementing the next step in our framework to effectively manage real estate to support priorities that people in Ontario need—like building more housing, including affordable housing and long-term care. These proposed changes, if passed, would ensure consistent, efficient and sustainable real estate services that could ultimately unlock cost savings, increase efficiencies and improve accountability.

Before I start, I want to reflect on how far Ontario has come after these past few challenging years. Through these uncertain times, Ontarians have shown remarkable resilience and unity. As we gather today, it's important to recognize the strength that has emerged from adversity and celebrate the collective spirit that has carried us through. The strength of this collective spirit represents the triumph of the unwavering commitment and adaptability of our communities and the indomitable spirit of the people of Ontario.

As we write the next chapter of this province's story, we move forward with this spirit of unity and resilience. Ontario's success is a shared success—one built on the foundation of the individual contribution of each person who calls this beautiful province home. Together, we are much stronger, more compassionate and more united than ever.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure, I'm proud to work shoulder to shoulder with a team delivering on our government's priorities to build a stronger Ontario.

The proposed legislation we are discussing today, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, is yet another example of our government's continued progress in delivering on Ontario's historic plan to build. It is worth reflecting on the significant achievements we have made as a province as we deliver on this plan, and as we look

forward to our government's next steps as we work to build critical infrastructure in growing communities while laying a strong fiscal foundation for future generations. Infrastructure is the backbone of a strong and healthy economy. It is essential to the quality of life of all Ontarians, both today and in the future. It's what makes our roads safer, our commutes more convenient and our communities healthier and more vibrant.

As Ontario's population grows, building long-overdue infrastructure projects to support people's needs is more important than ever. That is why our government is moving forward with Ontario's most ambitious capital plan by investing more than \$185 billion over the next decade in critical infrastructure projects. This includes \$20.7 billion in 2023-24 to build highways, transit, hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools, child care spaces and other infrastructure. We're getting shovels in the ground to better connect people to jobs, services, family and loved ones, and Ontario is using every tool at its disposal to build critical infrastructure smarter and faster.

A key part of our plan is building more homes to support Ontario's rapidly growing population. Having strong water infrastructure in place is critical to enable the building of new housing. This is why Minister Surma recently announced that the government is investing \$200 million over three years in a new Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. We have heard, time and time again, that municipalities need more options for funding to meet the growing demand for infrastructure in their communities. This new fund will support growing communities, helping municipalities build critical water infrastructure that would not otherwise get built, and bring the province one step closer to the government's goal to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Eligible municipalities will be able to apply for funding for the repair, rehabilitation and expansion of core water, waste water and stormwater projects to protect communities and enable housing development. The Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund complements the recently announced Building Faster Fund, a new three-year, \$1.2-billion fund that supports municipalities in achieving their housing targets, including housing-enabling infrastructure and other related costs that support community growth.

Ontario continues to call on the federal government for a next-generation infrastructure program that provides adequate funding in the face of rising costs and provides flexibility for provinces to address critical infrastructure needs. The government is also asking the federal government to provide funding to support this new water systems fund.

Ontario will continue to work with municipalities to build infrastructure, achieve housing targets and stand with communities. To continue building this critical infrastructure, we must find ways to help prevent delays and cost escalations. That is why we recently proposed changes to the Construction Act which would allow for lower minimum bonding requirements, a type of financial security for large public infrastructure projects that do not

involve private financing. Those changes are expected to help attract more contractors to bid on capital projects, foster and diversify market competition, and save taxpayers money. The proposed legislative measures would support the government's priority of building highways, transit and other infrastructure projects.

Speaking of transit, our government is also working to ensure that our communities can access faster, more reliable and seamless transit. Under Premier Ford's plan for transit expansion, we are building vibrant mixed-use communities around GO Transit, light rail transit and subway stations across the greater Golden Horseshoe. These transit-oriented communities, also known as TOCs, will bring housing, jobs, retail and public amenities close to transit.

1600

People's day-to-day lives are getting busier. Between work, family and other responsibilities, they not only want convenience; they need it.

As part of our TOC program, our government recently announced plans to build approximately 5,900 new residential units near six future transit stations along the Ontario Line subway and Scarborough subway extension. The proposed communities would also include affordable housing options, while improving access to transit and creating over 1,900 jobs. The subway TOCs will create over 79,000 new jobs and approximately 54,000 new residential units. And, Madam Speaker, that is just the beginning.

In September, the government also introduced Bill 131, the Transportation for the Future Act, 2023, which, if passed, will provide a new, voluntary funding tool for municipalities. This tool could be used by municipalities to fund the design and construction of new GO stations and recoup costs over time as new development occurs around them, encouraging new housing and mixed-use communities. By building transit where people live and work, we're increasing ridership, reducing gridlock, stimulating economic growth, increasing much-needed housing supply and lowering the cost of building infrastructure for taxpayers.

Another example of our government's plan for building a stronger Ontario is our nearly \$4-billion investment in high-speed Internet access. As you know, Madam Speaker, we made a historic commitment to ensure that no matter where you live, every community in Ontario will have access to reliable, high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. The opposition House leader is very happy with that announcement because he understands the importance of having high-speed Internet in his community as well.

Madam Speaker, Ontario has finalized agreements worth over \$2.4 billion for nearly 200 high-speed Internet and cellular projects across the province. We're making incredible progress and continue to finalize projects. Through a competitive process, we have now signed agreements with eight Internet service providers under the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program to bring access to more municipalities across Ontario. Through the Improving Connectivity for Ontario Program and the partner-

ship with Canada under the Universal Broadband Fund, Ontario is committed to providing high-speed Internet access to underserved and unserved communities, including First Nations and remote communities across the province. And we are investing in the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology project, known as SWIFT, to bring high-speed Internet to communities in southwestern Ontario through \$63.7 million in provincial funding that will benefit over 63,000 premises. Meanwhile, in eastern Ontario, rural communities are also closer to getting near-complete cellular coverage through our \$71-million contribution to the Cell Gap Project. Together, with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network, Rogers and the federal government, we have been supporting expanded cellular coverage to more communities in eastern Ontario.

We're also speeding up the construction of provincially funded high-speed Internet projects in communities through the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021. This legislation is helping to reduce barriers that can cause delays in building high-speed Internet infrastructure. We released guidelines and regulations to help provide more certainty for Internet service providers, municipalities, local distribution companies and others, to deliver projects faster. And we launched a new, interactive high-speed Internet map, making it easier for Ontarians to learn more about provincially funded high-speed Internet projects in their communities.

Our ministry is working hard to give every community access to the reliable, high-speed Internet they need and deserve. Under our plan for building a stronger Ontario, no community will be left behind.

Another way we're building a stronger Ontario is by delivering long-overdue, complex infrastructure through public-private partnership projects, known as P3s. P3s are used to deliver major projects like bridges, highways, hospitals, subways and correctional facilities through partnering with the private sector.

Infrastructure Ontario, working closely with industry and partners, continues to deliver our ambitious capital plan in uncertain times to deliver projects that help create great jobs and support economic growth for the people of this province. Projects like the Lakeshore West Corridor Infrastructure Improvements Project, which includes Long Branch GO Station improvements, a new underpass, pedestrian bridge replacement and enabling works for electrification as part of the GO Rail Expansion program, delivered in partnership with Metrolinx, demonstrate our dedication to building reliable and connected transit infrastructure for Ontario. And the successful diversion of traffic onto the new bridge, as part of the ongoing QEW/Credit River Improvement Project, further showcases our continued ability to deliver projects punctually and within budget by working closely with our industry partners.

Infrastructure Ontario's regular Market Update demonstrates our ongoing commitment to delivering major and critical infrastructure projects across the province effectively. Our last Market Update, released in March, included 38 projects with a value of more than \$35 billion in estimated design and construction costs.

The challenging work being done by the province's construction sector has been critically important, and our government appreciates and values how our partners are working together to help us build Ontario. Our government continues to invest in the delivery of major infrastructure projects crucial to this province's success as we support the hard-working people of Ontario. We continue to engage with key stakeholders to identify solutions to overcome challenges, and together, we'll bring these projects to life to help create great jobs and support our economic future.

Madam Speaker, this brings me to another critical element in our government's plan for building a stronger Ontario: real estate. We're consolidating and improving realty management functions while supporting a consistent and holistic approach to real estate decisions.

Minister Surma mentioned earlier that the Ministry of Infrastructure leads the government's General Real Estate Portfolio, also known as GREP, one of Canada's largest public sector realty portfolios. We continue to leverage the province's realty portfolio by working with other ministries to support provincial priorities, such as affordable housing and long-term care. This is part of our promise to make life better for the people of this province by working harder, smarter and more efficiently.

Working with Infrastructure Ontario, our government continues to support the sale of surplus and underused government properties to save taxpayers' money and put properties back into productive use, such as for housing or long-term care, public uses or development that stimulates the local economy. We're using surplus government properties in communities across the province to help improve Ontarians' lives and create opportunities for economic development and job creation. Some great examples include selling surplus property in Oakville to develop 640 long-term-care beds, or a property that was conditionally sold in Hamilton to create more than 500 long-term-care beds and over 800 housing units.

1610

Or take the new central division facility for the Waterloo Regional Police Service, which recently officially opened. This new facility was made possible by selling property to Waterloo region at a market value of \$6 million, saving Ontario \$550,000 annually on operations and property. Made possible by selling a surplus government property, this new facility put this land back into productive use, a win-win for both levels of government. By supporting the sale of surplus government properties, we're generating revenue and saving taxpayers' dollars by reducing liabilities and ongoing maintenance costs.

As part of our plan to modernize real estate management and introduce efficiencies to the environmental assessment process, earlier this year, this Legislature passed the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. If proclaimed into force, this legislation marks our government's first steps in streamlining the controls of real estate holdings. It establishes an initial framework to remove or modify the real estate authority of 14 organizations under the oversight of eight ministries, if any such organizations are prescribed by the minister.

Additionally, if an organization is prescribed, any real property belonging to the organization would be under the control of the Minister of Infrastructure on the day such a regulation comes into force, subject to any exceptions, limitations etc. set out in the regulation. Once proclaimed into force, the legislation will establish a foundation for future improvements to real estate management. It will centralize decision-making processes and ensure real estate decisions with government priorities.

Madam Speaker, the changes proposed within the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, would centralize or realign the real estate authority of 10 organizations and one proposed organization, allowing the government to act and direct more as one holistic organization to manage real estate. Our approach will also allow us to meet these provincial organizations' highly specialized service delivery needs, such as museums, science centres, convention centre corporations and an art gallery. In particular, the province is suggesting modifications in two key areas.

First, we are proposing changes that, if passed, would make the ability of four existing organizations and one proposed organization to hold interests in land, buildings and structures subject to the limits proposed by the new section 11.0.1 of the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011.

It also proposes a tailored approach to realign the realty authority for six organizations. According to this proposed tailored approach, these organizations would be restricted from engaging in specific real estate activities and/or would need government or ministerial approval and/or to comply with regulatory requirements, if required, before acquiring or disposing of freehold real property.

If passed, this approach would allow the government to better manage and oversee real estate more cost-effectively and efficiently, which would create opportunities, such as the sale of surplus properties, to better support government priorities like building more housing and long-term care.

Madam Speaker, the benefits of a streamlined, holistic real estate model are clear. That is why we're taking a more centralized model to enhance the accountability for managing real estate, which can potentially increase the value of these assets through better management or by rethinking their use. Our approach will allow us to align how we hold, manage or maintain real estate more closely with overall government priorities, allowing us to allocate resources effectively and ensure optimal utilization of properties while minimizing the risk of underutilized assets. Employing consistent, accessible and reliable data regarding the use of the province's real estate assets enhances our ability to plan and pivot as needed.

Madam Speaker, if passed, the proposed Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, has the potential to unlock these benefits—like cost savings, accountability, government-wide planning, program benefits, increased efficiencies, and more. The proposed measures within this bill would ensure the optimal use of real estate while finding innovative ways to revitalize the government's real estate portfolio. Communities across Ontario will

benefit from a more strategic use of real estate to support priorities that people need—like building more housing units, including affordable housing and long-term care.

The proposed legislation before the House today is not just about buildings and land; it is about the foundation upon which effective governance stands. Taking a more centralized approach to managing real estate is a strategic necessity. It will allow us to align the allocation and use of properties to support Ontario's broader goals and initiatives. We have created a clear and comprehensive framework for consolidating information and decision-making processes—a framework that prioritizes fiscal responsibility by identifying and eliminating redundancies, negotiating favourable terms and, overall, making more cost-effective decisions. This efficiency benefits taxpayers while responding to the intricate and ever-evolving regulatory landscape governing public properties.

Madam Speaker, by proposing to streamline the authority of real estate, our government will strengthen accountability for how we spend taxpayers' dollars to ensure we protect the services that people need now and in the future. As we envision an efficient and accountable future, a more centralized approach to the processes related to real estate management stands as a cornerstone in our government's plan for building a stronger Ontario.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask a question of the minister regarding Bill 151.

Infrastructure Ontario previously took over the property management of the Ontario Science Centre, and it failed to do necessary repairs. Infrastructure Ontario has been a bad landlord for the science centre. So why is the government making Infrastructure Ontario's role permanent and making them the landlord of more provincial treasures?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question.

The member's question is false. First of all—

Interjection: Withdraw.

Hon. Kinga Surma: —it does not reflect the realities. I apologize, Madam Speaker.

Number one: We've provided the science centre with funding for critical repairs. But the member opposite knows very well that this building is over 50 years old, and like any building, after so many years of being in operation, a lot of work is required and a lot of significant funding is required in order to make sure that the building can continue to operate. Everything has a lifespan. This building has operated for more than 50 years, and that needs to be acknowledged.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: This is positive news. I want to thank the minister and the parliamentary assistant for providing this information. We need to keep working to expand Ontario's real estate options and infrastructure to make sure that it supports the province as it grows. As the minister advised, we've got a lot of newcomers coming.

We've had an influx over the course of the last year, and we need to make sure that our province is successful in the future.

1620

But I had a question, though. A lot of people are wondering—the Ministry of Infrastructure already manages Ontario's general real estate portfolio. Why do these 20 new organizations not belong to the portfolio? If you could explain that, so that we can better understand the need.

Hon. Kinga Surma: These agencies are able to make their own realty decisions. Now, what we're simply asking for here is that there is a process and that there is government oversight and authority. There are many different agencies that run fantastic operations. But should they be in a situation, perhaps, where they want to dispose of land, shouldn't the first organization to know be the ministry responsible and the government at hand so that we can make a determination as to whether or not that particular piece of property could be used for something else that is required in the province of Ontario? That is simply what we are asking here: just to have greater oversight, greater involvement and authority, so that if there is an opportunity for land to be used for a greater purpose, we have that ability.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'll continue with the same thought process, that if Infrastructure Ontario fell short as the landlord of the Ontario Science Centre because the maintenance work wasn't being done, that money wasn't being spent and it was being allowed to kind of fall behind in that regard—but I will say that Moriyama had said that with proper investment, it would last over 250 years. We're standing in a building that's a hundred and something years old. Anyway, we shouldn't just tear it down.

However, moving on: Why isn't the government responding to the Auditor General's findings about the poor performance of Infrastructure Ontario and its private contractors? Because there were a lot of recommendations that I would love for the government to dig into that have far more substance than what we're seeing in this bill.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. Let's just take a very simple example that everyone can relate to, whether you have a car or a house. The car or the house does not last indefinitely, forever. The longer you have the house, the longer you have the car, the more and more and more money you have to spend to keep it operational. At a certain point in time, you have to make a decision whether or not you should buy a new house or move to somewhere else, or whether you should sell or buy a new car. That is just how things work, because things don't operate for an indefinite period of time.

And I'm glad the member raised the Legislature that we are standing in today. In fact, a very hard-working staff member in the whip's office just had his office flooded last week. Now, this is a beautiful building and a beautiful place that we will preserve, but it is running into problems because it is—let me repeat—a very old building.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the minister and my colleague from Brampton West for their remarks. I listened intently. I want to talk about one of the things that's frustrating since I got elected, and it's this kind of siloed approach the government can have. Anytime you're trying to make change, you're trying to do something effective, it's like you convince one ministry or one department or one agency to do it, and then you've got to convince the other ones. By the time you convince column A, the people in column B have already moved on, so you've got to tell the new people that work there and re-convince them.

One of the things that I love to see in this bill is a centralization of the real estate portfolio. I'm wondering if the minister or my colleague from Brampton West could talk just a little bit about what that methodology is. How is that going to drive better, more efficient outcomes for Ontario taxpayers? And why is the centralization of the real estate portfolio for the government not just common sense, but also is the right thing to do?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I think the greatest purpose of why we want a little bit more authority when it comes to real estate is because we want to have a complete, holistic view of real estate activities within our government agencies, because we want to address critical challenges that we face today. But we're taking a very thoughtful, step-by-step approach.

I presented legislation earlier this year, which was phase 1, which included 14 agencies, and now I am back here in the House presenting the next wave of agencies. We've done a very thorough assessment. We've done consultation. We've spoken to the ministries responsible for these particular agencies and organizations, and there are ones that will have tailored approaches. So we are taking a very thoughtful approach, consulting with the ministries responsible.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the remarks given by the ministry and the member from Brampton West. They both talked about high-speed Internet access across Ontario. I looked at the interactive map in my riding—and the member from Brampton West said that all communities would be covered—and there are projects, but there are large parts of the riding where there is a significant population where there are no projects pending, no projects planned and no Internet service. So is that actually going to be solved by 2025? Because I see a lot of the projects are in places where we actually have tower access.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member opposite. I, too, share his passion in terms of making sure everyone is connected, and if I was the local member, I would be checking that interactive map on a daily basis—or at least my constituency office staff.

Should there be areas that aren't identified on the interactive map, that is likely because we are currently

negotiating with a provider within the area that provides service, or we anticipate that the area will be serviced through our request for qualifications, which is out in the market today for a satellite service provider.

So, rest assured, everyone will be connected by 2025, and we're actually the first jurisdiction in North America to have a positive response for requests for qualifications for a satellite service provider.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): One last quick question.

Ms. Laura Smith: I appreciate the holistic approach, and the government would be able to create efficiencies in real estate management decision-making and execution of its realty initiatives. This would also help cut red tape, which would optimize space and enhanced fiscal management and save taxpayers' money because, let's face it, we're all in this room right now because we're here for the taxpayer.

Speaking of which, are there any costs associated with the CBREA initiative?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member. That is a very good question. At this moment in time, we don't believe there are any costs associated with the centralization. If anything, we believe that in the months to come, as both pieces of legislation are proclaimed and active, there will be opportunities for the government to save taxpayer dollars by modernizing space, optimizing space where possible.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very glad to be able to take my place in this Legislature and speak as the critic for the official opposition—as the infrastructure, transportation and highways critic, it falls to me to bring, hopefully, thoughtful comments on Bill 151, the short title of which is Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023.

So what is this bill? It's not a big bill. It accomplishes a couple of clear pieces which I'll outline, but basically this bill continues the government's centralization of their real estate holdings. When the government says "modernizing," I get a little twitchy. This bill seems to solve a problem that we can't identify and the government hasn't thoroughly explained.

The 2017 Auditor General's report was scathing and it outlined numerous recommendations for this government to clean up their act and improve real estate management. Instead of addressing that series of recommendations, we got Bill 69 and now Bill 151, which really are tinkering around the edges. Instead of public civil servants who are accountable looking after things, the government is putting even more under the Infrastructure Ontario umbrella where they rely on expensive private contractors to be in charge.

1630

Speaker, the private contractors show up a lot in the Auditor General's report, and in that report, there's nothing good that they have to say. The public does not trust this government's decisions and, frankly, we don't either. I would like for this minister and the government to

prove that they aren't doing something harmful. On the face of it, this is just a couple of changes. It will have an impact on 11 entities—this particular phase or in this bill. As I said, they had already started with Bill 69. I guess the point of all this remains to be seen. So we will look forward to hearing back from the entities affected and find out what that actually means for them. There is no evidence that further centralization of real estate management will make things better in Ontario. There is some evidence that centralization may make things more challenging or make things worse. And there is no reason to trust the government's intentions. So I hope that during this debate, as I raise some questions, the government can address those.

Speaker, Bill 151, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, is the second phase of centralization of the province's real estate holdings under Infrastructure Ontario—as I said, Bill 69 started, and this Bill 151 continues. We don't know what problem this bill is meant to solve. It certainly doesn't solve the problems revealed in the Auditor General's report; it may make things worse. In short, this bill does nothing to address the actual problems cited by the Auditor General with respect to the Ministry of Infrastructure's poor oversight of real estate services in Ontario.

We had a ministry briefing the other morning, which I appreciate. Actually, I really appreciate the briefings—and not as a thank you to the government, but a thank you to the folks who do the heavy lifting in the ministries. There are a lot of staff who make this place run. There are a lot of, we say, "bureaucrats"—sometimes affectionately, sometimes not—who know what they're doing and do a lot of work, sometimes at the whim and the behest of the minister, but hopefully in the best interests of Ontarians. I appreciate the briefing that they gave us, but I will say that a lot of the language did not really put my mind at ease and did not help clarify, because there's a lot of "modernization" language—"optimization"—and I don't know what that means in practical terms. As I said, I don't trust the government when they say "modernization" because it always does mean privatization.

What I'm going to do is explain—from their own briefing notes. There are 11 entities, ranging from Ontario Health or Niagara Escarpment Commission or Algonquin forestry committee, to Science North, Royal Ontario Museum, McMichael Canadian Art Collection—quite a range. They have broken them into two chunks: those that will be fully centralized—their real estate holdings—and those that will have a tailored approach. My layperson's understanding of that is, those with a more complex service delivery, like Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp. or Science North or McMichael, are part of the tailored approach, where anything to do with buying or selling of freehold real property has to go through cabinet, the Lieutenant Governor in Council—that's cabinet—or the minister of that entity's oversight ministry. So that's that group—that's the tailored approach.

The other ones, like Ontario agency for health protection and promotion, Public Health Ontario, Ontario

Health, Ontario Science Centre, Niagara Escarpment Commission, the proposed Ontario Health atHome that we're talking about in Bill 135—all of those will be fully centralized. This would create a framework to remove or modify each of those entities' ability to deal with real property. So it basically provides the Minister of Infrastructure control of their real estate, control of their property that was, up to this point, under the control of that entity. So it's going to snake in all their property, bringing it under Infrastructure Ontario. The other one is, just take away their opportunities to buy or sell—that's an abbreviated version. If I have said that or framed that incorrectly, I'm sure someone over there can explain it, but that's from the ministry's own briefing.

Something else they have mentioned in here is the stakeholder reaction. This is where we're listening—and I would encourage the folks at home who are affected by this legislation to reach out and tell us how it affects them—because as it says in here, several entities have felt that this initiative is aligned with their ongoing initiatives—that's what it says here. But it does say others have indicated a need for further dialogue to understand the practical implications, for example, operationally speaking, of the centralization and/or realignment of realty authority, should it receive approval.

So there are folks with questions on this list. We are hoping that this is just something smooth and easy, that makes the world a better place, like the minister outlined, but we'll just have to wait and see, I suppose.

How did we get here? The Auditor General's 2017 report, the "Real Estate Services" chapter, was a scathing report on how this province and Infrastructure Ontario looks after—or doesn't look after—its properties, from contract management to maintenance. A couple of times during estimates, I have asked many questions of Infrastructure Ontario, sat opposite the different folks in charge through the years and, generally speaking, the answer is always effectively, "Just trust us. We're looking after things."

But the Auditor General's report laid out a bunch of specific recommendations after they had delved and done the work. None of those recommendations were to further privatize. They effectively said get your house in order, or get your houses in order in this case—ha ha, they're not houses, though; they're galleries and museums and what-not, but it didn't say to privatize or to further privatize—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the member from Brampton North and his appreciation of puns. Thank you.

Ontario Place's contract with Therme: We've talked a lot about that. I'm not going to get into that too much, but that was a perfect example—sitting across from Infrastructure Ontario, where I asked them face to face about that contract, and I asked if there was a fairness monitor and there was not. We've raised that issue subsequently in the House, but there wasn't because it was, "Don't worry. We're fine, just trust us." Well, that is not a good track record for accountability or transparency. So, when Infrastructure Ontario is now holding the umbrella with all

of these entities underneath it, the "just trust us" thing is not enough.

Bill 69, again it has passed and these are previous conversations, but a quick review: That bill is the Reducing Inefficiencies Act. What was it for? Well, the government talked about office space all over the province and keeping track of it. So various entities that rented a floor and a half and another one over here that rented a floor and a half—oh, my goodness, wasted space, let's combine. Fine. If there's an ability to reduce inefficiencies, okay, but what if that means taking that head office and moving it—like WSIB, for example. But taking that entity, moving it where it is no longer as accessible for people, that changes what we're accomplishing. If it's just a matter of making sure we're not having available floor space that we're not being thoughtful about, but if we're actually reducing Ontarians' ability to utilize these services and entities, that's different. This is why I will go back to encouraging the entities affected by these pieces of legislation to reach out and let us know how they're handling these changes. But we're not talking about office space in this bill, Speaker. We're talking about the McMichael, the Ontario Science Centre and the Royal Ontario Museum—hardly office space.

From the Auditor General's report, and if there's time later, I will get right into the weeds, and I know the government members are super excited and hoping that I get there towards the end of the hour. But just in case I don't, here is the overall conclusion from the "Real Estate Services" part, from page 573 for the folks following along at home:

"Infrastructure Ontario could maintain government properties more cost-effectively by better overseeing the companies that it has engaged to provide most capital repair and property management services to ensure costs for capital repairs and property management services are reasonable and projects are completed on time. As well, existing government properties could be used more efficiently with people occupying less space per person. The agreement between Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Infrastructure needs better performance standards to incentivize Infrastructure Ontario to manage and maintain government properties more cost-effectively."

1640

I am going to add—I'm going to editorialize here, but that's the quote—it would be great if the Ministry of Infrastructure actually worked on that agreement with Infrastructure Ontario, not just to incentivize IO to manage and maintain government properties more cost-effectively but to actually maintain them at all.

As we have stood in this House and talked about the Ontario Science Centre and the government's characterization of it falling into disrepair and all that—guys, the landlord is Infrastructure Ontario. So if the money hasn't been spent, and if the repairs haven't been done, you call the landlord, and it's Infrastructure Ontario. So now we have a bill that says, "Well, let's give Infrastructure Ontario 11 more of our treasures to be in charge of." So you can understand how I feel. Anyway, moving on—I've got a pile, though. I'm trying to keep track.

Speaker, Bill 151 takes a whole bunch of entities and real properties and puts them all into the pocket of Infrastructure Ontario. As I said, Infrastructure Ontario has some improving to do when it comes to being a landlord. The science centre example: Under the authority of Infrastructure Ontario they have been allowed to fall into—when I say a state of disrepair—more disrepair than they should be in. But, folks at home, take your kids, go visit. Things are awesome there. Go and visit. Enjoy.

The public doesn't trust the government's decisions, so why should we? We would like this government to prove that they're not doing something harmful, and we haven't seen a business case for projects that are led by Infrastructure Ontario. Again, taking more entities, putting them under that IO umbrella—really? Okay. I would like to ask if Infrastructure Ontario is indeed up to the job because, remember, this bill is called the Improving Real Estate Management Act, and now all these folks are under the IO umbrella.

We have privatization concerns. Infrastructure Ontario hands out mega contracts for a few large property management firms and they're sending millions of public dollars to private pockets. Infrastructure Ontario doesn't do the work themselves. You don't pick up the phone and say, "Hey, come fix this thing." Well, you do, but Infrastructure Ontario doesn't come and fix it; they send someone, hopefully. They spend the money or they manage those contracts or they have property managers that are under them, so they're the middleman. There: Infrastructure Ontario is the middleman.

In the 2017 AG report, they found that Infrastructure Ontario's repair and maintenance expenses are 20% higher than the private sector pays. Ontarians will pay more for repairs and inevitably they get less. This is from the Auditor General. We would like to see that this work gets brought back in-house. Restore the public sector capacity and affordability. Public dollars need to serve the public interest and not private pockets.

When we ask if Infrastructure Ontario is up to the job, again, one of the things I worry about is that we see another example of the potential to be helping rich friends—again, right? There are fewer steps between the Premier's friends and the property they want to control. Infrastructure Ontario uses an uncompetitive process to select a small number of large private firms to manage its real estate assets—more about that later. In 2014, the Auditor General found that procurement was rigged to favour large providers like Colliers project managers, led by a past Conservative staffer, and there's limited competition for bids, meaning higher costs.

A side note: Many of us just met with the Ontario General Contractors Association—they're here today at Queen's Park—and they were talking about Infrastructure Ontario, the bidding process and the bundling, and that small or medium-sized companies who want to bid on local jobs, who want to be part of growth, who want to be part of building, can't get in on that because 90% of the time it's one massive company, and they know that 10% chance for them to get that bid is not worth their time. Well, why is that?

When the Auditor General is highlighting, in detail, a rigged process, the government should sit up and say, "Okay, yes, we don't like that." That's not fair for business. That's not fair for construction. We heard that in our meetings today. We heard about indemnification and that the government has made changes that now they would assume all of the risk for things that have gone wrong on a project, whereas there used to be a maximum. That's a Treasury Board change, right? That's a government funding change. That's a you-guys change. There are lots of pieces here that aren't fitting, and I hope that you're listening.

Something else I would say about Infrastructure Ontario and asking, are they up to the job—trust is dwindling for this government and their connections. I've said this before: The public does not trust the government's decisions. I would love for them to prove that they're not doing something harmful with this. Because, as I've said, and this isn't because I'm stupid—I have days—I don't know the problem that this bill is trying to solve. Like, I don't, and I spend time in this world. I don't get it. Walk me through it.

Is Infrastructure Ontario up to the job? Listen, Infrastructure Ontario has been hollowed out, with publicly accountable civil servants replaced by expensive private consultants and contractors. Infrastructure Ontario does not actually directly manage government real estate; instead, it outsources property management to private contractors. The Auditor General report criticized Infrastructure Ontario's uncompetitive procurement and poor oversight of these private contracts. We don't know what problem it's trying to solve. I've said that before. It doesn't solve the problems revealed in the report. It might exacerbate them.

The Auditor General report criticized the procurement for being uncompetitive and the fact that they're being awarded to contractors despite their poor past performance. The Auditor General also criticized Infrastructure Ontario's poor oversight of these contracts. So I'm kind of—not glossing over this, but I'm just mentioning it. There are pages in that report. It makes for really great, interesting late-night reading, to delve into just how broken things are. So how come we're not seeing those issues being addressed in a bill that's called "improving real estate management"?

Speaker, in 2017, the Auditor General report focused on how poorly Infrastructure Ontario was managing the government's real estate portfolio. Literally, what this bill is doing is giving more to Infrastructure Ontario to manage. Problems exist in the way Infrastructure Ontario is structured. The Auditor General found that the enterprise realty service agreement, the agreement between the Ministry of Infrastructure and Infrastructure Ontario, did not set out mandatory minimum standards of performance for managing costs of capital projects. The agreement didn't set out standards, guys.

The agreement did not set timelines for meeting the accommodation standards for office space, which is designed to ensure existing government properties are

used efficiently. We talked a lot about that during Bill 69, about office space. But the recommendation that the government had about the agreement and setting timelines wasn't addressed. Also, the agreement did not set timelines for meeting the maintenance standard set out in that same agreement.

Infrastructure Ontario is the province's landlord, and the Auditor General report focused on how poorly Infrastructure Ontario has been managing the government's real estate portfolio.

Let's think about the Ontario Science Centre. When we don't keep costs reasonable, fewer resources are available to maintain aging assets. What do they say? An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Well, a dollar of preventive maintenance is worth a bucket-load of money when you've got to fix the thing after it's broken. Thousands of public assets in urgent need of capital repairs, and we're overspending to deliver private sector profits. It costs more through Infrastructure Ontario than it would if we did it in-house, civil servants.

Deferred maintenance more than doubled, from \$420 million in March 2012 to \$862 million in March 2017. I'm using those numbers because that's what was in the report by the Auditor General. You'll recall that the Ontario Science Centre's landlord is none other than Infrastructure Ontario. You'll recall because I keep telling you.

I asked a question of the minister, from my press release: "... Ontario Science Centre Economics Don't Add Up."

1650

I won't read the whole press release. But after having asked the question, this is what we put out, and I'll share it with you in case you missed it:

"The minister says the science centre is falling apart, but their past business plans say nothing of the sort. To make matters worse—Ford's Conservatives have been depriving the science centre of the required maintenance for years. The science centre needs investment and repairs, not a half-baked plan with zero community consultation."

"Infrastructure Ontario is the science centre's landlord, according to the Ontario Science Centre's 2022-23 business plan."

I don't know if the government doesn't recognize that being a good landlord and doing the necessary repairs is far less costly than a new building. I don't think that this sudden interest in the science centre has anything do with the science centre.

"With Infrastructure Ontario as the landlord, the ministry could have chosen to fund the needed repairs—but has not."

This is not a new thing. This is an ongoing thing. When you look back at the plans and their reports through the years, you see that this has been a cumulative thing. But it's not falling down. It's a mischaracterization of what is really happening.

"The solution is funding and investment, not abandonment."

The Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure have been painting it and its architecturally significant building as a teardown, but it isn't at all.

I hope that people go visit it. It will still be there, in all of its magical glory, hopefully for the 250 years that Moriyama said that with good investment it would stand. But I think the government has other plans. We'll see what happens.

The science centre is a cherished provincial asset, even if the government is pretending otherwise. This government has claimed, without evidence, that at this point it would be more costly to complete long-delayed repairs of the Ontario Science Centre than to relocate it to Ontario Place with a much smaller facility built atop a publicly funded, government-funded parking structure that alone will cost an estimated half a billion dollars.

The late Raymond Moriyama, the world-renowned architect of the Ontario Science Centre, has stated, as I've already mentioned, that with proper maintenance, the Ontario Science Centre could "last beyond 250 years."

Speaker, from an article entitled "Infrastructure Minister Offers Few Details on Business Case for Moving Ontario Science Centre":

"Ontario Infrastructure Minister ... declined to provide specific answers ... about the government's business case for moving the science centre to Ontario Place as part of the latter's controversial redevelopment."

She "said the decision to build a new, and considerably smaller, science centre on the waterfront and demolish the existing facility rather than repair it was based on costs."

She was asked by the interviewer, "What was the cost to repair the building at the Ontario Science Centre?" The minister said, "The cost was higher. It was much more expensive." "What was the cost specifically?" she was asked. The response was, "While the government is doing its due diligence, we are verifying all of the numbers included in the business case. Before we share that information with the public, we want to triple-check all of the information." This was in April. I think by now they've had time to bajillion-check all of the information—far beyond triple—but we still have no numbers. Spoiler alert: I don't think we're getting them.

I'll continue. "It has already drawn criticism from some community groups, residents and mayoral candidates"—see, back in April; this is a while ago—"who have questioned why the current science centre could not be upgraded and kept at its current location North York.

"Environmental charity Swim Drink Fish" said "it could no longer stand behind the government's plan.

"The province of Ontario's plan for Ontario Place is simply too opaque and controversial for us to support'....

"Construction on the new facility is slated to begin in 2025, with its opening expected in 2028. The existing science centre will remain open to the public until then, the province says, and then it will be demolished....

"The building is considered by many to be one of the finest remaining examples of brutalist architecture in the city."

This government's plan is fairly brutal—but not a fair comparison.

Instead of treasuring a gem that would be a long-lasting asset in the province, they are planning to demolish it and diminish its future.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I hear from—what's that guy's name? Oh, Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

MPP Jamie West: He thinks you're clever.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: He always has something charming to add.

Okay, moving on. This article is “Confusion Reigns over Doug Ford’s Science Centre Plan that Includes Conservation Authority Land.

“The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority says it doesn’t understand why the Premier’s plan includes housing on ‘hazardous’ ravine land unfit for new development.”

So, the Premier first said the Ontario Science Centre will be demolished and replaced with housing, but the conservation authority that owns much of the land is waiting to tell him that that’s impossible.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority had said, “Nothing can be built on our land, but it’s not just because of the TRCA, it’s also city and provincial policies, which is why we were confused when the province announced affordable housing on that land....

“It’s within a ravine and considered hazardous lands because of the steep slopes and the West Don River flood plain, so I’m not sure how you would accomplish building in that area.

“We and local community members are trying to get a better understanding of what the province’s agenda is with that land—there have been announcements but it’s kind of unclear as to what the actual intention is.”

So the TRCA and the city of Toronto own the area: “They jointly leased it to the science centre for 99 years, ending in 2064, in an agreement that allows for only the centre on the site and requires renegotiation for any other uses including housing, according to city officials, who already have plans for new housing on adjacent city-owned parking lots.

“Under fire for his Ontario Place redevelopment scheme that includes a towering private spa to be built by an Austrian company,” the Premier “on April 18 announced science centre programming would move to the site and its ‘tired’ concrete structure, built into the ravine, would be demolished.”

The Premier told reporters that the province is “planning to get rid of the old science centre, putting in affordable, attainable, non-profit housing homes up there, because that’s what people need.” About a week later, he changed course and said, “We’re going to help you out with a new community centre and we’re going to help you with a new school, because they’re in desperate need of a school, I hear.”

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Guys, stop.

What is true—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m asking my own team to stop heckling me. I realize what happened there. Knock it off.

Speaker, I will continue. So the Premier doesn’t seem clear on the purpose for the demolition. If it’s going to be housing and then he finds out it can’t be, well then it’s going to be a community centre. It sounds like a science centre open to the public is a pretty awesome community centre and community hub, but they’ve been painting it as a teardown, and it isn’t.

What is true is that capital repairs and building renewal are years behind. The minister says it’s falling apart; it isn’t. And the science centre, what they need is for people to come visit and enjoy it, and they need the government to cough up the needed funds and make the repairs.

I don’t remember who owns the property across the street from the science centre or in and around there. Is it one of the De Gasperises? The government can let me know.

But there are lots of fingers in these pies. And even if I’m off and there is some kind of other plan, we have no reason to trust this government.

While we’re talking about it—and I can, because the government named the bill Improving Real Estate Management Act and we’re literally talking about managing their own real estate—in a piece by the Trillium, Jessica Smith Cross has written, “RFP for ‘Diminished’ Science Centre at Ontario Place Highlights Space Constraints....

“The province is moving forward with its plans to build a new provincial science centre at Ontario Place, issuing a request for proposals for planning and design....

“The province has confirmed the new ... building is expected to be about half of the size of the current building in Don Mills.

“Details about what that will mean for the programming can be found in the request for proposals (RFP), which says Infrastructure Ontario ... has a completed ‘functional program’—a description of the requirements of the facility—that was finished in 2022....

“The RFP then says three elements were initially in the functional program,” which is a description of the requirements of the facility. They said that three elements were initially in that “but had to be cut ‘due to a required reduction of size of the building/square footage requiring rationalizing of the current activities.’”

1700

So when Infrastructure Ontario had done its functional program, which is the description of the requirements of the facility, they had three things that were part of the requirements of the facility, and then, they’ve had to be cut because of size, even though they’re apparently integral. Those elements that have been cut are a large-scale immersive experience, an outdoor experience, and a planetarium. Infrastructure Ontario will decide whether or not some or all of these pieces—if that work will be done. And they’ll only include them if the cost is approved by Infrastructure Ontario. Well, that makes me sad, because the outdoor experience it envisions, as it says here, are “an adventure playground and iconic climbing/risky play structures throughout a large defined space.” Something interactive for the kids, right? Nope, no room.

“The Ontario Science Centre offers unique, interactive large-scale transformative immersive experiences that the entire family can enjoy. The Telus Rainforest at the current site is one example of a large-scale immersive experience. This space in the Living Earth exhibit hall is dedicated to engaging visitors about biodiversity and unique characteristics of plants and animals living in a rainforest. The functional program does not currently contemplate the opportunity for a large immersive space that replicates the experience of the Telus Rainforest.”

They’re literally chopping down a rainforest—oh my gosh—and there is no reason. It’s so popular, and it’s awesome; but Infrastructure Ontario is like, “Hmm, there’s no room,” because they’re moving it for no reason.

The other thing is, unfortunately, currently there is no public major-size planetarium in Toronto. When we think about what a planetarium offers—I’m not going to make comments about flat earth versus the cosmos, but I think that a planetarium and the education that goes with that would be a missed opportunity, to cut that.

Anyway, it is sad that “‘there’s simply no way’ a science centre at Ontario Place could accommodate all of what the current centre does today, even though it’s expected to be a five-to-seven-storey building that would ... block views of Ontario Place’s iconic pods and Cine-sphere.” I’m still reading from the article.

“Ontario Place for All also accuses the province of ‘jumping the gun’ and pushing ahead with the plan before obtaining city approval—the new building is to be on city-owned land—or approval from the Waterfront Toronto design review panel, ‘or any form of community endorsement.’”

It says, “Ontario Place for All wants to see the province bring additional Ontario Science Centre programming to the pods at Ontario Place—focusing on water science ... while maintaining the original centre in Don Mills.” That would be actually pretty cool if we have the science centre proper that people know and love and then if they had a water addition, like a separate location. Keep exploring.

Anyway, Ontario Place for All, I think, was also in the news today. While I don’t have it in my pile here, I’m pretty sure that they—didn’t they file an injunction today? So this conversation, fortunately, is not finished, and hopefully, the science centre will also not be finished.

The Auditor General has recently announced investigations into both the government’s plans for the Ontario Science Centre and for Ontario Place. The Ontario Place, Therme and Ontario Science Centre mashup deal—all of that is of great interest to Ontarians, which is why on October 16, the official opposition tried to bring forward a motion, and the government blocked the official opposition’s opposition day motion to scrap the 99-year Therme deal. We didn’t even get to talk about it. For months, we’ve been sounding the alarm on this government’s absurd plan to put a luxury spa on Ontario Place and for their weird plan to move and demolish the Ontario Science Centre.

What we’re talking about here today is a whole bill that is about bringing real estate management further into

private hands, into the hands of the private contracted managers that Infrastructure Ontario allows to run things. That is actually the whole goal of this: to bring it into ministry and Infrastructure Ontario control. A perfect example of how there is zero accountability and no transparency when it comes to Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Infrastructure—like, that’s entirely the point of this bill.

The Premier of the province of Ontario is currently under criminal investigation by the RCMP—

MPP Jamie West: What?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Right? The mess of the greenbelt grab is still unfolding. We have stood in this place and been forced to talk about massage table deals and boys’ trips to Vegas and massive cash transactions and developer wish lists and personal sketchy dealings shaped by preferential relationships that are not in the best interests of Ontarians. Every deal this government has been doing falls under a cloud of suspicion. Maybe some of the deals they’re doing are perfectly fine, but they keep tucking it where we can’t see it, so how do we rest assured?

For months, we’ve been sounding the alarm on this government’s absurd plan to put a luxury spa on Ontario Place. This Conservative infrastructure minister has been hiding important information on the Ontario Place project. As I said from that article, she said they were going to triple-check the numbers and then release it. So far, she has failed to show us the business case for why the Ontario Science Centre needs to be moved to Ontario Place. I don’t believe she has a business case.

In her words, “Ontario Place has been sitting there, no one has been going there ... I drive by it frequently, and it’s not enjoyed.” This is not correct. She knows it, because media reports have shown that she was told by the Ontario Place Corp.’s chair that they had had almost three million visitors last year, and the minister tried to sell us on that nonsense that no one enjoys Ontario Place.

We also learned that the Ministry of Infrastructure has not made public Ontario Place Corp.’s annual report since 2018—five years, no reports. I would like to know why they’re sitting on her desk. Our research yielded this from the Ontario Place Corp., and the Ontario Place Corp. answered us with this:

“Our 2019 and 2020 annual reports are with the Ministry of Infrastructure, awaiting transmittal to the Office of the Legislative Assembly. Once they have been approved, Ontario Place Corp. will be posting these reports on its website.

“The OPC 2021 annual report is tentatively scheduled for posting by February 28, 2024, with no date available for the 2022 annual report. Ontario Place Corp.’s financial results are consolidated annually by the government of Ontario.”

Fascinating. They’re turning in their numbers to the Ministry of Infrastructure, so 2019—that was a couple of years ago, yes?

MPP Jamie West: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So 2019 and 2020 are sitting on a desk in the Ministry of Infrastructure. I’d love to

know what those numbers are. But also, the annual report for 2021 is scheduled for posting by February 28, 2024—next year—with no date available for the 2022 annual report. They've done their part, but now it's sitting on a desk, and we don't get to know it. It's supposed to be reported to the Legislative Assembly, once it's passed forward to the Legislative Assembly, by the minister, who ain't gonna do it. The Ontario Place Corp. has provided their annual reports. To recap, they're sitting on this minister's desk. That is hiding, and it's changing the rules mid-game, folks.

During committee, when I asked Michael Lindsay, the CEO of Infrastructure Ontario, about whether or not there was a fairness monitor, which is standard for large procurements to ensure there is no funny business during the procurement process, he told us there was no fairness monitor. A few days before the submission deadline for the Ontario Place project, the deadline was suddenly extended by three weeks. Infrastructure Ontario's own CEO confirmed to me at committee that while other bids had been received, Therme's bid had not been received before the deadline was extended. I asked to see what scoring criteria were used to evaluate the bids. Infrastructure Ontario couldn't provide any. I asked to see the scorecards for each bid. Infrastructure Ontario couldn't provide them.

We see that the government's internal documents show the underground parking garage was being planned two years before the public knew about it. This stuff is exhausting. Despite the January 2021 document showing the parking garage, when these Conservatives unveiled their design concept six months later, in July, they suspiciously did not include the parking structure in their renderings. But in their 2021 document, it showed the parking garage. The government told bidders on the Ontario Place redevelopment that they had to use whatever parking was already available and that the government would not fund any additional facilities.

1710

However, when Therme won the bid, suddenly they were offered a brand new, publicly funded parking garage that was not offered to the other bidders. The other bidders were told they had to use what was available and there would be no parking, but for Therme, "Don't worry, we got you."

This minister loves the line that the parking is for an unnamed mom with three kids who is going to park. We've heard that countless times. Here's the thing: This picture that she's desperately trying to paint for us about the mom with three kids leaves me with the question: Is the parking garage for the public and not just for Therme customers? Because that's sort of the picture she's painting, that it's for everybody. However, as reported by Spacing, "The Ford government wants to bundle the proposed five-storey parking garage and the relocated science centre in a single public-private partnership deal that will see a for-profit consortium design, build, finance, and maintain these two new Ontario Place facilities for 30 years."

The project specific scope attributes shared by the government details "the below grade parking structure is proposed to be integrated with the new OSC facility, providing up to 2,000 parking spaces in a five-storey underground structure to meet landlord lease obligations." So this is part of a landlord lease obligation, despite the fact that the original call for development clearly told bidders the government would not fund additional facilities.

So the minister's mom of three kids gets to park only if she is taking her kids to the mega spa? Maybe moms with three kids are interested in taking them all to the spa or leaving them at home and going to the spa. That's a real thing; I feel you on that. But you know what that mom with three kids needs? She needs a home she can afford, she needs her kids to be safe in funded schools, she needs her hospital to be funded so they can get the care they need, and she needs a government that isn't in cahoots with every fat cat with a thick wallet. That's what she needs.

Ontarians need a government they can believe and trust, and they don't have it. Since this government won't be honest or transparent about this deal, we wanted them to scrap—we still want you to scrap—this deal, which is an insider deal, apparently, with Therme.

Speaker, all of this is part and parcel of improving real estate management, which is the title of this bill. If they don't want to talk about improving real estate management, then they shouldn't name their bill this.

What I want to know is, who is actually looking after Ontario's real estate portfolio? I had already asked: Is Infrastructure Ontario up to the job? I'm going to go with no. But who is actually looking after Ontario's real estate portfolio? Infrastructure Ontario hires a very small number of very large property management firms to manage its public assets. One of those companies is Colliers Project Leaders. They used to be called MHPM. Colliers Project Leaders is led by past Conservative Party staffer Olivia MacAngus. Mega companies like Colliers Project Leaders are benefactors of massive government contracts. There are very few of them. There are very few very large property management firms. That's been written about in 2017, in the Auditor General's report. They talked about company A and company B. In the report, they weren't named, but since there are only two, it's not hard for us as Ontarians to know who we're talking about.

I asked a question this morning about Colliers Project Leaders. Last week, Infrastructure Ontario announced that they would continue to provide project management services for the province's real estate assets. She criticized Infrastructure Ontario's previous procurement of project management services, and the new Colliers mega contract appears to be even bigger, folks. The permanent presence of embedded contractors within Infrastructure Ontario means that public dollars are going toward private profits instead of keeping Ontario's public buildings in a state of good repair.

I want to know why the Premier is wasting money by maintaining a permanent presence of embedded private contractors within Infrastructure Ontario instead of bringing this core function back in-house, to be delivered

by civil servants who are accountable to the public and not to private shareholders. I asked that question this morning and I don't remember getting an answer that answered that, but it's a real question, especially if this is a government that talks about the dollars and cents of things.

Speaker, I put out a statement today: "The Ford government, like the Liberal government before it, is addicted to privatization and outsourcing. This latest megacontract will mean more public dollars flowing into private pockets. It means Ontarians will pay more for capital repair costs, and inevitably get less.

"This private contractor has been embedded within Infrastructure Ontario for over a decade. The Auditor General found that the previous procurement for this work in 2014 had been rigged to favour large contractors like Colliers, and" Infrastructure Ontario "only received three bids for two large contracts. While" Infrastructure Ontario "has not disclosed the value of this latest megacontract, it appears to be even bigger, limiting competitive bids even further.

"Under the Liberal and PC governments, supposedly public agencies like Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx have been hollowed out, with publicly accountable civil servants replaced by profit-seeking private consultants and contractors. The permanent presence of these embedded private contractors within the government means decisions about capital projects are being driven by private interests, and not the public interest."

Oh, the room got quiet. I'm just looking for my page.

Mr. Graham McGregor: It's because this guy stopped talking.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes.

I think the room is worried that, if I stop talking, they'd better start coming up with thoughtful questions to ask me.

Speaker, I'm wondering if companies like Colliers are too big to be held accountable, and I worry about that because in our meetings today with the Ontario General Contractors Association, we did talk to construction companies who can't even get in on the game. When the province has divided itself into two zones—and basically bundling, right, but two zones within a big province—what company is big enough to be able to handle one of those two zones in terms of all property management? That's what we've got right now. And the Auditor General had said in her report that a lot of smaller, local companies are putting their hands up and saying, "Could you carve out smaller areas? We would like to help manage. We would like to work in our communities and have jobs in our communities. We've got equipment to handle a small area, but when our company is in Thunder Bay and you want me to be responsible for Barrie and Oshawa, I can't do that."

When we're going so big, it's not even elbowing out the competition; it's just a totally different game that smaller or growing companies can't get in on. And I think the government understands that. A lot of them come from the business world and what we heard today from the General Contractors Association is that there are a lot of things in

the way that make it not fair and not competitive, and that's certainly what the Auditor General had highlighted.

But focusing on Colliers, this is the company that the government continues to award millions in real estate management contracts to. That's literally who we're talking about. That's why I asked the question today. They've announced that they're embedded in Infrastructure Ontario. This is the company. In 2020, the federal government launched an investigation into the business practices of Colliers Project Leaders in relation to their work on water treatment projects in Neskantaga First Nation. That's who we're dealing with.

From this article in November 2020: "Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller is preparing to launch a third-party investigation into the business practices of consultants and engineering companies hired to end Canada's longest-standing boil-water advisory in a First Nation—a probe that could extend to other communities." So, the federal minister is launching an investigation. "The federal government's pledge comes after" Chief "Moonias wrote to Miller on October 22 demanding 'an immediate investigation into business practices of contractors, engineering companies' hired to fix more than two decades of water problems that just got worse....

"We take the word of the engineers or consultants.... Since we've been doing that, we've been under a boil-water advisory for 25 years...."

"Timmins-James Bay NDP MP Charlie Angus called on Ottawa to probe the long-standing problems with Neskantaga's water treatment plant, along with other infrastructure projects in northern Ontario First Nations."

1720

He said, "The problem is we have a system for delivering infrastructure that always goes with the lowest bidder ...

"When you have a big-ticket item, like a water plant that's very expensive to build in a community, costs and corners get cut and that's the danger. Neskantaga has been a nightmare situation'....

"Members of Neskantaga First Nation unleashed their frustration on Tuesday in front of the office of Colliers Project Leaders, a project management company hired in 2016 by the community to upgrade its water treatment plant, shouting, 'Fix our water.'

"Moonias spoke to one of the engineers via Zoom."

He said, "Why did it have to come to this? ... I thought you were our help? I thought you were on our side?"

"MP Charlie Angus said the system that is set up to award contracts to First Nations is flawed.

"In an email statement, a spokesperson for Colliers Project Leaders wrote the company respects the right to legally protest and shares the desire to bring clean drinking water to the community."

Chief Moonias has said that "he still can't understand why it's taking so long."

He said, "I don't think it's because of where we are situated ... I think it's because of the lack of will to finish this."

So again, my question: Are these companies that are handling more than half the province, or half the province, too big to be held accountable?

Also, in 2020, the previous CEO at Colliers Project Leaders pressured employees into giving up paid vacation days. Again, this is the company the government continues to award millions in real estate management contracts to. And the thing is, maybe they did good work on this, that or the other thing, but when there's no competition—when the Auditor General says there aren't any standards for timelines, there aren't incentives in the agreement, then I would think that a responsible, business-oriented government would sit up straight and say, "Whoa, that's not okay. That is not how we have a competitive process. That is not how we do business. We're going to fix that." And yet?

From this article—June of 2020—a little while ago Colliers was in the news: "CEO Asks Employees to Lie on Timecards or Risk Job Losses—Violating Labour Laws.

"Company apologies, offers to return vacation days after Go Public inquiries.

"Several workers of a high-profile company say they were pressured into giving up paid vacation days, then told to lie about it on their timecards—or risk job losses during the height of the pandemic.

"In an internal company video provided to Go Public," the "president and CEO of Ottawa-based Colliers Project Leaders—asks employees to 'surrender' vacation time if they want to save their own jobs and those of their co-workers.

"I'm asking everyone to work a full week and to record an additional eight hours of vacation onto your time sheet every week in April and May," he said.

"This reduces our compensation costs and permits us to avoid mass layoffs ... Now if we all surrender a bit of future vacation, we can keep our coworkers and ourselves employed."

"One employee tells Go Public workers who refused to give up vacation days were pressured by managers to change their minds—and their timecards—receiving frequent calls from higher-ups, asking if they planned to comply.

"It's not a choice ... there's so much fear that if you don't do this, you're going to lose your job," said the employee, who works on infrastructure and revitalization projects for the company.

"The scary part is if you're going to get fired, say next week, you have no vacation time to show."

"According to two employment lawyers Go Public Spoke with, it's against provincial labour laws to take away or reduce vacation time that's required by law and to produce false or misleading vacation time records....

"But labour lawyers say what Colliers Project Leaders was asking its employees to do was not only unethical but illegal.

"On every single level it's offensive," says lawyer Howard Levitt, who practices employment law in eight provinces and is the editor-in-chief of the Dismissal and Employment Law Digest ...

"Encouraging workers to create fraudulent timecards is a violation of employment standards legislation in every single province across Canada, leaving employees with no official record of what the company owes them and no official guarantee they'll ever get their time or money," he says."

So again, this is the company the government continues to award millions in real estate management contracts to, and I hold in my hand Bill 151, Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023. There are opportunities to actually improve the management of properties and real estate and entities that we have here in Ontario.

The Auditor General's report—I said earlier that it was scathing, but I think it was fair. It was fair because it had all of these details and very real solutions laid out clearly. It criticized the procurement of the contracts for being uncompetitive, and the fact of being awarded to contractors despite poor past performance—but part of that is, these areas of responsibility are so massive that a small or medium-sized company that we know and like in our community or could recommend cannot get in on that game. I don't think anyone in this room thinks that's fair. But that is what Infrastructure Ontario does, and that is documented in the Auditor General's report. There are opportunities for this government to tighten those reins, to have input in that—and very clear suggestions that I don't even imagine you would disagree with in that Auditor General's report—2017, but still fresh.

Again, back to this bill: We don't really know what the intentions are; I don't know whether to imagine that they are benign or that they're nefarious. There's not too much in this bill, but it's the implications—it's the bringing it under the control of Infrastructure Ontario, which is the middleman that organizes who looks after the maintenance. They're the landlord, but they hire a contractor to come and do this, and very few folks are able to get in on this. They were talking about maintenance, which we have been today—or we're talking about, actually, capital repairs or building.

One of the recommendations that the Auditor General made—the first recommendation:

"We recommend that Infrastructure Ontario review and adjust accordingly its process for procuring project management services to:

—formally prepare a new business case on whether to enable more project management companies in the future to bid on such services;

—include standard penalties for all contract managers on future RFPs; and

—incorporate past performance in the evaluation of the bidders."

Those are pretty basic things that I think are head-nodders. But then, in reality, as I said, are Colliers and the other one like them too big to be held accountable? That was a big part of the Auditor General's report—yes, they haven't met the standards; yes, they missed the deadline; yes, poor performance; yes, there are concerns and challenges, but there's nobody else. Well, part of that is because the map chunk is so big that no other company

can say, “Yes, I can look after that.” And that’s an Infrastructure Ontario decision. So you guys should pick up the phone and say, “Is that Jennifer French girl talking about something that makes sense?” Yes, I am, and so is the Auditor General.

Mr. Graham McGregor: No.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I see the member from Brampton North enthusiastically participating. I’m going to read that as support of what I’ve said. He may disagree; I’ll give him the chance to get up and ask me. But I really do appreciate his participation.

Speaker, I’m essentially out of time, after an hour, but I will say that we don’t know what problem this bill is meant to solve. It certainly does not solve the problems revealed in the Auditor General’s report; it might make them worse. In short, the bill does nothing to address the actual problems and—

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member for the speech.

Madam Speaker, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act is about ensuring that we’re saving taxpayer dollars and cutting red tape and practising good governance while remaining fiscally prudent.

Legislation related to [*inaudible*] allows the government to ensure that we’re overseeing and optimizing the management of Ontario’s large and complex realty portfolio, and it is our government’s obligation to the people to be fiscally responsible when managing government assets.

My question to the member opposite is, why does the NDP favour the mismanagement of taxpayer dollars?

1730

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That’s so interesting. Okay, on page 586 of the 2017 Auditor General’s report, in the real estate services section, they outline that Infrastructure Ontario issued a request for proposals for management services for capital projects for government properties worth \$900 million over five years.

“The RFP stated that one project management company would be assigned to each zone, which limited the bidders to larger real estate project management companies that had sufficient resources to cover the required volume of projects.

“The result was that the competition attracted only three companies to bid: Two contracts for an estimated 7,500 projects, each worth between \$100,000 and \$10 million were awarded to two ... of the three companies that had bid.”

We are giving them so much money and they are costing so much more than it would if civil servants did the job and if we brought it in-house. That is so documented. How on earth can you financially justify that handing money out the door to them without accountability is good business?

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Oshawa on her one-hour lead on Bill 151.

She talked a lot about government trust and public trust. The government’s record on building housing is kind of sketchy at best, with the scandal over the greenbelt. A lot of public trust was broken.

Under the Ontario Science Centre, you had talked about how this government isn’t releasing the business case that happened in the spring. The late Raymond Moriyama, the world-renowned architect of the science centre, has stated that with proper maintenance, the Ontario Science Centre could actually last beyond 250 years.

Again, how does this instill trust, when the government is not releasing the business case, flip-flops on housing and then the community centre? Where is the trust when it comes to the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? Back to the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don’t have trust and I don’t know how the average Ontarian does. I’m in this space a lot, so we get to be in the weeds, but the folks out there know that the science centre is not falling down around their ears, that it is a community treasure. And when they find out that the landlord is Infrastructure Ontario, the middleman who has not put the money in, and that the repairs have not been done—that’s on Infrastructure Ontario, that’s on this minister.

It doesn’t make any sense that the government continues along these paths. The minister absolutely could show the numbers. She said in that article I read that they’re triple-checking, but that was April. Come out with the numbers. Be accountable with numbers. This isn’t new—

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank my colleague from Oshawa for the hour of remarks. I listen and, while I don’t always agree with the politics of the member, I certainly appreciate the attention paid to the file. I listened intently.

One of the parts of the member’s speech that I was a little leery of was when the member talked about being leery of words like “modernization” and “optimization.” I’m not old, but I’m old enough to remember when the NDP used to be a party that championed progress and modern values. I’ve even seen the NDP modernizing—they used to just oppose building hospitals just because it was our idea. They actually supported us on scrapping the carbon tax recently, which I think is modernization of their approach. I’m wondering if the member will be recommending that the caucus continue to modernize their approach by supporting good, common-sense PC solutions like the ones put forward in this bill.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The member from Brampton North—I miss his engagement on the committee that he and I both sat on. I would invite him and the government House leader to put him back on, because we were doing really good work on that committee for procedure and House affairs, talking about the restoration of this building—the restoration and the revitalization, the important work and the cost, the attention, all the things

involved in keeping this building a special part and heart of Ontario.

So “modernizing”—there you go—but maintaining and keeping the soul of this space. Yet the Minister of Infrastructure is like, “Oh, the science centre is 50 years old. Tear it down. We can’t have that kind of thing.”

So I miss the member. Come back to committee. We’ve got work to do about really taking care of Ontario’s spaces. Come on back.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I also want to thank the member from Oshawa for her one-hour lead on Bill 151. She spoke a lot about the different reasons why we would question this bill and the purpose behind it. When you have Infrastructure Ontario and the way they have handled, really, the lack of repair, the lack of maintenance we’ve seen with what they have already been given the task to do, why is the government adding to their plate? To me, it seems like they’re just adding a layer of private profit to this middleman and the service costs, which will all go back to the taxpayers.

I just want to hear the member’s thoughts, because I know she went on to speak a little about private property and what we’re seeing with the result of—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Oshawa for response.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There was so much in that, I’m not sure, really, which part to answer. But I’m going to tell some more from my notes that I didn’t actually get to share. Because if we’re giving more to Infrastructure Ontario, I have concerns.

Some of the Auditor General’s concerns that she flagged: Infrastructure Ontario doesn’t obtain enough information from their external project managers to assess whether they’re doing a good job. They don’t track how many vendors bid on capital projects or which vendors are successful. Their preliminary estimates don’t factor in additional costs incurred to address actual site conditions. We have no idea about the cost-benefit value: “Capital projects completed between April 2013 and March 2017 ... were completed on average about 330 days later than originally scheduled.”

There’s no accountability. Everything she flagged was problems with numbers, and yet this government says, “Eleven more entities—here, get under the umbrella.”

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member opposite. When we heard the debate, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, for me, is about understanding best practices. It’s understanding that we’re living in 2023 and not a long time ago. It’s understanding that we’re one of the largest landowners and landlords of properties in Ontario, and it’s understanding that we need to be modern in how we look at things.

So I’d like to ask the member opposite: Given the times we’re in, given that the technology is so much different today, why can they not accept that best practices include moving forward with this bill?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The technology piece doesn’t make any sense with this bill. This is about five of the entities not being allowed to buy or sell freehold real estate without the permission of the minister. This is about the other six being brought completely under control—the real estate assets completely under the control of Infrastructure Ontario. This is not about modernizing technology or what have you. This is about control.

What the government will do with that control and that information has yet to be determined, which is why I’ve asked, what is the problem that this bill is setting out to achieve? Because if the minister is going to make a reference to technology or whatnot, how does that connect? I hope one of the government members gets up and tells a story to us about what the heck this is for, because rather than being about real estate improvement or management and improvement, it seems to be about—I have no idea why you’re just consolidating. So enlighten us, please and thank you.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It’s always an honour to rise here to speak on behalf of the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore, and today to speak in support of Bill 151, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, introduced by the Minister of Infrastructure.

As the minister said, this bill would continue the work that we began earlier this year with Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, which began the process to centralize decision-making about the real estate owned by ministries and agencies, to allow the government to manage these properties more effectively and more efficiently, to reduce red tape, to improve accountability and to save taxpayers money.

1740

Speaker, I appreciate this work because this is exactly the kind of project we’re working on at the Treasury Board. Just to take one example, our new centralized procurement agency, Supply Ontario, is taking a whole-of-government approach to purchase goods and services to save taxpayers money by using provincial purchasing power to get access to the best quality products at the best value for the people of Ontario. We are also taking a whole-of-government approach to enterprise risk management. I know that our new oversight committees, like the Ontario Internal Audit Committee and the Audit and Accountability Committee, are bringing new levels of accountability to help ensure Ontario taxpayers get the best value for their money.

Speaker, three years ago I said that I know we’re going to continue to bring the rigour of business into the business of government, and that is exactly what Bill 151 would do. If passed, this bill would provide the Minister of Infrastructure with control over the real estate decisions of 10 agencies and organizations, including Ontario Health and Public Health Ontario and the proposed Ontario Health atHome, a new organization announced just last month that will be responsible for connecting people to home care services across Ontario.

I want to reiterate, the minister and her team have consulted with these agencies and the ministries that are responsible for them, and they all support this important initiative because they understand that it will save them time and money that they will now be able to use to focus on delivering public services that Ontario families need and deserve.

As the minister said, Ontario is the second-largest property owner in Canada. Only the federal government owns more land than the province of Ontario. But it is clear that we can make better use of this real estate. Back in 2017, the Auditor General reported that provincial properties could be operated more efficiently through centralized decision-making. This has been confirmed several times since then, by Pricewaterhouse in 2018, Deloitte in 2019 and research by the Real Estate Centre at the University of Pennsylvania.

In 2017, the Auditor General reported that Ontario owned 812 empty buildings, which cost \$19 million each year to maintain. She also reported that the Liberals were wasting at least \$174 million each year by keeping more office space or more expensive office space than the government needed. Just to take one example, we now are working with the WSIB to relocate their head office from Toronto to London, where real estate costs are about 40% lower. We expect that this will save the WSIB up to \$70 million each year.

This is also part of the Community Jobs Initiative, which is helping to distribute the provincial agency workforce from Toronto across the province so that every Ontarian and every community has fair access to these high-quality jobs. A centralized approach of managing the government's real estate would help to ensure that all properties are used in the most effective and efficient way and also create new opportunities, including the sale of surplus property, to better support government priorities like housing and long-term care.

Speaker, we're already making real progress on this, and I can give you a few examples just from my own community. First, I want to take a moment to congratulate our former Minister of the Environment Elizabeth Witmer, who was named to the Order of Ontario earlier this month. Some members might recall Minister Witmer came to the old Lakeview generating station in Mississauga–Lakeshore in March 2001 to announce that Ontario's five coal-fired power plants would be closed, beginning with Lakeview in 2005. It was this decision and this leadership by Minister Witmer, not the carbon tax, that reduced Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 27% since 2005.

I'm sure all members will recall the Lakeview location from the Liberals' billion-dollar gas plant scandal. They may not know that the 177-acre former OPG property is now being developed into the new Lakeview Village with 16,000 new residential units, including 1600 affordable units, all within steps from transit, including a new GO train station, new waste water treatment plant, new schools and new child care spaces and a 64-acre conservation area with a new public waterfront trail and the largest Canadian pier in the Great Lakes. This project will help thousands of families achieve the dream of home ownership.

Unfortunately, in May, Mayor Crombie said she was deeply disappointed in this project. She told an angry NIMBY crowd at council that she feels their rage. Well, today her campaign is against NIMBYism, so maybe her position has changed now. I don't think so.

As I mentioned, a new waste water treatment plant will support Lakeview Village. So I want to take a moment to thank the minister for the new \$200-million Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund for the repair and expansion of core water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure. Two weeks ago, I was proud to join the Minister of Infrastructure together with the Minister of Finance for this announcement at the Arthur P. Kennedy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeview. The new water system fund is an important step towards our provincial target of 1.5 million new homes by 2031. Again, I want to join the minister in calling the federal government to match this important investment.

Speaker, I'll give another example. A few years ago, we replaced the OPP highway safety detachment in Port Credit with a new detachment in Streetsville. This new \$20-million facility was state-of-the-art, with easy access to highways that the OPP control. The Port Credit facility was at the end of its life with flooding damage in the basement. It no longer met the need of the OPP. The property was sold last year, and a new 352-unit residential building is now planned for this site.

So I want to thank the minister and her team, including her parliamentary assistant from Brampton West, not just for their work on this bill but, more generally, for all their work on our government's infrastructure plan, which is the most ambitious in North America: \$185 billion over 10 years, including \$20.7 billion in the first year and almost \$26 billion next year in 2024-25. This plan is getting shovels in the ground to build new transit, rebuild our hospitals, modernize long-term care and other critical infrastructure to lay the foundation for a stronger Ontario and to support a population that is growing at half a million people each year, more than any US state, including the fastest-growing states of Florida and Texas.

It's worth taking a moment here to recall some of the other ways that the previous Liberal government capital investment failed to meet the needs of Ontario. Fifteen years of mismanagement and underinvestment left us with an infrastructure deficit in transportation and energy at the municipality level and in so many other critical areas. The Liberals left us with overcrowded hospitals and a wait-list for long-term-care beds, some of them in badly outdated facilities, like the four-person ward rooms in Camilla Care community that were not up to the challenges we faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the former Liberal Deputy Premier and Minister of Health George Smitherman said, "Ontario Liberals really starved health care for five years, and that is not spoken enough." Last year, former Premier Wynne admitted that she would not have done this if she had known that the pandemic was coming.

Everyone agrees on this—or I should say almost everyone, because earlier this year, when TVO asked

Mayor Bonnie Crombie if Premier Wynne had done everything she would not have done, Mayor Crombie said that Premier Wynne spent too much money, and in particular, she spent too much money on health care. Speaker, we don't agree with her. That's why under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is investing over \$54 billion in the largest hospital and long-term-care build program in Canadian history. In my community of Mississauga–Lakeshore alone, this includes an historic multi-billion-dollar investment to build both the largest and most-advanced hospital in Canadian history, and the largest long-term-care home in Ontario, which just opened earlier this month.

1750

At 24 storeys, three million square feet and almost 1,000 beds, the new Mississauga Hospital will be triple the size of the current hospital, which first opened in 1958. My mother worked there in the kitchen as a first-generation immigrant. I was born at that hospital. My two sons were born there. My sister worked in medical records and my niece was a candy striper. But the truth is, we needed a new hospital 20 years ago, and the former Liberal government kept saying no to the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

As I said last week, we just hit an important milestone on this project, as the RFP process for the new hospital has now closed. Construction can now begin next year on the site of the former parking garage, the former Camilla Care building and an administration building, as those offices will be moved to a new location on Hurontario. As I've said before, the new hospital will include a 200,000-square-foot women's and children's hospital, which will be the first of its kind in Canada. It will transform how health care is delivered to families and to women and children in Mississauga and Etobicoke.

As I mentioned, earlier this month, we celebrated another milestone for my community, as 632 new residents began moving into the modern, comfortable and safe new home at Wellbrook Place. Just three years ago, I joined the Premier in an empty field to announce the accelerated build program, which used rapid procurements and hospital-owned land to deliver projects years faster than the traditional timeline. That empty field is now Wellbrook Place, the largest long-term-care home in Ontario, even larger than the Credit Valley Hospital when it first opened 38 years ago.

As my friend from Kitchener–Conestoga pointed out last week, we have added more new long-term-care beds in just this one location, on Speakman Drive in Mississauga–Lakeshore, than the former Liberal government added from 2011 to 2018—only 611 long-term-care beds for the entire province. As the number of Ontarians over 75 increased by 75%, the number of long-term-care beds increased by less than 1%. This is what former minister George Smitherman meant by starving health care. And, of course, for three of those years, they did it with the support of the NDP, which held the balance of power from 2011 to 2014.

As I said last week, Wellbrook Place will be part of a new campus of care for seniors, including a new health

services building and the first residential hospice in Mississauga, which will be operated by Heart House Hospice, which just launched their new brand yesterday. They are now Hospice Mississauga.

I want to congratulate Kitrina Fex and her team on this. Again, I want to thank Karli Farrow at Trillium Health Partners and Tess Romain at Partners Community Health for all their hard work to deliver Wellbrook Place on an accelerated schedule.

There are projects like this under way right across the province as we continue to build and upgrade 60,000 long-term-care beds, including 1,100 in Mississauga–Lakeshore—more than any other riding in Ontario. Again, I want to thank the minister and her team for their investments.

The minister's plan also includes \$71 billion for transit infrastructure, including \$7.5 billion this year and almost \$12 billion next year in 2024–25. This includes the new 18-kilometre Hazel McCallion LRT line on Hurontario, which is on budget and on schedule to open in the fall of 2024. I joined the President of the Treasury Board to see the first piece of LRT track installed in Mississauga. The first piece of track in Port Credit was installed just this past week. It will connect to the Port Credit GO station, with 15-minute service or better, and the new Lakeshore BRT line.

As part of this development, MetroInx sold a “surplus” parking lot—about 1.5 acres—for \$65 million to a community builder in December 2021. This builder proposed a 40- or 42-storey transit-oriented development that would have direct access to the LRT and GO train station, just steps away from a municipal bus route. This will be a major inner-regional transit hub, but Mayor Crombie said these heights are “unacceptable and they are really excessive.” But on her leadership campaign website, Mayor Crombie also promised to remove height limitations around major transit stations.

Speaker, this government has been clear: We will continue to build transit-oriented communities, including affordable housing options, near transit. But we also recognize the cost of traffic gridlock. That is why this government is investing \$28 billion to expand and improve our highway network. We know that this is critical to the economic well-being of Ontario.

I'll just take a couple of examples in Mississauga–Lakeshore. The first phase of the QEW/Dixie interchange improvement is now completed and the new twin bridge over the Credit River has now opened to traffic on the QEW. This is part of the \$314-million QEW/Credit River Improvement Project. And, of course, Highway 413 will bring relief to one of the busiest corridors in North America.

Again, I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and her team, including her parliamentary assistant, for all their great work on this bill.

Lastly, I want to note that Bill 151 has been posted online on Ontario's Regulatory Registry. Comments are due by December 31, so I encourage everyone to please submit their feedback before the end of the year.

I will be voting for Bill 151 and I urge all members to support this very important infrastructure bill, Bill 151, for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Questions for the member?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is, why isn't the government responding to the Auditor General's finding about the poor performance of Infrastructure Ontario and its private contractors?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As the Auditor General did say, how did they mismanage something they never had? The whole point is to bring mismanagement together so that we can—sorry, I'm having problems here today. I apologize.

Miss Monique Taylor: You're reading the wrong answer.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: No, I'm not.

By doing this, it will give Infrastructure Ontario the authority to look over the whole real estate portfolio to make it much more efficient for the people of Ontario so we can save money and make things run much more efficiently.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore for that excellent presentation. He spoke in his remarks about some of the challenges that we have in getting things done. You hear from one side where we have some of the opposition that say, "We don't want to build any new highways. We don't want to build new communities where they haven't been put before." They cite environment concerns, they cite farmland issues—any kind of NIMBY reason they can come up with about why we can't build in new places. But then when we have ideas to build high density in places that make sense, where there's transit, we also hear that there's opposition to that.

Here we have a very common-sense piece of legislation that says, "Let's look at government land efficiently." But, again, we have naysayers on the other side. What would my colleague say to these naysayers and how can we get them on board?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): A quick reply, please.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Brampton for that question. Yes, I have that issue all the time in my riding alone. You want to try to build density; the NIMBYs say, "Do not build density." You want to build urban sprawl; they don't want to build urban sprawl. So where do we put the half a million people that come into our province every year for the next 10 years? I ask them that question as well.

1800

I do believe we have to build more infrastructure around transit—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. I apologize to the member. It is now 6 o'clock, and we have other business to attend to.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There being no business designated for private members' public business, it is now time for the late shows.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

COST OF LIVING

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Orléans has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the member on the government side can reply for up to five minutes.

The member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's great to be here with everyone this evening.

Nobody can deny that there is an affordability crisis impacting our province here in Ontario. While the most vulnerable have been experiencing this crisis for some time, it's now getting bigger and bigger and bigger, to the point where middle-class and even some upper-middle-class families are now also feeling the pinch. Mortgage rates are doubling, leading to hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars more each and every month. The cost for new cars is on the rise. There are some new cars, Madam Speaker, that now cost more than my parents paid for their first home 30 years ago. Transit fares are going up and up and up, all while transit agencies like the TTC and OC Transpo in Ottawa are cutting back services at the same time.

We've seen, across the province and across the board, grocery prices that are escalating beyond the reach of many families, to the point where they're needing to decide whether they can put breakfast on the table for their kids before school or if—in some cases, I've heard of stories where the kids in the family are even deciding which of them gets to take a lunch to school that day.

Madam Speaker, we're seeing utility bills that are higher now than they were in 2018, hydro prices that are up, natural gas prices that are up. Many, if not most, if not all, of our daily and weekly and monthly expenses are up, and the list of those costs, the list of those expenses seems to be getting longer and longer and longer as each day goes by.

We've also seen, Madam Speaker, that doctors are charging subscription fees for services that never used to be charged for. People are being asked to pay for prescription renewals, or they're being asked to pay monthly or yearly fees to access a medical clinic that might have a nurse practitioner or other supplementary services where these requests were never made before.

All that is to say, Madam Speaker, that Ontarians are struggling. They're struggling to pay the bills in a way that they haven't been for quite a long time. We're seeing an economic turn-down in many parts of North America, and many are forecasting a recession in the months and year to

come. It's clear that people are going to be more and more and more challenged to make ends meet at the end of the week, the end of the month etc.

And so last week I asked the Premier a very simple question. Ontario Liberals were the first party in the province—and I believe in the country—to propose removing the HST from the cost of home heating, an affordability measure that would have real and direct impact on families each and every month. When you get your gas bill at the end of the month, when you get your hydro bill at the end of the month, you can see how much HST you're being charged. If we were to remove HST from home heating, each and every month families would get to see that they're saving \$10 or \$15 or \$20 or \$25. Over the course of the year, that would add up; that would add up to the registration fees for Johnny to play soccer next spring. It would add up to the cost of buying a healthy breakfast or preparing a healthy lunch for the kids at school, Madam Speaker.

So I asked the Premier a very simple question: Would he support our motion to eliminate the provincial portion of the HST from home heating and to work with the federal government for them to do the same? The Premier has often spoken of his very close friendship with the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the finance minister—that they have been able to work collaboratively together, especially through the pandemic, to do so many good things. And so it would seem to me very simple to be able to pick up the phone and say, "Let's work together to cut the HST from home heating."

I asked that very simple question of the Premier last week, and he didn't answer. He decided to go on a giant rant about everything the federal government should do, and nothing about how the province could help families in the affordability crisis.

So I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he support cutting the HST from home—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. To respond, the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm happy to hear the member is thinking about affordability issues for Ontarians. For the last few years, we've acted quickly, and often alone, to provide the people of this province with the support they needed. Our government didn't wait to act when the cost of living began to rise. We took early action to keep costs down for Ontario residents.

But as I said, I'm happy to hear that the Liberal member is starting to finally talk about affordability. I am, however, disappointed to see his actions do not match his words. Speaker, the member chose to support our motion on eliminating the carbon tax on grocery items, and yet, only a few weeks later, he chose to vote against our motion on the removal of the carbon tax on all home heating fuel, a motion we put forward to cut costs for Ontario families. Did he change his mind on whether the carbon tax was hurting the economy in that short a time?

I'd like to say that I'm surprised by these political games, but if I've learned one thing in my years here, it's that consistency is not one of the Liberal member's strong

points. Last week, he supported eliminating an aspect of the carbon tax; this week, he's against it again. All I can say is, I hope when this government brings forward another motion on ending the carbon tax, we land on one of those days that he decides to be against it again.

Somehow, everyone but the Liberal Party seems to know that the carbon tax is hurting the pocketbook of Ontario families and making their life more unaffordable. The Bank of Canada has said that it drives up inflation. The Parliamentary Budget Officer shows that it results in income loss for the average Canadian. Our constituents tell us every day how it makes things more expensive. And even the NDP finally figured out that they should support our motion.

Speaker, think about that. Somehow, the member opposite found it in himself to support a carbon tax so regressive that even the NDP couldn't bring themselves to support it. In fact, just last week, his fellow Liberal member for Kanata–Carleton said that "the vast majority of Ontario households are better off with a carbon price"—better off. The members of this party change their mind by the day on whether they support making life more affordable for Ontarians. They can't even make up their minds on what they think of the carbon tax they love to talk about.

But the member asked where we stand on issues of affordability, and I'm happy to highlight real action from our government for him. This year alone, we increased the minimum wage from \$15.50 to \$16.55 per hour, helping more than 900,000 hard-working men and women across our province. We're eliminating double fares for commuters transferring from GO Transit to most local transit systems in the greater Toronto area, saving transit riders up to \$1,600 a year. And while the federal Liberals drive up the price of energy and gas, we're keeping it down by extending the gas tax cut from December of this year to June 2024. This will increase the average savings for Ontario drivers to \$260.

But after today, I hope the member opposite will choose to make up his mind once and for all and join us in our opposition of the federal carbon tax and our push to put money back in the pockets of hard-working Ontario families.

1810

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the government House leader. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter. The minister, parliamentary assistant or government House leader may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: It's great to be here with everyone this evening.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned by this government's nonchalant approach to managing our rapid-transit infra-

structure. It is a serious matter to us, and maintaining our subways, streetcars and buses is important, not only from an economic perspective, but also as an issue of public safety.

Madam Speaker, three days before my election, the Scarborough RT derailed. I was at the doors furiously when I heard the news. I was in shock, and my first thought went to my daughter, who rode that RT route every day. I assumed the worst, just like any other parents would—that she was on that train when it went off the rails. In that moment, I stopped thinking of the election and everything else. I just wanted to make sure that my daughter was okay. Thankfully, she was not on the train at that time. I also thank God that no one was seriously hurt in that accident, because it could have been so much worse. I could not believe that something like that could happen to us. There needed to be accountability. But what did we hear from this government? Not a word—no statement from the Minister of Transportation at the time, and nothing from the Scarborough Conservatives.

All the province will commit to is the Scarborough subway expansion, which can't come soon enough. Unfortunately, it's only scheduled to open in 2030, and knowing this government's track record for delivering projects late, I don't have much confidence in that plan.

The TTC has advanced a plan to build a busway where the RT once operated so that the 30,000 people who relied on the RT can get where they are going on time. Unfortunately, the government will not commit to funding this project, even though it will cost \$60 million—a drop in the bucket, considering this government is spending almost \$200 billion this year alone. The disrespect to the people of Scarborough is palpable and not something we will forget anytime soon.

Further troubling is that this derailment has not raised alarm bells in the offices of the Ministry of Transportation when it comes to Line 2. The trains used by Line 2 are 30 years old and are scheduled to reach their end of service in 2026. In anticipation of this, the TTC began their process of purchasing new trains in 2020, but they had to cancel this year because of the major funding crisis the TTC is facing now. The city of Toronto is broke. They cannot financially, by themselves, support this project. They are still \$1.6 billion short.

The consequences of not investing in new trains can be enormous. At the worst case, we could see another serious accident happen again, like the RT derailment that happened in Scarborough. These trains are not built to last forever, and while the TTC would opt to maintain them as a contingency, they tried the same with the Scarborough RT, and we saw what happened. The signalling technology in Line 2 needs to be urgently upgraded, as it dates back to the 1960s. New signals, combined with automatic train control, would provide for smoother and faster operation for our transit riders, like the TTC has already accomplished with new trains on Line 1. They also need new trains to accommodate the Scarborough subway expansion's kilometres of new tunnels, otherwise wait time between trains will increase drastically, hurting not only Scarborough riders, but riders all the way to Etobicoke.

This government often claims to be fiscally responsible, which might be their excuse why they cannot part with the \$1.6 billion for new trains, but even if we try to extend the lifespan of the current trains, which will cost millions of dollars, we will still have to buy new trains. Best we do it sooner than later, because the cost of them will only increase with time. Subways do not get cheaper over time, so I am not—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Sorry. You're out of time. Five minutes goes fast, I'm sure.

To respond, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and talk about transit in Scarborough.

The member knows—Madam Speaker, I'll let you know—that I did spend some time in Scarborough. My family moved back there when I was 14 years old, so I know that area of the city, actually, very well. I used to have to take the York Mills 95 bus to school, and then it was the York Mills 95A, because back in 1985, the government of the day—it was a Liberal government—reduced funding, so the 95 became the 95A. And then it stopped about a kilometre and a half away from my home—which now, in retrospect, gives me the ability to say to my kids that I had to walk a kilometre and a half back and forth to get to the bus. That was, of course, a relic of the Liberal times.

But I would have been one of the first people to actually get on the Scarborough LRT at the time. They built the LRT because the Liberals didn't want to build a subway, so they decided they would go cheap for the people of Scarborough, and they built a—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Typical Liberals.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, yes. They built this LRT, and it was a cheap alternative to a subway.

The subway stopped at Kennedy. Well, for a long time, it actually stopped at Warden, then it stopped at Victoria Park. Then Conservatives ensured that we built from Victoria Park, then we built out to Warden, and then we built it out to Kennedy, Madam Speaker, as you will know. But anyway, then the David Peterson Liberals came in and they decided that they would only build an LRT, despite the fact that everybody wanted a subway. So they built this LRT. It was cheaper. Now, it never really worked very well, to be honest with you.

But then, during the time when the Liberals were in power—actually, funny story, Madam Speaker, if I may; we have three minutes. My first job in government was actually in 1985. I don't know if colleagues know this, but I was a summer student at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing when I was 15 years old. I was a summer student, and the minister at the time was Alvin Curling, a Liberal minister—a really, really good guy, actually; I really liked him.

But for me, from my riding, I had to take the Scarborough 86 bus, because there was no connection to that area of the city. I had to take the Scarborough 86 bus from near the Toronto Zoo, where we lived, to Kennedy station, which was an hour away, because that was the closest. I couldn't afford to get on the GO train, because they made

it so expensive, right? And then I came all the way down here and I got \$3.15 an hour to do that. I never got myself on the Scarborough LRT at that particular point in time, because the way they created it, it was so unreliable that nobody actually wanted to take it.

And then the Liberals were in office for 15 years, as you will know, Madam Speaker, and they made the decision not to build subways in Toronto. They made the decision not to build subways for the people of Scarborough. But thankfully, we decided that we would do that.

The member will know, also, that at that time—you probably remember—that the Eglinton 34 bus, which is a really important bus in that area of the city, at that exact same time in the 1980s to the 1990s while the Liberals were in office, was also reduced in service because it was in Scarborough. The service was maintained in the Toronto portion, but it was reduced in the Scarborough portion.

Then they went one step further, the Scarborough 85—I know the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park will know how important that route is. That was also reduced in service, the Scarborough—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What did the Liberals have against Scarborough?

1820

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know what they had against Scarborough, to be honest with you.

Now, that was the legacy of transit and transportation as I was growing up, Madam Speaker. All that to say, it leads me to the point of all of this, that the Liberals, of course, made no investments in Scarborough.

When I was a federal member, I was in Scarborough—a link in Sheppard. As a federal member, we announced the Scarborough Sheppard extension, I don't know, three or four times, but Toronto and the province could never agree to do it. Then, finally, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, the Associate Minister of Transportation, comes along, and what do we have? We have a subway being built in Scarborough.

So there is at least one member elected. I know the other Conservative members in Scarborough fought very, very hard, despite 15 years of inability by the Liberals, this member got it done. So I think that member for the work that he did.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IMPROVING REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION DES BIENS IMMEUBLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux infrastructures.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just want to say good evening to everyone out in living-room land watching us here, in TV land. We're here tonight for night sittings. We're debating Bill 151. The title is An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure, but I guess the layman's terms for the topic—it's called the Improving Real Estate Act Management, 2023.

Earlier, the Minister of Infrastructure had her lead. I was listening to her speech, and she talked about how the real estate that's under the Ontario government is one of the largest portfolios in Canada and in North America. What this bill deems to do is take properties that are owned by the government and bring them into this bill for decisions—whether or not these organization agencies can sell or dispose of property or even buy property.

One of the things she talked about—and it's about property obviously and about government assets, but one of the things she also mentioned in her speech is that doing this is going to help the government in the broader plan to build affordable housing. When she talked about affordable housing, I quickly went to my phone to look up a very special project that's happening in the London–Fanshawe area for actual affordable housing, the true definition of what affordable housing is—and I'm so very proud of that build.

The Diocese of London has joined the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to help construct affordable housing in the city's east end. Originally, it was going to be 60 units, but I went to an event a couple of weeks ago—coincidentally, the speaker was one of the people that was on the Saint Vincent de Paul board—and they were talking about this affordable housing project. Originally it was going to be a 60-unit building, but because the need is so vast in London—I believe he said the increase was going to be to 74 units. That's what the project is now changed to. He was there to talk about the project and how it's coming along but also about funding, because he wanted to have some fundraising so that people can contribute to this.

As I said, the project is made possible by the diocese and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and this is a quote from the Most Reverend Joseph Dabrowski, the auxiliary bishop for the diocese, and he said, “We have over 2,000 people who are homeless in London and our mission is to help.” One of the things that's really going to be very affordable when it comes to housing under this project is that the rents for the units are expected to be between \$800 and \$1,000 a month. That's pretty substantial that London is taking on these affordable housing projects. Of course, when I think about the fact that they're looking for funding, I think, “What's the provincial government's role in building true affordable housing?” I know the government talks about affordable housing, but these will be not-for-profit homes and buildings. They're going to have two elevators.

That was something that was very interesting as well. I don't know if anyone has experienced this, but there has been not-for-profit being built, and obviously many other for-profit apartment buildings being built, and sometimes, an elevator gets broken—I mean, here in the Legislature. But usually, there's a backup elevator. But in these two particular buildings in my riding—seniors' buildings, quite frankly—built under the NDP under the not-for-profit housing, when they had those programs going that were unfortunately cancelled by the Conservative government after the NDP in the 1990s—they stopped building these not-for-profit buildings.

For instance, Richards Memorial United Church is the one that has the building on Wavell Street. But what's interesting about that particular situation and why I bring that up is because they only have one elevator in that building. A couple of years ago, that elevator broke down. If you can imagine, it's an actual seniors' building. It's a building for seniors for affordable rents. So there were seniors who could not walk up and down the stairs because, of course, they had walkers or they had wheelchairs. They were very concerned, if there was an emergency, how they would get out of their apartment building if there's a fire or there's a medical emergency.

One of the things that I asked the question at the time of the event of Larry McKenzie's—that was the presenter: “Are there going to be two elevators? Because it needs to have a backup system.”

One of the things that I think is very important and this government needs to also address is how to get an inventory of the elevators in buildings that only have one elevator. If it breaks down, we need to talk to the operators, this highly skilled trade that fixes these elevators, and find out: Is it a worker shortage issue? Is it supplies from parts? What is the problem? Because it took months, in my example, to fix that elevator in that affordable housing apartment building, and it was very stressful on the tenants because they relied on that for mobility. Some of them couldn't get out to get groceries. This wasn't during the pandemic when we weren't allowed to get groceries; this was just the elevator was broken.

The fact that the government has talked about how this bill is going to create more affordable housing—that's good, but when you look at the bill, it doesn't really get into affordable housing. What it does get into is management of these companies. Our critic from Oshawa talked about the fact that they're going to have a total of 11 government assets now being brought into the Ministry of Infrastructure and that Infrastructure Ontario will be the ones that will be the property managers that will hire people to look after these properties.

There are five of these properties. They're going to be a fully centralized realty authority. What that means is they're going to create a framework to remove and/or modify five entities' and one proposed entity's ability to deal with real property if prescribed and to provide the Minister of Infrastructure with control of real property previously under the control of the prescribed entities. Who are those five prescribed entities? Well, I'll tell you

who they are. The five prescribed entities are going to be the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion Act, 2007; the Ministry of Health's Connecting Care Act, 2019; the Centennial Centre of Science and Technology Act; and the last one is going to be the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act—that's only four. The last one is Bill 135, the Convenient Care at Home Act. These are all going to be under the fully centralized category in this bill.

Then, the next six properties that the government is going to manage or decide that the entities that have the control of who they hire to fix the property, or maintain the property—they are going to be called a “tailored approach” in the next six, because there's a total of 11 in this bill.

By the way, this bill is two pages. The first page is an explanatory note and then the next two pages of the actual description of the bill is just two pages, so it's a very short bill. The intent of it is obviously about real estate and control of these properties, but we're not really sure the reasons why this is happening. That's something that's kind of a lingering question when it comes to this government bill.

1830

The next category, from the 11 properties that the government is going to take control of, is called the tailored approach. The tailored approach realigns the realty authority of six entities that would prohibit specific realty activities and/or require that approval from the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the ministry of the entities' oversight—ministries to obtain and/or to comply possibly with the LGIC regulations for freehold real property acquisitions or freehold real property dispositions. These entities will retain authority for realty management of certain properties; for example, personal property or non-freehold interests in real property.

Those properties are, as we said here, six, and these ones, as they say—it's going to be the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is basically the government, or the minister, depending on if the minister has been assigned to that portfolio or that asset. Those six will be the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act, the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corporation Act, the Ottawa Convention Centre Corporation Act, the Royal Ontario Museum Act, the Science North Act and the Algonquin Forestry Authority Act. That's kind of the breakdown of the bill.

What the minister talked about at the time when she was doing her lead, she said that this is to fit into the broader plan the government has to build affordable housing and to build long-term-care beds. She said that Ontario is the fastest-growing region in North America. So this seems like a bill that they're pushing as a necessity, that we've got to take control of these properties because this is the only way we're going to build affordable housing, it's the only way we're going to build long-term-care beds, to make sure that the government can meet the needs of the population growth of this province. That's kind of the way it was laid out.

I don't know if doing that is necessarily going to help, because we don't know the real plan around why the government wants control of these properties—whether to dispose of real property or buy new. It's really not clear. The Auditor General—and the government talks about that this is based on one of the Auditor General's recommendations, but quite frankly, the Auditor General didn't address this particular issue. The Auditor General, when they conducted the report—and I'm going to go over those recommendations because I think they're really important to read into the record, because none of these recommendations are in this bill. This is what the government claims is the case.

Again, while we still don't know what problem this bill is solving, it's not solving the problems that are revealed in the Auditor General's report with respect to the ministry's poor oversight of real estate services in Ontario. While the AG recommended better oversight and performance standards government-wide, she did not recommend centralization per se. So to the extent that the AG indicated that Infrastructure Ontario was the problem, this bill could make the problem worse by giving this to Infrastructure Ontario and embed in private contracts more properties that they're going to manage, and, quite frankly, poorly. Their performance does not warrant giving them more business and more clients to manage properties. It really doesn't. They don't have a good track record.

One of the recommendations I found interesting from the Auditor General was recommendation number 3 in the 2017 Auditor General's report. On page 591, recommendation number 3 says:

“In order to ensure the fair and economical procurement of project contractors, we recommend that Infrastructure Ontario:

—obtain sufficient information on procurements conducted by external project managers, and analyze this information to determine whether there are any trends that suggest non-cost-effective procurement practices; for example, too few vendors bidding or a large portion of projects being awarded to only a few vendors; and

—implement its planned controls over external project managers manually adding vendors to identify any potential conflicts of interest in this process.”

That's something that I think the government is unaware of, oblivious to, neglectful; I don't know the word. But conflicts of interest are really important when it comes to real estate and property. I think the greenbelt fiasco shows that this government isn't really in tune to what a conflict of interest could look like. There have been lots of examples of how they kind of skirt around the rules. I think the Auditor General is very clear that this has to be corrected when it comes to procurement because, again, this bill is giving the government more control, and Infrastructure Ontario is the corporation that manages these properties.

The other recommendation that the Auditor General wanted—a few of them, but this is the one I found kind of interesting—was recommendation number 4. Again, these recommendations, as far as we know, haven't been ad-

hered to because, even with the Ontario Science Centre, the business case that apparently was done this spring still hasn't been made public. I don't think this government is taking the lessons that other professionals—highly skilled professionals; the Auditor General is a highly skilled professional. They are giving advice to this government on how to conduct these dealings so they can actually restore trust in the public and give some faith back that people who are handling your public assets—and they belong to us, really; they belong to the public—are going to be dealing with them in a fair, honest way. No one is going to be benefiting financially from this, right? But we know with the greenbelt, that's what happened. So it kind of destroys the credibility of the government when it comes to bringing a bill forward and there's really no clear reason why they need control of these assets.

Anyway, recommendation number 4—I'll get to this one. It says: “In order to ensure capital projects planning uses reliable estimates to achieve cost-effective projects, we recommend that Infrastructure Ontario:

—review initial cost estimates to ensure they are reasonable for prioritizing capital projects to be funded;

—confirm that the external property and land manager and external project managers are complying with the provisions of their contracts or master services agreement that expect their estimates of project costs to be within a certain percentage of actual costs, and take corrective action where necessary;

—re-evaluate and update future contracts to provide sufficient incentives to external project managers to complete capital projects on time and on budget”—imagine having to ask for that—and

—“review and confirm that external project managers have valid reasons for revising project completion dates.”

These kinds of recommendations really leave a lot of speculation and doubt.

I was talking to someone recently on the other side and we were having a discussion about the Auditor General. The member felt that it was unfair how critical the Auditor General is when they examine portfolios. Look at the greenbelt, right? I think a kind of sticking point with them is the Auditor General's greenbelt findings. I said to the member, you have to think of the Auditor General and their training; it's called an audit. They're meant to go in and find the errors. They're not there to pat you on the back.

While I think there were some good things in there—she might have thrown some tidbits. But the point is, they're not there to pat you on the back. When you're an auditor, you're going in there with a fine-toothed comb and you're going to find every mistake on the planet. It's kind of an interesting job, don't you think, to actually look. You must be meticulously detailed to want to go through processes, policies and systems to find what's wrong.

And this is the beauty of the Auditor General. If you take a different perspective on it rather than thinking, “All she does is criticize what we do”—not just your government; any government—then if you take a different perspective about it and say, “Jeez, if we can make things

better by a different set of eyes outside of us doing the work”—because sometimes when you’re inside, you don’t see your mistakes. You can’t find your fault, right? So when she finds the errors, this is a wonderful reason when you can actually correct those mistakes and make things tighter, make things better, make things more efficient, make things not go over budget and make things be honest, because when we have systems in the government, no matter what ministry, that there aren’t those fail-safe pieces that keep people honest—and most of us are. I mean, I certainly think it’s not many of us who would ever do that.

1840

But the Auditor General, she is a wonderful asset— whoever that might be in the future. If an Auditor General does their job properly, they will find mistakes in any system, because I am a firm believer that anything can be done better. So even if you create any bill, things change over time. People change, skill sets change, technology changes, and you can correct things as you go. But if you just think the system is good enough, then that’s when it becomes a problem and people poke holes, right? Who would have thought the Premier would be using his personal phone and not his government-designated phone for government business and think that’s okay? That doesn’t make any sense.

So when we’re talking about this bill, we understand that the government wants control over these 12 properties but we’re just not sure why they have so much faith in Infrastructure Ontario when they failed on so many other levels. In 2017, it was clearly laid out that improvements had to be made and I don’t think the government has addressed those improvements as of yet.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We’re going to now go to questions for the member.

Ms. Laura Smith: It was interesting to listen to the member opposite’s comments and I appreciated some of the things she talked about, including the Auditor General and her report. Our government is about to deliver one of the most ambitious infrastructure plans with a historic investment of more than \$159 billion over 10 years. But circling back to systems and a streamlined system, I appreciate the fact that everything can definitely be done better, and that’s one of the things I think the Auditor General was referring to.

I’m just going to read the Auditor General’s recommendation—and other third-party reports have identified opportunities, definitely, to deliver the real estate portfolio more efficiently through initiatives including a centralized authority.

So I’m just asking what the member opposite’s perception of the AG reports is, especially from 2017. Does she believe they were correct when the AG said that?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I thank the member for that question. I think there was a suggestion—and I wouldn’t doubt what you’re reading from the Auditor General, but it didn’t say, “This is going to fix the system.” What the Auditor General was talking about was Infrastructure Ontario needs to be fixed. They’re the ones that are faulty

when it comes to managing the assets of the government’s property. That is what I was speaking about from my approach to that.

It didn’t say, “The government needs to”—because if that was the recommendation, it would be very clear: The government needs to centralize all public assets to make sure they run efficiently. No. The recommendation is that Infrastructure Ontario failed, and that needs to be fixed.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for her comments. I really appreciated that she mentioned affordable housing at the beginning of her speech and wondered if she wanted to expand on how the government’s approach to real estate affects affordable housing issues in London–Fanshawe and what is missing from this bill that the government could use its power to increase the supply of affordable housing in London.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member, our critic on municipal affairs. He mentioned affordable housing and I just want to talk about specifically how right now, there is a building in my riding on Webster Street—and I mentioned this building before—where there are a lot of renovictions going on. So one of the things we should do is absolutely build more affordable housing. It should never have been taken off the government’s plan. Every government should have that on its radar. It should be mandatory, quite frankly, so we’re not put in this position again in the future. On Webster Street, there are a lot of renovictions.

I think if the government made stronger legislation, like real rent controls, and held these bad landlords accountable when they are squeezing people out in bad faith, that would help the affordable housing crisis—and going forward, building more.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I just find it interesting that the government chooses to talk about real estate after what we’ve just gone through in Ontario, in terms of an RCMP investigation, an \$8.3-billion backroom deal.

Here’s the thing: We’re passing some greenbelt legislation to protect the greenbelt from the government, and we’re passing urban boundary legislation to protect urban boundaries from the government. In this bill, we’re actually being permissive. So one of these things is not like the other.

How are we actually permitting the government to be less transparent when it comes to real estate in this province?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Here’s my prediction—who knows if it will come true. Bill 150 is about the urban boundaries. Quite frankly, when you read that bill, they list the urban boundaries—can’t sue the government, can’t sue anybody; they protect themselves legally. So my prediction is, if something goes wrong, they’ll have another bill—that we can’t sue Infrastructure Ontario, or the minister’s government controlling these assets. That will be the next bill we’ll have.

So, yes, you're right. They don't have the legal part where you can't sue them, but it's coming.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from London—Fanshawe for her remarks this evening.

I know she referenced the Auditor General throughout her remarks this evening, and I was just wondering if the member of the opposition is claiming that the AG reports from 2017 are incorrect.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I don't understand that question.

Quite frankly, the Auditor General is a highly skilled, educated professional and deserves respect. When you have somebody who's going to go in and do a deep dive into any system, you need to listen to what they say, because you're inside the bubble; you're not seeing what's happening outside that bubble to fix the problems. It's just like if you get a plumber coming into your house and they're going to tell you how to fix the leak, and you're like, "Well, no, I don't think the leak is there. I think it's up here." No, they're the experts. Fix the leak.

If you had followed the Auditor General's recommendations, we probably wouldn't be in the state that we have now, where you have to take control of 11 properties.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for her remarks. I know she deeply cares about the issue, especially when it comes to housing, and she talked a little bit about that as well.

When we look at the necessities and we understand that Infrastructure Ontario had an important job of managing, really, Ontario entities—and one of them is the Ontario Science Centre. Clearly, they have failed to do any of the repairs. So I'm just curious to see why Infrastructure Ontario is given more to do. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again, I'll say that there was a business case given to the minister in the spring, and that is still yet to be made public. This government has sometimes—they don't like to give information out when it should be public, and I think that's not right. That's incorrect. That's not good practice. I can tell you, the Auditor General probably would tell you to fix that system too. Maybe that's a private members' bill in the works—someone can come up with that.

Any time a report comes that should be made public, because it's in the public interest—in this case, this is public property, so the public has a right to see what that business case was. If the repairs are so poor, then that business case should back up what this government is saying—that the Ontario Science Centre is irreparable.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The government is doing a bill to do something they didn't do in another bill—which is what they seem to be doing in this session. There have been problems all the way through—greenbelt, MZO, urban

boundaries. What in this bill actually protects Ontarians in terms of the decisions that are going to be made about disposing of real estate, in terms of the best value for Ontarians? How are we going to make sure that happens here? I can't see it.

1850

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member can't see it because it's really not there.

Again, I'm really concerned—when we heard the minister say about the broader plan this government has. We don't know what their broader plans are.

They've got this bank that they're creating—Ontario Infrastructure Bank—and the government said they're going to invest \$3 billion into that because they want to have critical projects being built. It's like a domino effect. They're going to take control of 11 properties. Is it just paying off their friends? I don't know. Is this another scheme? That is the question people have. Whether you like it or not, that's what is on people's minds.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There is not enough time to go for another round of questions and answers.

We're going to move to further debate.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I will be splitting my time with the member from Ottawa South.

I recognize that the Ministry of Infrastructure has an enormous mandate, dealing with billions of dollars of real estate.

Infrastructure Ontario has operated, historically, without much popular attention, not much flash, but it has been absolutely crucial. This is an organization that supports all the other ministries, and that is what allows Ontario's public services to thrive.

With this legislation, I think—and I know that Bill 69 came before. Taking over all of these real estate operations from other government agencies brings with it risks, and when you have this new bill—and also adds to that risk by bringing further agencies under the direct control of the government. There might be rationale for some of this, to be fair. With some small agencies that rent out space on the commercial market, maybe it's better to find them a place in a building that the government already owns. That makes perfect sense to me. But when we're talking about centralized management—it's really a very dictatorial style of leadership. It centralizes authority. It centralizes decisions. It prevents proper oversight and visibility. It limits transparency. It actually limits communication—both the quality and the quantity of communications.

It also limits collaboration because it removes all these boards of directors that were working in their local areas, and it concentrates that power, that authority, in a select group of individuals. How do you know that select group of individuals have all the information they need to make the best decision? Often, with extremely centralized organizations, that can lead to myopic decision-making and can lead to a loss of the checks and balances that would have provided good decisions in the past. I grant you, though, that it does provide for rapid implementation of decisions. But as my mother would say, decide in haste;

repent at your leisure. Often, that drive to get things done can actually lead to mistakes—mistakes that we'll have to live with for the rest of our lives.

So I think when we look at this kind of extreme centralization, we need to be very cognizant of what the risks are. Often, in the commercial world, if you see drives to centralize, maybe it is in order to serve customers better, especially when they're far-flung. But when I read this legislation, I'm wondering to myself, who does this legislation actually serve? Who does it serve? And how do you get local decision considerations involved in this decision process once it is totally centralized? And I think that's where the danger is.

We've seen this kind of centralization in the past. And I get it—according to some of the management gurus, a centralized approach ends up with a better, more coordinated, more strategic approach, increases efficiency. However, with that it brings some extreme risks, and I think one of the things that we need to really talk about is transparency. When you have people in a small cabal making all the decisions, that's when danger happens. That's when risks actually come about. Look at the greenbelt: It was a very centralized decision—a very centralized decision—and now the government wants to do more of that, without really figuring out what actually happened that led to some poor decisions—whether it's the greenbelt, whether it's the MZOs, whether it's the urban boundaries. What is it about what was happening, in the culture and in the processes, that actually led there?

We need to learn those lessons first. This is a huge step towards very extreme centralization. How are we going to ensure that public assets aren't just handed over to private interests for profit? There is no guarantee. There is no way of locals having an input into the decisions being made.

I can see one thing here, when I read this. I kind of think, you know, we're growing as a population. We're growing quite dramatically, and this is generally good news for us, but how do we make sure that we don't sell real estate and sell it to speculators, only to have to buy it back for twice the price a few years later? How do we make sure that doesn't happen? I don't see anything in this legislation that gives me any hint that that was even a consideration.

When I look at it, for me, I get the centralization part of it, but the local part of it I think is so very important. Those are the people who will volunteer. They're the people that will keep it going in good times and in bad, and if you cut them out of the process, then you're not going to have the benefit of that talent, that experience and that information that they hold that maybe we don't.

So, collapsing public boards who control public assets for the public, in the public's interest, in order to place it under direct control of the government makes me very nervous. This kind of extreme centralization, whether it's in infrastructure—we've also seen hints of it, as well, in health care—carries with it extreme risks. And when I read this legislation, I don't see any of those risks—any suggestions that those kinds of risks are recognized or that there is even a process to mitigate them.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to pick up where my colleague from Kanata–Carleton left off. She did raise the issue of how this government got in trouble on land speculation and ended up in an \$8.3-billion backroom deal and now we have the RCMP investigating. And that's because there were no processes; there were no checks and balances. The government even admitted that. The Premier declared it to anybody who would listen to him on any street corner. And here we are, consolidating without the processes that we need to protect people.

So, how are we protecting against speculation in that case? Maybe we're talking of assets that are owned in Toronto—we know we're going to build housing there—but what about an asset they own up in Timiskaming, right next to my colleague's farm? You never know. How are we protecting and making sure the use of that provincial asset is in the best public interest—not just necessarily to get the best price, which is something that we want to do—and how do we ensure that it's not an inside deal where well-connected people get the inside track on buying a piece of Ontario's publicly owned property? I get it. School boards hanging on to schools when other school boards can use them? That's wrong. I think we can all agree on that. I agree on that. But this bill goes further than that.

1900

What's happening right now, we have governance, and that governance protects Ontarians. It protects the institution. It protects people. It makes sure that our decisions stand the test of scrutiny. I don't want to end up in a situation like we did with the greenbelt, where all roads led back to the Premier's office. It wasn't the minister; the minister was under the direction of the Premier's office. That's how things work in government these days—some governments more than others. I would not want to see another minister put in that position, because that's the way things have been working for a while and that's why we have an RCMP investigation. That's why the government had to pass legislation to protect the greenbelt from the government, in particular the Premier. That's why we're debating legislation—we haven't passed it yet—about urban boundaries, to protect the urban boundaries and the people of Ontario from the Premier.

Now we're doing something about MZOs. I'm not entirely clear what we're doing there. We're doing a review. I'm not sure who's doing the review, but if it's the minister doing the review, although I respect him greatly, I think we need a bit more diligence than that. Maybe they should just get on with it and put another bill in to protect Ontarians from the government with regard to MZOs. That's kind of what we're doing here: We're undoing and adding on to in this legislative session. What can we point to of substance that we've done to address the affordability crisis? Very little.

My last point—oh, I've got lots of time, so I can make it my second-last point; sorry guys—is transparency. My

colleague from Kanata–Carleton has very clearly laid it out: Where's the transparency in this? There's a lot of publicly owned assets out there.

It's not just about this current government or this current minister, but when we do things, they're supposed to have some level of permanence here. We don't usually do things like carve up the greenbelt and then undo it, and then expand urban boundaries and then contract them, but we seem to be doing that. I hope we're not doing that with this bill, to be honest, and that we get it right, but you've got to think about what it means 10 years from now, because we're all protecting the same people.

I get it; I understand it. But what I need to see in here is the measures that we're taking, because we're taking governance out of it. We're removing governance and narrowing down the decision-making. So if the board of the ROM decides they want to sell, they still have to go to you, but they have to make that decision and they have to make that case. Now they don't. They don't get that option. The power is being consolidated, and when you consolidate power—my colleague is right—there are risks. There are risks that people who had some power, some connection to it—they're taken away.

Let's go back to the greenbelt legislation. Now we're passing greenbelt legislation that actually puts power back into people. And we're only doing that because somebody took advantage. Some people took advantage of no processes.

What I would like to hear from the other side—because the minister has already done the hour leadoff, maybe we can get it in one minute—is how we are actually being transparent and protecting people while we're consolidating this power. Because that's what is happening.

I understand the need to do things quicker. I understand the need to say, "Those school boards should be selling those schools to other school boards." I realize that we may have a lot of property out there, but let's not, in haste, make a decision that, five years from now, 10 years from now or even right now, if people don't handle it right, is going to be the wrong decision.

That's the thing that concerns me. I understand it; I get it. But there's some reasonable doubt with this government's ability to be open and transparent with the decisions that they're making, especially when it comes to anything that has to do with real estate and land. And that, Speaker, is why we have an RCMP investigation.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to thank the members from Kanata–Carleton and Ottawa South for their presentations.

I wanted to ask the member from Ottawa South—I think that he made a lot of sense when he talked about this government having to roll back so many of its plans. Basically, their entire housing strategy has been a complete disaster that they've had to roll back; the greenbelt, obviously; urban boundary expansions. We expect they're going to have to roll back some of their MZO nonsense. So it's just a constant situation where the government puts something forward, they don't research it properly, there's

not the proper transparency, and then they have to roll it back. It's the story of their entire housing legislation.

What could the government have done differently with this legislation in terms of transparency to be more believable? How is anybody supposed to have confidence that they're not going to have to roll this back as well?

Mr. John Fraser: I think you had to be more explicit about the transparency of the decisions like they have been now with the greenbelt.

Look, first of all, on the housing strategy, the quickest thing would have been to actually return to real rent control for buildings built after 2018. That would have helped a lot in housing; that would have helped a lot of people. It would have kept prices affordable. We wouldn't necessarily have got ourselves more housing, but right now the housing crisis is about people staying where they are, in some cases.

So I think the way they could have built more confidence in this bill is not to have carved up the greenbelt, not to have expanded the urban boundaries because certain insiders wanted certain things done, and not to have granted MZOs for 50-storey apartment buildings in a flight path.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I was listening carefully to the remarks made by the member from Ottawa South, and I had remembered that during a previous debate in this chamber, we had had the opportunity to review several government agencies—if I remember correctly, approximately 18 various agencies—who had decision-making authority over various real estate assets. I found that very surprising, and so did the Auditor General. In 2017, the Auditor General and also other multiple third parties said that there were lots of opportunities for the province to deliver the real estate portfolio more efficiently if decision-making authority had been centralized.

So my question to the member from Ottawa South is this: Why does he disagree so strongly with a recommendation from the Auditor General?

Mr. John Fraser: Because if you wanted to find efficiencies—what are you talking about, efficiencies? Just simply disposal, or is it disposal that's appropriate? Is it disposal of a public asset in the public interest, or is it disposal of an asset just to get the money? Is it disposal of an asset just so we can favour a particular group or person? That's the point. The point is, when you have local governance, the minister still has the power to direct; the government still has the power to direct if they want to get rid of an asset. They just want to remove—this is red tape removal, but it's not red tape; it's actually the thing that protects people, that ensures that there's trust in government, trust in decision-making.

If you look at Ontario Place, we can't get any transparency around Ontario Place, or the Ontario Science Centre. So how can people have confidence in that decision? And now you're saying, "Can we just please have some more power? Give us the power, because we need it." Well, you've had it a couple of times, and I've got to say, it's been pretty disappointing.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to my colleague as well. In his debate, he talked many times about \$8.3 billion that was part of the greenbelt scandal. I'll just remind everybody: that was a low estimate based on previous land values. And so you have that. On the heels of that, you have Ontario Place and the Therme scandal, with \$650 million going to Therme and all this luxury spa and all the sketchy stuff that's associated with that. Then we have this bill in front of us. This bill is about two pages, but basically it's like, "Trust us. Trust us."

Now, if you go on Twitter, or X, or whatever you want to call it now, you'll see the Premier's name and "corruption" trending on a regular basis. There is no trust for this government, Speaker.

1910

So, to my colleague from Ottawa—South?

Mr. John Fraser: South, by the airport.

MPP Jamie West: Ottawa South. Why would the Conservative government expect anyone in Ontario to trust them on anything at this point?

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, wow. How much time do I have?

Mr. Will Bouma: One minute.

Mr. John Fraser: One minute? Dang. Gosh, where to begin?

Okay, I've got to say this. I've got an audience; I can say it. I didn't hear anything about the parking garage when the RFP was out there. And all of a sudden, we have a parking garage. It's going to be underwater—probably not underwater, but close to the water underground, so if it doesn't work out, Ripley's can probably move in in a couple of years, right?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Liberal headquarters.

Mr. John Fraser: That's right.

But here's the thing: They're paving paradise and asking us to pay for the parking lot. That's what is happening here. So, that's why it's hard to trust them. I mean, I like all of you. I think you're great. And it's not all of you, but there's a few people I just kind of wonder what their motives are. And I think that's a fair assessment, right? All roads lead to the Premier's office.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I just want to return to the fact that the Auditor General recommended in 2017 that decision-making authority over these various pieces of real estate should be centralized. Now, this is a recommendation from the Auditor General. I'm not going to pretend that any government, or even any member in this Legislature of 124 people, is automatically bound by anything that the Auditor General says. I'm not going to pretend to do that. But certainly, the Liberals have insisted on it, time and time again, that we should slavishly follow every recommendation of the Auditor General, even if we disagree with it. The Liberals have repeated that time and time again: that we should follow every single recom-

mendation of the Auditor General, even if we disagree with it.

Now, this happens to be a recommendation from the Auditor General and we're following it, but this time it's the Liberals who don't want to follow the recommendation. So, my question to the member is this: Why are you picking and choosing? Why are you contradicting everything that you've said in this House since I've been elected? Why are you now saying that it is fully acceptable—

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

The member for Ottawa South to respond.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, where to begin? I just want to remind you there's two of us here, right? Two. You can direct your questions up here.

Mr. Will Bouma: She's nice, though.

Mr. John Fraser: She's nice. I know, I know.

Okay, look, I think what I'm saying is, I think what the Auditor General would say is what she said in the greenbelt report, which is, "Yes, you've got to have processes." And I agree with her. Inside this bill, I don't see any process. You're taking away governance; you're taking away power, and what kind of transparency are you putting in it?

The minister could basically say to the ROM, and I know this is outrageous: "We're selling the ROM." That's literally what could happen now. I mean, it would be a stupid thing to do and probably—

Mr. Kevin Holland: Probably done by you.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, you never know. You never know.

But that's what I'm saying: Protect ourselves from further governments that come after. There's going to be one that comes after you in 2026, so you need to make sure that the protections are there so that the people you represent—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We have to go to a last question.

Last question?

Ms. Doly Begum: I was actually saving this question for one of the PC Conservatives, since we call it the "NDP Party." This is my new term, the "PC Conservatives." Because they seem to, for the first time, be really keen on the Auditor General's report, and the Auditor General has made a lot of recommendations recently, we have seen, with the greenbelt. There are a lot of recommendations that were made in the 2017 report, as well.

Did you find any of them? Which one in there is the actual recommendation to put more on the platter for Infrastructure Ontario? Because that's not there. So whose recommendation are they talking about, really?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): A quick response, under 40 seconds.

Mr. John Fraser: I've got 40 seconds. I can get a lot done in 40 seconds. It really is truly ironic, I have to say. I get a lot undone in 40 seconds.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Don't go there. Stop, okay? Everybody, stop.

It is ironic—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I just can't keep it up. I've got to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I think it's better that way.

We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I am very proud today to stand to speak about this Improving Real Estate Management Act. This was a cornerstone of the Ontario Progressive Conservative government platform: that we build. We'll continue building: build the highways, build the bridges, build the transit projects, hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools, child care facilities. This is a cornerstone of the platform this government was elected for. We committed to bringing the high-speed Internet access to every community by the end of 2025, fixing the energy system to lower the costly electricity bills and building 1.5 million homes by 2030.

Today, though the work is not yet completed, we are well on our way to fulfilling our promises and building the infrastructure that Ontario desperately needs. The Liberals and NDP have been pushing back against us from day one, whether transportation, health care, long-term care or education. Every good infrastructure idea, the opposition voted no. They voted no to highways and transit projects, no to new long-term-care homes, no to hospital extensions, no to housing initiatives. The Liberal and NDP opposition can't help but say no.

Despite the opposition, our government has made a commitment to build infrastructure in Ontario. We will get it done. Our commitment to infrastructure is not just a political program; it is a pledge to the people of Ontario for a more connected, efficient and prosperous future.

We know that without new infrastructure, our province could soon face serious challenges. The services and infrastructure that we rely on are increasingly being depended on by more and more people. Congestion is increasing. Housing is getting more difficult to find. Government services are being used more often. With so many newcomers and growing density in the GTA, we need to ensure that we are building sustainable infrastructure. We can't afford to wait until the problem gets worse before we start to take action.

Whether it is management of government real estate, the expansion of housing supply or new transportation projects, our government needs to be proactive and ready to face whatever comes next. We must ensure that the services Ontarians have been relying upon for decades are able to continue for the next generation to enjoy. That's why our government is building more infrastructure, strengthening existing services and getting it done for the people of Ontario.

Today, the proposed Improving Real Estate Management Act would continue this important work of allowing our government to build and sustainably maintain infrastructure. This bill, if passed, would continue on important work that the Reducing Inefficiencies Act of earlier this year began toward allowing the government to act more holistically in the management of its resources.

Today, the proposed bill would allow the Ministry of Infrastructure to oversee public real estate holdings and, when necessary, take action to ensure that these important holdings are being used efficiently and for the betterment of Ontario's infrastructure. Efficient centralized management of public real estate fulfills our commitment to running effective government. When we first came to office, we promised to find efficiencies. We promised to cut red tape. The goal of these efficiencies has always been ensuring that the government can do more, at efficient cost.

1920

Ontarians are trusting the government to be good stewards of their resources. We will fulfill these expectations and get it done.

This efficient centralized realty authority will allow for more opportunities for innovative and efficient use of real estate. The government will be able to better support projects such as more housing and long-term care, all the while maintaining the services that Ontarians have come to know and love.

In 2020, during a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, our government launched Supply Ontario. Supply Ontario was a new procurement agency that centralized government purchases into one organization. This allowed it to have a whole-of-government approach, delivering the most value for Ontarians' tax dollars. This organization has the expertise, the coordination and the buying power to make the most effective decisions. Likewise, a Ministry of Infrastructure empowered to control public real estate will be able to make important decisions that benefit everyone.

The organizations affected by this proposed bill are highly valued by the people of Ontario: museums, science centres, convention centres and an art gallery. Some of the locations that would be affected by this bill, if passed, are places where I have visited many times and where millions of Ontarians visit each year. We care, and the people of Ontario care, that these important locations are stewarded diligently.

We should also acknowledge that this proposed bill takes a very reasonable and cautious approach to property management. This government understands that not all organizations are equal. They do not all have the same requirements. For example, the needs of the Royal Ontario Museum are very different from the needs of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. This bill, if passed, would acknowledge that. The government is proposing that six organizations will have a tailored approach to realty activities.

Future generations deserve to have well-maintained and fiscally responsible infrastructure. Our government is setting the stage for good infrastructure that will last generations. By creating systems to better manage Ontario's real estate, we are establishing procedures that will allow strong and resilient infrastructure for decades to come.

For this reason, we are continuing with our plans to build more infrastructure, including Highway 413. Starting in the northwest of Mississauga, the new Highway 413

will make it far easier to travel across the GTA. This is one of the busiest transportation corridors in North America, and relief is needed to ease the congestion that commuters are facing on a regular basis. Once the 413 is built, Ontarians can expect to save up to 30 minutes on their commutes during rush hour. This is a promise made, promise kept, and we are very excited to see the results of this important investment.

The Highway 401 expansion is already showing positive results. With the new expansion of Highway 401 through Mississauga and Milton now completed, it's now far easier to drive through the west of the GTA. This is evidence that better infrastructure leads to positive results for the people of Ontario. Our government knew that it was a problem. We found the solution, and despite opposition resistance, we got it done. We expect that the 413 will show the same positive results and help Ontarians get to their destinations faster.

Because of this government's commitment to infrastructure, we are building the Hazel McCallion Line LRT along Hurontario Street in Mississauga. The Hazel McCallion Line is well on its way to completion. Once finished, it will be 18 kilometres long, running north from Port Credit to Brampton. With its own dedicated lanes and environmentally friendly vehicles, the light rail transit system will provide smooth, reliable and convenient rides along Hurontario Street. It will allow convenient connections between MiWay, GO Transit and Brampton Transit. I am very excited about the Hazel McCallion Line. It will serve as an important piece of infrastructure for Mississauga and Brampton.

For the same reason, a new Mississauga hospital is being built and we are expanding Ontario health care infrastructure. The Peter Gilgan Mississauga Hospital will improve access to health care in Mississauga and address the challenges that a growing population is bringing to the region. The new hospital will also include Canada's first-ever women's and children's hospital—200,000 square feet dedicated to helping families with high-quality medical care. This hospital is a very important piece of infrastructure coming to my home city of Mississauga. By building more health care spaces, our government is fulfilling our commitment for convenient, connected care close to home.

I'm also very excited that Ontario is now undertaking a comprehensive development of Ontario Place. Ontarians have great memories of spending time with family and friends at Ontario Place, but after many decades of neglect by previous governments, it is in a poor state. I visited Ontario Place over the summer, and I can testify that it needs much work.

Thankfully, this government is bringing Ontario Place to life, making it a remarkable, world-class, year-round destination that will include family-friendly entertainment, public and private event space, parkland and waterfront access. We are building the infrastructure, and doing so in a timely and efficient manner to achieve our goals of making Ontario Place a world-class destination that people of all ages can enjoy.

Each of these projects we are working on prove that our government is committed to building better infrastructure. In each of these projects, we are being effective stewards of the resources that the public has entrusted to us. Unlike other governments, we are not wasting taxpayers' money on pet projects and insider initiatives. We are being reasonable and responsible by building new infrastructure that is highly needed and maintaining existing services efficiently.

To be clear, this PC government inherited a mess when it comes to infrastructure. Decades of neglect and mismanagement of infrastructure had left Ontario in a poor state. Ontarians were not getting the effective infrastructure and services that they deserve. Our government is making it a priority to not only maintain the infrastructure we already have but expand it.

We have seen what happens when governments don't do what's needed to maintain infrastructure. If the Liberals had not ignored health care, we wouldn't have hallway health care. If they hadn't ignored long-term care, we wouldn't have been close to the limit, necessitating our action to build 32,000 long-term-care beds. If Liberals had not ignored transportation, we wouldn't have so much congestion on the roads. If they didn't ignore housing, we wouldn't be facing a housing supply crisis.

1930

Today, the proposed legislation demonstrates the government's commitment to a solid, long-term strategic plan. Unlike governments of the past, this Ontario government is doing things differently. If this proposed bill is passed, the Minister of Infrastructure would have the authority she needs to manage the long-term vision of Ontario public real estate holdings. The people of Ontario trust what this government is doing to manage its property responsibly and effectively, and that they will continue to do so for decades to come. This legislation would make that possible.

To summarize, today's proposed Improving Real Estate Management Act would be about building and maintaining effective infrastructure with long-term vision. It would be about creating responsible authorities to oversee realty management, so that Ontario public property can be effectively and responsibly stewarded. If passed, the minister would be able to harness the resources of the government and deploy them as part of an efficient long-term strategy. This would allow for innovative and effective methods of management applying to real estate.

This government will continue to work hard to follow through on the infrastructure projects that we are all looking forward to, like Highway 413, the Hazel McCallion line and the new Mississauga Hospital. With these new proposed authorities, Ontario would be better positioned to effectively continue fulfilling the services that Ontarians love.

Under the proposed legislative changes, five organizations' real estate holdings would come under full centralized authority: Public Health Ontario, Ontario Health, the Ontario Science Centre, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the proposed Ontario Health atHome.

I would like to take a few seconds to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for putting forward this important bill. These government infrastructure initiatives are made possible because of the minister's hard work and dedication on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I fully support this proposed bill, and I'm excited to see all the amazing infrastructure projects that would come from this. When we manage the resources we have in our portfolio, we can find more efficiencies and how to use them. I know the NDP and many of the opposition have been asking to have a look into some of the properties the government of Ontario owns that can be used for development of affordable housing or whatever, so we have a priority to manage what we have first and we can effectively make innovative solutions for maintaining existing infrastructure.

I fully support this proposed bill, and I am excited to see all those amazing infrastructure projects that would come from this. Ontario can count on us get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions. I recognize the Minister for Accessibility—Sudbury.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Not the minister of Sudbury, just—in fact, the minister of Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: I've got to phone my mom, Speaker.

Thank you to my colleague for his debate. In this bill, it's basically taking a lot under Infrastructure Ontario. So when I look at Ontario Science Centre in question period, oftentimes, I hear the Minister of Infrastructure talk about this backlog of repairs for the Ontario Science Centre, how it hasn't been maintained properly, how much funding there is—and I don't have the exact number in front of me, but like we're talking about \$150 million, or something like that—and a backlog of repairs. But all of that is because Infrastructure Ontario hasn't maintained the science centre. I just see this in my head as a way of piling it up, and maybe I don't understand. Why would we say, "Look, they haven't done a good job with this; let's put more into these, under Infrastructure Ontario"—which I feel like this bill is doing. It's a disconnect I have, in that it doesn't make sense to reward bad behaviour with more bad behaviour.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I think the first step is to look into this and how to take some ownership of those assets so that we can—those maintenance plans are not, "Let's get a plumber." This is long-term maintenance, and it has to be done annually. There should be some strategic planning around maintaining those assets. So I think the first step is to take ownership of those assets and start building those strategies so that we can maintain it for decades.

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

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I rise in the Legislature today in support of Bill 151—the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023. This piece of legislation brought to the House by the Minister of Infrastructure is so

important, and I would like to commend the minister on her leadership—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Minister, it's questions to the member.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Oh, no, I don't have a question. I'm sorry. I thought it was my turn to speak.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, I will reiterate that we are a government focusing on infrastructure: maintaining current infrastructure, building new infrastructure, and expanding the current infrastructure. This is part of what we were elected for. I think this bill comes as a crucial part to take control over—centralize—taking over some of the assets in the portfolio.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So there are quite a number of important institutions and important buildings in the province of this government's grabbing, centralizing control over. I have a question to the member. Can you explain to me the difference between full centralization of these entities or the tailored approach for these? and I specifically would like to know, when it comes to the Royal Ontario Museum, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, are you talking about the collection—the art works as well? Is that what the tailored approach means or is that what the full centralization means? Can you explain that to us, please?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: No, actually this proposed bill is just to maintain the real estate infrastructure. For example, the ROM still owns artifacts, all the display parts, but the management of the asset—real estate itself is what this bill concerns.

Also, if I can clarify, those different institutions actually manage their own assets by themselves. They have some of the realtors or their own way and own party to manage their leases and manage their assets, centralizing those in one authority will allow the authority to look into similar situations.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question? 1940

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm going to ask the member if he could say some comments about, perhaps, what he thinks is the most important or significant infrastructure project in or around his riding, and the reason I want to ask him that question is because in my riding of Essex, we have an extremely important infrastructure project. It involves Highway 3. Highway 3 is being twinned from two lanes to four lanes. And this is very significant for us, and important for us, because it improves the safety of our commuters going back and forth to work and it also helps the many, many truckers who are going to bring their products to market get them to market faster, by using Highway 3. And that's why I bring up this question.

So, my question to the member is: Among the various infrastructure projects that this government has initiated, what does he think is the most important or perhaps his favourite one in relation to his riding?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member for his question.

I can talk about two projects: One of them, again, is an example of lack of good maintenance strategy. Our South Common Community Centre is, I think, about 30-some years old, 38 years old. And because of lack of maintenance, to now bring it to a good level of use will cost more than rebuilding it. So, we are rebuilding it. We managed to get some funds—\$52 million—to rebuild the whole community centre from scratch, when, if we had some good maintenance plans going on, we wouldn't have to retire that very fast.

Also, the 401 expansion lanes from Milton to Mississauga—again a piece of infrastructure which will help my riding.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Listening to the member definitely made me think about the cost of redoing these capital projects. You talked about capital projects being behind and them not being funded properly, but yet, under Infrastructure Ontario, a lot of those publicly funded centres will now go into the private contractors' hands, which will cost so much more to the public dollar.

Do you not think it would be the responsible thing to keep that in-house and have a cheaper cost with public services and public workers doing that work instead of private contractors, who are clearly working for profit, as they should, but with Ontario tax dollars? Don't you think it would be better off for the public good to be under a public sector?

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I think the best is having competition, having competitive quotes from multiple contractors will bring the best job, because if he didn't do a good job, he will be banned. He's not going to get more business. And I think this is—governments cannot do everything, cannot be the action of everything. They can't do everything. They only have to outsource through the specialized people who can do the job properly, and through competition, through bidding agreements, they can get the best prices in the market for the job.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: To the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills: How about we go back to the basics? Can you explain to the House again why your government is taking this approach, so that Ontarians can support this approach in the Improving Real Estate Management Act?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, if we have a specialized department or a specialized part of the ministry managing the real estate, the maintenance of those projects, they have—yes, they have different requirements, but some of those aspects of managing the real estate are the same, like the research of the market pricing, the evaluation of the level of rent in that area, or comparing it to other listings, and all that research is almost the same for any property. It's the same thing. So, having some specialized department or specialized part of the ministry managing that will be able to use the knowledge base or the skill set in-house, as a member said before, can get good judgment and get the best of the assets we have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for further debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 151, the Improving Real Estate Management Act. I'm going to talk a little bit about the bill, but it's getting repetitive, so what I'm going to do is get a little more specific about one of the things from Niagara, which is the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

The Auditor General's report on Infrastructure Ontario wasn't the only scathing report that the Auditor General did. There was another one on conserving the Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I have real problems looking at joining these two entities together, in terms of real estate management, when both of them are in such trouble. I'm going to talk about the Auditor General's comments and recommendations for both, just to kind of underline the problem in marrying these two entities through real estate management that are having such problems.

First of all, there are five entities that are going to have their real estate brought fully under the control of the Ministry of Infrastructure via Infrastructure Ontario, who will have complete control of real property that was previously controlled by each respective entity: the Ontario Science Centre, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which I'll talk about, and the proposed Ontario Health atHome.

Now, the government claims that these changes are a response to the Auditor General's 2017 report on real estate services, which criticized the poor management of government properties. However, that report mainly criticized Infrastructure Ontario, as others have pointed out. Infrastructure Ontario does not actually directly manage the real estate holdings it oversees; it contracts real estate services out to private providers. The Auditor General's report criticized the procurement of these contracts for being uncompetitive and the fact that they were being awarded to the same entrenched contractors despite poor past performance. The Auditor General criticized Infrastructure Ontario's poor oversight of these contracts.

This bill does not solve the problems revealed in the Auditor General's report with respect to the ministry's poor oversight of real estate services in Ontario. While the AG recommended better oversight and performance standards government-wide, she did not recommend centralization per se. To the extent that the Auditor General indicated that Infrastructure Ontario was the problem, this bill could make this problem worse by giving Infrastructure Ontario and its embedded private contractors more properties to manage poorly.

There is no evidence that further centralization of real estate management will make things better in Ontario and some evidence it will actually make things worse. There's no reason to trust the government's intentions.

This bill continues the government's centralization of their real estate holdings. They call it "modernization," and we get worried when we hear that from the government side.

This bill seems to solve a problem that we can't identify and this government has not explained.

The 2017 Auditor General's report was scathing and outlined numerous recommendations, which I will talk about, for this government to clean up their act and improve real estate management. Instead, we got Bill 69 and now Bill 151, which is tinkering around the edges.

Again, instead of public civil servants who are accountable looking after things, the government is putting even more under the Infrastructure Ontario umbrella, where they rely on expensive private contractors to be in charge. Private contractors show up a lot in the Auditor General's report and there's not a lot good about it.

The public doesn't trust this government's decisions, as we've talked about. Frankly, we don't either. We would like this minister and this government to prove that they are not doing something harmful. We are actually at that stage where people want to hear that more damage will not be done.

1950

I want to talk about the Niagara Escarpment Commission and concerns that we're putting one very troubled entity that the Auditor General has reported on, with a value-for-money audit, together with Infrastructure Ontario, the subject of another scathing report.

In 2022, there was a value-for-money audit done, *Conserving the Niagara Escarpment*, about conserving the Niagara Escarpment. The audit was done under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, which directs that the Niagara Escarpment is to be maintained as a continuous natural environment with only compatible development. The Niagara Escarpment Plan, established under the act, is considered to be Canada's first land use plan with environmental protection as its primary objective. That's something that, historically, we've been quite proud of in Niagara.

The conservation of the escarpment is a shared responsibility between the natural resources ministry, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and other entities. The reason this is important is because the Niagara Escarpment is recognized internationally by the United Nations as a world biosphere. It's a place to conserve nature and promote sustainable development. It's located beside the most densely populated part of Ontario, and the escarpment's natural environment faces ongoing development pressures, especially exacerbated by this government's attack on the greenbelt, urban boundary expansion, and their MZOs. The World Economic Forum ranks the loss of nature in its top three most severe risks globally over the next decade. So these plans are very important.

The Auditor General looked at this agency and made 23 recommendations, and it was a really scathing report. Many of the recommendations took a lot of people by surprise—with things that they were intended to address that folks didn't realize were ongoing. It had to do with not only mismanagement, but primarily government's lack of funding for the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which makes this troubling—that they're going to marry it with Infrastructure Ontario.

The first three recommendations addressed weaknesses in the Niagara Escarpment Plan and revealed some really shocking things. The plan did not cover all of the escarpment, so not all of it is protected from incompatible development. The plan allows new and expanded aggregate operations, despite the environmental impacts, poor inspection rates, poor rehabilitation track record, and no required justification of need for pits and quarries. It's quite incredible, when you think about it.

Changes to the plan in 2017 allow development that harms endangered species habitats. The ministry changed the plan to align it with changes made in 2007 to Ontario's endangered species legislation. As a result, protecting an endangered species habitat is no longer explicit grounds for the commission to refuse a development permit application. Up until 2017, the plan did not allow new development in endangered species habitats. So this plan is being chipped away at.

The next recommendations have to do with the effectiveness of the Niagara Escarpment Plan not being sufficiently monitored—and this is where the government wants to talk about being more efficient, doing things better from a real estate point of view. But they're not even funding agencies like the Niagara Escarpment Commission properly to monitor really important environmental impacts.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission and the natural resources ministry, it found, did not have sufficient performance measures and targets to evaluate whether the purposes and objectives of the act and plan were being achieved. They didn't have enough staff. There is no longer environmental monitoring, as there are no commission staff, resources or programs to assess the state of the escarpment—shocking.

The commission has not assessed the cumulative effects of more than 12,000 development permits that it has issued since 1975.

They also found that there were insufficient conservation efforts. The commission does not have a long-term strategic plan to achieve its legislative mandate to conserve the escarpment—no plan. Almost all development permit applications have been approved by the commission in the last five years because they don't have the resources to monitor it.

The ministry does not have a plan or program to assist in financing the completion of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System and to secure a permanent route for the Bruce Trail. Only 45% of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System sites have approved plans to guide their protection despite increasing use and threats like invasive species. Protected areas cover 16% of the escarpment but there's no target to increase their number or better conserve the natural environment.

They found that there are deficiencies in the administration of the plan. This is how the government is supporting—or not supporting—an agency that is supposed to be protecting the environment and managing real estate. The reports of possible contravention have climbed 82% over the last five years but no charges have been laid under

the act since 2014. The commission has not conducted sufficient public outreach to promote the plan. The commission unnecessarily reviews applications that do not require a development permit. Plan amendments can languish for years. The commission lacks a modern information management system to effectively and efficiently implement the plan. The ministry provides insufficient financial and staffing resources to the commission to ensure the plan and act are effectively and efficiently implemented. The commission does not charge fees for development applications or other services to finance program delivery. This is just a problem after problem after problem that has to do with a lack of resources provided by this government for real estate management of the Niagara Escarpment.

And there are further recommendations to enhancing the processes for commissioners to do with governance.

The conclusions that the Auditor General came to were:

“The escarpment has been governed by both an act and a plan for the almost half-century since its conservation was enshrined into law....

“However, the natural resources ministry and the Niagara Escarpment Commission are failing to fully provide the necessary leadership, resources and actions to maintain the escarpment and adjacent lands as a continuous natural environment, and to ensure that all development is compatible with that environment.” That’s a scathing, scathing report of the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

And here we have a government that, after a lack of funding, a lack of leadership and a lack of support for the Niagara Escarpment Commission, is going to put the management of its real estate resources under the purview of an organization like Infrastructure Ontario, which is the subject of another scathing report.

I’m going to touch on some of those recommendations, as my friend from London–Fanshawe did, just to give folks an idea of what kind of problems this organization is having, many the same as the commissions and entities that are being put under its purview.

The first recommendation was:

“We recommend that Infrastructure Ontario review and adjust accordingly its process for procuring project management services to:

“—formally prepare a new business case on whether to enable more project management companies in the future to bid on such services”—that’s something that this government’s legislation is, I would argue, going against;

“—include standard penalties for all contract managers on future RFPs; and

“—incorporate past performance in the evaluation of the bidders.”

Those are basic things that Infrastructure Ontario was not doing.

2000

Another recommendation recommended that IO “obtain sufficient procurement data from external capital project managers, including all bids, change orders and bid evaluations”—it’s incredible that that was not being done—“to:

“—establish a risk-based process to review procurements carried out by capital project managers;

“—confirm that its procurement policies result in sufficient competition among bidders; and

“—confirm that contracts for capital projects are awarded to the most qualified bidders. Infrastructure Ontario should then adjust its policies accordingly if needed.”

That wasn’t happening, Speaker.

Another recommendation:

“In order to ensure the fair and economical procurement of project contractors”—which is a big concern with this legislation—“we recommend that Infrastructure Ontario:

“—obtain sufficient information on procurements conducted by external project managers, and analyze this information to determine whether there are any trends that suggest non-cost-effective procurement practices; for example, too few vendors bidding or a large portion of projects being awarded to only a few vendors;”

So, a lack of competition among vendors.

“—implement its planned controls over external project managers manually adding vendors to identify any potential conflicts of interest in this process.”

If there’s something we’ve seen with this government and its real estate dealings, it’s most assuredly conflict-of-interest concerns.

Another recommendation:

“—review initial cost estimates to ensure they are reasonable for prioritizing capital projects to be funded;”

Can you imagine that Infrastructure Ontario wasn’t doing that already?

“—confirm that the external property and land manager and external project managers are complying with the provisions of their contracts...;”

So, a lack of oversight.

“—re-evaluate and update future contracts to provide sufficient incentives to external project managers to complete capital projects on time and on budget.”

There wasn’t the proper oversight for completing projects on time and on budget.

“—review and confirm that external project managers have valid reasons for revising project completion dates.”

And it goes on and on. There’s actually 13 recommendations, and I’ll point out just a couple more that I thought were really important.

Recommendation 6:

“For government properties to be economically and efficiently maintained, we recommend that the Ministry of Infrastructure work”—and this actually was not being done; it’s incredible—“with Infrastructure Ontario to:”

“—assess and revise base rents to match the projected cost of future capital repairs to properties and funding parameters for Infrastructure Ontario’s fees;”

So they didn’t have a handle on their fees and they didn’t have a handle on future capital repairs.

“—establish and implement a plan to reduce deferred maintenance in government-owned buildings.”

No plan for that.

So we have recommendation after recommendation outlining some pretty incredible problems with the over-

sight of Infrastructure Ontario, the way it manages its properties, and I have a real concern, Speaker, with the fact that an agency or an entity like the Niagara Escarpment Commission is being put under the purview of Infrastructure Ontario when both of these entities are in such trouble, are having such a problem with oversight, are busy implementing the recommendations of the Auditor General after scathing report after scathing report.

The escarpment commission does really important work, and what this government really needs to be doing is looking at these individual entities like the Niagara Escarpment Commission and asking how we can help them to actually do their job properly, protecting something precious like the Niagara Escarpment. Obviously, the Niagara Escarpment Commission has been starved financially and in terms of oversight, in terms of accountability, to such an extent it can't even do its basic job any more and protect the Niagara Escarpment, and now this government wants to, instead of fixing those problems, just put it under the purview of Infrastructure Ontario, which is having many of the same problems.

I believe this is making the problem worse. As I said in my introduction, there's no reason to trust this government, especially when they see how they've underfunded and poorly managed the Niagara Escarpment Commission and Infrastructure Ontario. So this is legislation that I think is ill-advised, poorly researched and is not going to accomplish the goals of the government.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): It's time for questions.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for his remarks. I learned a lot about the Niagara Parks Commission and some of the issues that run into land development there. Knowing the crux of the bill is related to real estate and the centralization of such, I've seen many, many organizations seek out the effort to centralize real estate. I saw the movie *The Founder*, which talked about McDonald's; it was probably the best example of a successful business based on successful real estate.

I just wanted to ask whether you support the general concept of modernizing government processes related to real estate, because right now, with everybody doing their own thing, it's old, it's outdated, and it doesn't allow an exchange or a repurposing in a way that benefits government as a whole.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his question. Look, I think I said in my conclusion that this bill doesn't accomplish what it sets out to accomplish. As we have pointed out time and time again, it's tinkering and working around the edges.

What I would prefer to see is, rather than the government taking one troubled agency and putting it in under the purview of another troubled agency, I would like them to fix the problems that actually exist. They could have taken advantage of the opportunity after an Auditor General's report on the Niagara Escarpment to set about properly funding that and making sure they could do their job, rather than just marrying these two subjects of such scathing reports from the Auditor General.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I thank the member from Niagara Centre for his portion on debate this evening. We have definitely seen, time after time, this government has had to backtrack on things that they've put forward. They're scrambling because of public outcry. We have seen scandals. We have seen RCMP investigations. We see situations with the science centre and Ontario Place. Everything that it seems that the government can put their hands on seems to go wrong, and now we're seeing this bill before us that wants to actually give them more rights to more properties that are crown jewels, quite frankly. Do you see an issue with the fox taking care of the henhouse?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Hamilton Mountain for that question. Yes, and we've talked about it earlier: The government's entire housing policy has become one of backtracking, on everything from the greenbelt, which was a huge mistake, to forced urban boundary expansion and now backtracking on that. We know there's going to be backtracking on MZOs. That's why I think that rather than trying to put a bill like this forward which, really, they can't even explain what it really accomplishes, they should be actually trying to fix some of the problems that are out there.

When over and over again you try and take big bites and it's a disaster, take a small bite and try and fix something instead of making things worse. I see no reason why the people of Ontario would trust this government with anything to do with real estate, especially when it comes to Infrastructure Ontario.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened to the member opposite intently and appreciate his concern over the properties of the province. Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios, and they've been working and establishing a better approach to managing real estate owned by the ministries. But as it currently stands, the current processes are really outdated and old. So I would ask the member perhaps again: Doesn't he support modernizing and bringing a lot of these properties into the system in a current value system that could better serve the people of Ontario?

2010

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for Thornhill for that.

Look, I don't support making use of an agency like Infrastructure Ontario, which is the subject of a scathing report—recommendation after recommendation that they're struggling to implement so that they can clean up their act. Why would the government not clean up Infrastructure Ontario first, work with the Auditor General's recommendations, before utilizing an agency that's in such disarray to manage, as my friend from Hamilton Mountain said, some of our jewels, in terms of property in Ontario?

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The government keeps saying “modernizing,” but let’s call this what this is: This is a huge power grab on the part of this government; it’s a huge realty grab. It’s so strange to me that this is a government that says they’re against big government, but here they are, centralizing enormous power over untold billions and billions of dollars of public assets, with no accountability. The public has absolutely no trust in this government and no reason why they should. We saw the greenbelt grab, which was simply to enrich their speculator friends.

Why would this government think that we would just trust them when it came to them trying to act like the politburo and control all of the assets with one minister? Do you think that this is going to go over well with a public that already doesn’t trust a government under criminal investigation by the RCMP?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciate that question from my friend. The Niagara Escarpment is something that is very near and dear to people in Niagara. It’s really kind of scary to think that in the condition it’s currently in, where, as I said, there has been an 82% increase in complaints and no investigations—I mean, they have no staff. They’re not even able to do their job properly. To think that this government is centralizing things so that there’s even less accountability and less transparency, I can’t see anything good coming out of that, especially, as my friend points out, with this government’s record of scandal and having to reverse any decision they’ve made around real estate because it turns out to be a complete disaster.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I’ve been listening intently. I’m an enthusiast of the Auditor General reports over the many numbers of years past, as anybody else. This recommendation has been part of many of those reports toward good oversight. I guess my question to the member opposite is, is the Auditor General incorrect in making this recommendation?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yes, as my friend says, it’s a selective interpretation of the Auditor General’s report.

The government is trying to make it seem as if this follows the recommendations of the Auditor General, but what the Auditor General pointed out is that the government’s problem in managing real estate is that Infrastructure Ontario is a mess. So the recommendations were actually trying to recommend ways to fix Infrastructure Ontario. Trying to interpret that as somehow meaning that we should put more properties under the purview of Infrastructure Ontario is exactly the opposite of what the Auditor General was really talking about.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): One last quick question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I really appreciate you talking about the Niagara Escarpment, because we’ve seen a government that was prepared to sell off our natural heritage when it came to the greenbelt and when it came to farmlands. Now, really, my actual gut fear is this takes all these properties one step closer to the minister’s office;

that minister has shown no compunction to sell off Ontario Place, to tear down the science centre. Do you have fear that some of these jewels in the crown are going to be sold off by this government?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Quick reply.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Briefly, in the time I have left: Yes, very concerned. Especially, as I pointed out, that the Niagara Escarpment Commission already can’t do its job. You have a government with the record that this government has, with doing favours for their speculator friends. One and one equals some really bad things happening in the Niagara escarpment. So it is scary, and I hope the government would reconsider such a foolish piece of legislation.

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

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I rise in the legislature today in support of Bill 151, the reducing inefficiencies act. This piece of legislation brought to the House by the Minister of Infrastructure is so important, and I’d like to commend the minister on her leadership and all the marvellous work she’s doing across this province.

First, I’d like to acknowledge how far our province has come and the progress we have made since forming government in 2018. We have saved taxpayers and businesses thousands of dollars through actions such as supporting a reduction in WSIB premiums and the WSIB rebate without reducing benefits; increasing the Employer Health Tax exemption from \$490,000 to \$1 million; cutting the gas tax by 5.7 cents per litre and the fuel tax by 5.3 cents per litre beginning July 1, 2022. We are also delivering historic investments of more than \$159 billion into infrastructure over the next 10 years, and thanks to the leadership of this Premier, since 2018, our government has doubled the base funding for our Seniors Community Grants, from \$3 million to \$6 million.

Our government is ensuring that seniors are able to stay fit, healthy and socially connected right within their communities. Since 2018, our government has invested over \$70 million into nearly 300 Seniors Active Living Centres across the province. These centres are vibrant places for people to attend, stay socially connected, get active and stay fit and healthy.

From Home and Community Care Support Services to the seniors public transit credit, to GAINS supporting low-income seniors, we are making sure seniors have access to quality care and supports they need in their communities.

Madam Speaker, once again, our government is ensuring people and their families are being cared for and that our communities have the supports they need to strive for decades to come.

We have also delivered more public transit across the province, from the return of the passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario, to breaking ground on the new historic Ontario Line. This includes two new subway lines in Scarborough and a new medical school right in my hometown of Scarborough. Every dollar invested in infrastructure is a dollar invested for accessibility, as all

new hospitals, subways and GO trains are fully accessible. Our transit investments are getting people to and from work or to their families faster and more conveniently, with more commuting options, stations and seamless connections. Our government was re-elected with an even stronger mandate to build Ontario for today and for generations to come.

2020

Madam Speaker, our government has a unique opportunity to improve governance and operate our real estate portfolio more efficiently by creating a framework for decision-making and management. Bill 151, the reducing inefficiencies act, if passed, would establish that initial framework to modify the real estate authority of 11 entities and provide the Minister of Infrastructure with control of real property previously under the control of the prescribed entities. This would be the first step in allowing our government to increase operating and fiscal efficiency. It would also support our objective of saving taxpayers' money through a holistic approach when it comes to overseeing and managing Ontario's real estate portfolio.

By creating this framework to centralize the real estate authority of the 11 entities aligned in this bill is the first step. This would allow our government to be in a better position to reduce red tape, create more efficient processes and ensure that these entities can focus and invest more on their individual mandates, while continuing to provide the services Ontarians need and deserve.

The legislative amendments that are being proposed in this bill, if passed, would support the centralization of real estate, subject to any exceptions that would be determined by regulation. Madam Speaker, this is about good governance, which Ontarians expect and deserve from their government.

The bill, if passed, would bring our government one step closer to reducing costs of eliminating duplication of responsibilities and, by providing clear guidelines, it would improve the quality of services to the taxpayers. This bill is the first step towards reducing the number of people involved in making simple decisions on real estate.

This bill, with the changes that we are proposing, is important to the future of our province. The people are depending on innovative ideas and new approaches to reduce inefficiencies. They expect us to be fiscally prudent, respect taxpayer dollars, cut red tape, and practise good governance. This legislation, if passed, will deliver on those expectations.

Madam Speaker, I urge the House today to vote in support of Bill 151.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Questions for the minister?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the minister for his speech this late evening.

You talked a lot about saving money for the taxpayers. You talked a lot about trust in government. You said that the people of the province of Ontario deserve a good government, and I agree with you, but I also have to say, respectfully, that we don't have one right now in the province of Ontario.

Does this minister understand why no one trusts this government? Does the minister understand that your government is the first government in the history of Ontario to be under an RCMP investigation? There's no trust.

When you're asking Ontarians to allow your government to concentrate power in one minister, with all these tens of billions of dollars worth of realty property, do you understand why people have no confidence and do not trust your government?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the question.

While real estate is one of the government's greatest resources, currently, there's no centralized approach to managing and making decisions about government real estate. That is why the province is taking the next step in its plan to establish a framework to act holistically and more efficiently manage real estate to support priorities that people in Ontario need—like building more affordable housing and long-term care. This builds, in part, on initiatives introduced through the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, which created a framework to remove or modify the realty authority of prescribed entities.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's really wonderful to be here today.

I know our minister has turned 87 years old and has become the longest-serving minister in Ontario's government in the history of this province. It's very great.

I'm excited about this piece of legislation. As a former minister who was responsible for the Royal Ontario Museum, the Niagara Parks Commission, the Ontario Science Centre and Ontario Place, it's great to see that our government is taking a stand on making sure that there is an Ontario realty secretariat, so that we have consistency and standards and we're there to protect the heritage, the landscape and the environment of this province. What does the minister have to say about that?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios in Canada and has been working towards establishing a holistic approach to manage real estate owned by ministries and entities under their oversight.

The proposed legislative amendments related to phase 2 of the Centralization of Broader Real Estate Authority, CBREA, would remove and/or modify the realty authority in whole or in part of 10 entities and one proposed entity. MOI worked with support of the three ministries responsible for these entities.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the minister for his debate this evening. It's quite late, so hopefully he'll finish up this debate and find his way back out of here—

Mr. Kevin Holland: That's rude.

2030

Miss Monique Taylor: It wasn't rude. Not at all. It wasn't even meant to be rude. I'm thinking about the nice minister.

Anyway, the minister talked a lot about cost savings. We've definitely seen a lot of issues within our ministries these days, with Ontario Place, the science centre, the lack of government trust in so many ministries.

Does the minister not have any concerns about having so many of our precious gems underneath just one Infrastructure Ontario and not having a lot of oversight?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the question. I mentioned the cost savings. At the present time, we have 11 entities, and all these different entities make their own decisions. If we centralize, we could shorten the time, making more efficient decisions, and we could avoid duplication. By doing that, I think we could save taxpayers money and we would bring more efficiency.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: It's very good to celebrate the birthday of the minister and to see that he's still so active in the community and in our government. I think what I appreciate so much about my relationship with him is the fact that he has the ability to look at all sides of an issue. In fact, you've been through the journey of all sides of the political spectrum to end up where you are today, too, and I very much respect that.

What I was wondering is, from his years of experience in so many different levels, what it means to him at this point that this government works so hard to find efficiencies and do right by the people of Ontario, and if he could expound on that a little bit more, what it is to do right by the taxpayer, like what we're doing in this bill.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for your question. We have a great task before us. We have a plan to build 1.5 million homes in 10 years' time. That is why speed is very important and efficiency is very important. By centralizing with this bill, Bill 151, I think we could achieve what we're trying to achieve there. That's my response.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question would be: Obviously, the minister feels very positive about centralizing these real estate public properties under the government's purview. But what would the minister say if the Royal Ontario Museum Act—if that asset, that property was to be sold and the government agreed, how would you respond to that? Would you want to see that be sold under the permission of the government, the way it's being set up?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the question. I would be very cautious to respond on a specific property. I could only talk more in a general sense. If you have a more specific question later on, you could raise that question to the Minister of Infrastructure. That's my advice and my response to you.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Minister, for your speech. A couple of years ago, I was able to visit the Stone Road campus in Guelph, and I was amazed at how that

facility was managed. It made me think that there was actually a system already in place. So, really, this piece of legislation adds a lot of authorities and organizations that don't already take part in the centralized Ministry of Infrastructure portfolio, the general real estate portfolio.

I wonder if you could shed some light as to why the 20 organizations not belonging to the portfolio today have been excluded and why it's a good idea to have them now.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: That's a really excellent question. That is why this bill, Bill 151, if passed, gives more authority to the Minister of Infrastructure. Instead of spreading all the decision-making power all over the place, we give centralized authority to the minister. That is the intention, that is the goal of this bill, Bill 151. Thank you. I hope I responded to your question.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A lot has been said tonight and I'll try to add some additional information to this debate. As has been said many times, what we're talking about is this government's bill that essentially is going to wrestle realty functions away from agencies. This legislation is aiming to centralize authority for real estate management within the Ministry of Infrastructure, reporting directly to the minister.

I have to start by saying I am simply shocked by this government, who talk about modernization, saying, "This is about modernizing"—but let us just derail here. This is about centralizing power. It's about centralizing decision-making, and this government has shown themselves not to be trustworthy when it comes to their decision-making, particularly their decision-making when it comes to things that are owned by the public and that should be in the best interests of the public.

It is not for no reason that there is an RCMP investigation—the first ever in the history of Ontario—into this government's behaviour when it came to the greenbelt, the forced urban boundary expansion and the MZOs that this government was giving out like, well, actually, probably wedding favours.

Here we are with a government that just got caught and got spanked hard over the fact that you have tried to take public assets and the public's interest and use it for your insider friends. Evidence showed and the Auditor General showed that you gave preferential treatment to insiders and developers and speculator friends.

This is the context in which we're looking at a bill where this government is saying, "Trust us. We are going to take over management of some of the most important pieces of real estate in the province." This is really not the first time that they've done this; this is actually the second time that this has happened, the second bill that has done that. As has been said before, no justification, no evidence has been put forward from this government or this minister as to why this government needs central government authority and why this government deserves to be given central government authority from the people of the province of Ontario.

I also find it extremely ironic, or very strange, that this is a government that talks all the time about not liking big

government—they're opposed to big government; they're opposed to Big Brother looking after the people in the province of Ontario—but they're not opposed to big government. They're not opposed to taking a big mass of property when it's in their best interest. Really, the irony of a government that stands up and says, "We're opposed to big government," when this is what this bill is about. This is a big bill that takes away from all of the trusted agencies in the province their authority and their ability to conduct their business, because this government says that they know better, that they know how to manage real estate in this province.

And really, do they? They can't even manage to build a single house in this province. Your housing plan has fallen so flat. You keep saying, "1.5 million houses. We need it, get on it," but you've wasted so much time with your bungled attempts to build housing. You can stand up in your place as often as you want and say, "We're committed to building 1.5 million houses in the province." That's just a cover story that nobody in the province believes. You've lost the branding on that. I don't know how you can stand up and say with a straight face, "We're going to build 1.5 million homes in the province." I wish it were the case, but nobody believes that. Nobody has any confidence, and why should they?

2040

We heard the member from Orléans say that you're so far behind on this goal, how are you ever going to catch up? You still haven't unravelled the mess that you created with your greenbelt grab, with your forced amalgamation—actually, that's another thing. Now you're going to de-amalgamate communities, and what's the cost going to be?

Really, this is a government that has—what's that expression? Their eyes are bigger than their stomachs. They think they can do all this, but they can't do the simplest thing. They can't execute the simplest thing in the province without stepping in it. So why now would you be doing this?

It has been said many, many times by our critic, who did a fantastic job of saying that you haven't even shown us what the actual problem is. You can forgive the people of the province of Ontario if they do not have clear answers if you don't really delineate the problem that you're going to solve. You don't really delineate the way there's going to be actual oversight and checks and balances. The people of the province would be forgiven if they said, "You know what? Hell no, we don't trust you. You have not earned our trust; you've broken our trust."

Putting this bill forward at this time is beyond tone deaf. I can't even imagine why the government thinks they're going to get away with this. And in the absence of a clear reasoning, a clear justification, any evidence, people can only speculate as to what you're doing here. People can only speculate because we've seen your motivations in the past. Your motivations when it came to the greenbelt were to enrich speculators and developers, and you did that to the tune of—a low estimate—\$8.3 billion or \$8.4 billion. So people can only speculate what you're up to now. What are you up to now?

When you look at some of the properties that you are looking to take into the minister's office, to be controlled by the minister, we're talking about the Niagara Escarpment Commission—I don't think people understand how important that is to Ontario, particularly to MPP Taylor's region and my region as well—the Ontario Science Centre, which we've been talking about a lot here; the Royal Ontario Museum—it is no wonder the government's got their greedy eyes on the Royal Ontario Museum. It's just right down here. I can't even imagine the value of that property at the corner of Avenue Road and Bloor. The value of that property must be astronomical. The Metro Toronto Convention Centre—I mean, really, what are the numbers we're talking about, the dollars we're talking about? The Ontario Convention Centre—these are properties that are worth billions and billions, untold billions. I can't even imagine.

In addition to those properties, you're looking at taking control of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. I don't know if everyone understands the importance of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. It is the home of the Group of Seven art collection, the most renowned collection in the province of Ontario. You're going to take over that, and of course the Royal Ontario Museum and the treasures that are there. These are important institutions and important buildings, and your government has given a flimsy two-page bill to explain why you are taking this over.

Really, a government that says they're against big government, they don't like centralized authority, they don't like delegated authority—but this is behaviour like of a politburo. This is what other countries and communities do. They bring centralized power; they hide and don't show themselves accountable. This is that behaviour. If I described this to someone and didn't say who the government was, and said, "Can you guess where this is coming from, what country?" believe me, it would not be in Ontario. It would be somewhere probably in Asia or central Europe. This is the behaviour of a government that likes to control and concentrate the power in the hands of the Premier—not just power but our public assets. Make no mistake, this is what you're doing.

My question is, has this government shown any ability to be trusted with big capital projects? I did listen to the minister, and it sounds to me like a lot of you read the exact same speech that was written for you by the bureaucrats, because it was the exact same speech read by quite a number of the members here.

I would also just say: Stand up and use your own words. If you're going to stand behind a bill like this, if you're going—

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Point of order, the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Point of order, Speaker. And I'm sorry; I could be a little bit delayed. The member opposite noted something to do with "greedy little" something, and according to standing order 25(j), "charges another member with uttering a deliberate

falsehood”—you can’t criticize using “greedy little.” Sorry, it just seems wrong.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I thank the member. I take notice. I definitely didn’t catch that. I’ll be paying more attention. I take note, and I will allow the member to continue—with carefulness.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Certainly.

Some of the things that the minister said that I’m going to debunk here: that they are going to have proper oversight and management with these big projects. Here are some examples of how this government is conducting themselves when it comes to proper oversight and the management of these big projects:

Eglinton Crosstown: Do I need to look much further than the Eglinton Crosstown? Let’s be clear: The Eglinton Crosstown is a project that’s going on three years late. It’s now currently estimated to be \$1 billion over budget. There’s lawsuits back and forth between the consortium building the project and Metrolinx, and now those lawsuits exceed over \$500 million. This is taxpayer dollars. This is taxpayer money. I don’t know how you’re saving taxpayers’ money when you’re looking at these kinds of numbers here—\$1 billion over budget and \$500 million in lawsuits.

Let’s also look at the CEO of Metrolinx who is responsible for this, who got up not that long ago and said that he absolutely couldn’t provide any timeline for the completion of this project. This is a government that has Metrolinx doing their work for them. We have seen that Metrolinx has—

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member. I have another point of order. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I looked at the bill. I did not see references to Metrolinx as one of the agencies subject to the bill, so pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i), I ask, through you, Speaker, that the member return to the subject matter of the bill, the real estate, because Metrolinx is not germane to the item being debated.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the point of order. I will allow the member to continue on the subject of the bill.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It would appear that the members of the government’s own bench were not listening to the minister when she gave her hour lead, because the minister talked endlessly about highways and about building transit. So while it may not be in the bill, the minister brought this up. I didn’t see you rising on a point of order that the minister wasn’t speaking to her own bill, so I would look forward to when you correct the minister from straying from the two-page bill that’s in front of us.

Metrolinx: Can we just be clear that Phil Verster makes \$1 million—\$1 million—to oversee an Eglinton Crosstown that is \$1 billion over budget. This is an organization that has 59 vice-presidents and 19 C-suite executives. I don’t know how this kind of expenditure in any way is saving taxpayer dollars. Every one of you got up and said, “We’re going to save taxpayers’ dollars.” Here’s evidence that you’re not. You’re squandering taxpayers’ dollars.

Let’s look at the Ontario Line again, because it was referenced by the minister when she made her speech and when she talked about how they’re going to build highways and they’re going to build transit to get families home safely to their families. That’s the quote from her. Ontario Line: The cost of the Ontario Line has doubled from the initial estimates. It was first estimated that the 15.6-kilometre line was supposed to be completed in 2027, and the cost to the taxpayers was \$10.9 billion. Now the price has been pushed to a \$19-billion estimate and it won’t be completed until 2031. That’s the new estimate for the Ontario Line. Here’s a stat: This is more than \$1-billion per kilometre. How is this cost-effective, \$1 billion per kilometre?

2050

Then the minister, again, talked about Highway 413, which is going to get people home to their kids faster by about 30 seconds. Let’s be clear: Even though the government is not providing estimates, it’s been estimated to cost at least \$10 billion to \$12 billion to build Highway 413. What could we have been doing with that money instead? I think it’s interesting to note that Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer estimated that more than 16,000 Ontarians were homeless on any given night, and so instead of spending this money on a highway, the government could afford to build housing for 20,000, for the cost of about \$4 billion, a half or a third of the cost of Highway 413.

The government is talking about effective use of taxpayer dollars. We could build 11 hospitals with the cost of Highway 413. People could use hospitals. That’s a big expense. With \$1.5 billion, we could hire 1,000 registered nurses and 9,000 registered nurses who would work for four years, so there’s some effective use of taxpayer dollars.

But what I want to say very specifically about Infrastructure Ontario’s ability to manage property—I don’t have to look much further than my riding. In Hamilton, we have an area we call the brow lands. This is at the corner of Mohawk and Fennell. Before this government came to power, there was a wonderful plan. Mohawk College was going to buy the property and the building. They were going to use it for their nursing program. The money that they got from buying this property would be used to build affordable housing.

But the government came to town and they blew up that made-in-Hamilton project. They issued an MZO on the property, and the idea was that they were going to build long-term care. It was referenced by my good friend from Brampton West—long-term care in Hamilton. This happened in 2018, so where are we now? Five years ago, you blew up a plan that would have built affordable housing, and this property is still not for sale. I don’t know if seniors in a long-term-care home want to sleep on the grass in the weeds, because that’s all there is in that field right now. This is Infrastructure Ontario managing an important property in Hamilton.

But I just want to end by saying that we saw the huge greenbelt grab. This quite clearly seems like a property grab—a public dollar property grab—and people will see

that for what it is, because they see what you are up to with the science centre. We know that there is absolutely no case for the Ontario Science Centre being torn down. People are quite clear about that.

We also see that the Ontario Science Centre being torn down is connected to Therme's mega-luxury spa. We know that Therme promised to invest \$350 million in Ontario; however, that's not what actually ended up happening. What actually happened is taxpayers are going to be paying \$650 million for a private, for-profit luxury spa with a 95-year lease that the minister won't release, that we cannot see. We cannot see the particulars of a lease that this minister signed on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario, and they expect us to think that they're going to be transparent.

But more offensive than all of this is the fact that talking about tearing down the science centre. This is a government that I could say is kind of heartless and kind of artless, because I don't think you understand the importance of the Ontario Science Centre. The Ontario Science Centre was designed by a Canadian architect whose name was Raymond Moriyama. This Canadian architect built his first structure in a BC internment camp during the Second World War, and he went on to design some of Canada's most iconic buildings. He was responsible for the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa city hall, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, the Toronto Reference Library, the Canadian embassy in Tokyo and the Ontario Science Centre. This is a man that we should be respecting and revering. Instead, you're planning to tear down this building. What I would say is that in building the Ontario Science Centre in 1964, the minister of the day, who was the public works minister—similar to infrastructure now, I would say—had said that the brief for Moriyama was that he was to “design an institution of international significance.” That's what we have here. For people who seem to know the value of a dollar but don't understand the importance of anything, I would say, on your legacy you're going to tear down a building of historic significance, yet again to benefit—

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

We're going to move to questions.

Hon. Rob Flack: Great to be here tonight. Thank you to the member opposite for her question.

I have to ask you: I found it quite profound that you mentioned the politburo in your comments. When I hear someone from the NDP talking about the politburo, I find it interesting that you would spend, in my calculations, close to \$60 billion—you announced in London—for 250,000 homes. How is that fiscally responsible when you see that we've achieved 11% of our housing target; when you see that we've had more housing starts in the last three years than in the history of this province for 30 years; when you see that when you were in power, in the Bob Rae days, it was the worst housing starts in the history of Ontario—even our Liberal friends got more done.

Yes, we have headwinds. But at the end of the day, my question is: You're the party of no; what is it you're really going to do to build houses in this province?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think that it's really interesting that the member doesn't understand—look in the mirror—that what you are doing by centralizing this power is exactly—

Hon. Rob Flack: You said “politburo,” not me.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —the definition of a politburo.

Hon. Rob Flack: Politburo: That's Russia. That's communism.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly, so look in the mirror. That's what you're doing. Centralized control—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Through the Speaker, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Please make your comments through the Speaker.

Next question? The member from Sudbury.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order. Can you proceed with the question? It's your time, member for Sudbury, for the question.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you to the member as well. She spoke eloquently about this bill. It's a very short bill, but basically the short version of this is the Conservative government saying, “Trust us. We're going to take care of this.” She spoke about many instances where the people of Ontario simply do not trust the government of Ontario. It's not a secret that the Premier is under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

Why in the world would the people of Ontario buy into this “trust us” ideology that simply does not exist anymore for this government? And why does the Conservative government not connect the dots between RCMP criminal investigation and lack of trust from the public?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Simply put, people don't trust this government. They absolutely don't trust this government. Unfortunately, this government has tipped their hand to what their actual priorities are, and we see that with all of the bills that they put out, all the bills that they had to roll back. We see it with all the many times that they take things to court using taxpayers' dollars because they're petulant about something, so they go to court to use taxpayer dollars. As much as they stand up and crow about it, they are not interested in building affordable housing for people because if they were, we wouldn't be so far behind in the plans. I have to say, people of the province of Ontario see what they're about. They don't trust them. You're going to have to re-earn their trust. A power-grab bill like this is not going to help you with your reputation as power-hungry.

2100

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. It's with regard to the Centralization of Broader Real Estate Authority initiative, which is not expected to result in any new costs to taxpayers or to the organizations that may be impacted by the proposed legislation.

In fact, if passed, it is expected to save taxpayers money by bringing the province one step closer to centralizing the

approach to managing and making decisions about realty and optimizing office space for organizations.

My question to the member opposite is, given that this will not cost taxpayers any money, will the member opposite support this bill?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Here we go: You're going to save taxpayer money? The only taxpayers' dollars that you're saving are the billions that you've got socked away in an unheard-of contingency fund. I just need to remind you that that's not your money; that's taxpayers' dollars, and they could use you spending that money to help them out with the crisis that they're facing right now and help them out with their inability to afford groceries and their heating bill.

And, back to saving taxpayers' dollars, did I tell you the numbers of the taxpayers' dollars that are going to be spent on an over-budget Eglinton Crosstown? It's at least \$1 billion.

So listen, promises, promises, promises, but your track record shows you don't save taxpayers' dollars; you waste them.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: My friend talked about housing in Hamilton. I wonder if she could tell us what the government could have done in a bill about real estate that would have assisted Hamilton with their efforts to build more affordable housing, rather than have urban sprawl.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Honestly, any time that I can talk about Hamilton, I'm proud to do so. I know there are three Hamiltonians in the House today and I know we're all proud to talk about Hamilton. But I think we all realize Hamilton has some struggles, as do many of our communities.

Tomorrow, here in the House, we're going to have the Federation of Rental-housing Providers. I think what we're going to hear from them is that the people who are providing rental and affordable housing, social housing, are starved for funding from this government. And that is the case in Hamilton, as it is in all of our ridings.

I skipped over it very quickly, but the made-in-Hamilton plan that we had on the brow lands, not only would it have built much-needed affordable housing, it took place with a ministerial zoning order that the city didn't request and that they asked to be rescinded. So this property is sitting empty and vacant while it could be used, not only for housing, but it could be used—

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

Next question.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's been interesting listening to the debate tonight about this bill from the independent Liberals and from the NDP, especially because it seems to me they're not spending a whole a lot of time actually talking about this bill, because it's so simple in order to build these efficiencies in.

One thing that I found is that when the opposition can't find anything bad to say about a bill, they'll try to talk

about everything else but the bill, which is exactly what we're seeing here tonight.

So, I would like to ask the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas if she will be supporting this legislation.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member is mistaken. I can find a lot of bad things in this bill to talk about. Even given the fact that it's two pages—

Hon. Rob Flack: Less trees—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Fewer trees. It's grammar.

Laughter.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This impacts significant properties of the province, billions and billions of dollars of property and taxpayer dollars invested. It needs to be said, you don't own these properties; you're supposed to be the stewards of them. And nobody trusts this government.

As I said before, when I tell people about this, they just say, "Oh, yeah. We know what's going to happen. They're going to move this closer to the minister's office, the minister who is going to tear down the science centre and is going to give Therme a 95-year lease."

I don't have anything good to say about it and neither do the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for more questions.

We're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Billy Pang: I rise tonight to support Bill 151, the Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023. This proposed legislation stands as a testament to our government's commitment to efficient governance, responsible resource allocation and, most importantly, the well-being of the people of Ontario.

In the wake of a global pandemic that tested the resiliency of our province, we found ourselves at a pivotal moment in history. Ontario and its diverse and growing population require innovative solutions to effectively manage its vast real estate portfolio.

In Markham–Unionville, our community has witnessed substantial growth and transformation over the years. I understand the critical role that the real estate sector plays in shaping the lives of our constituents and Ontarians.

The Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, if passed, would represent a significant step forward in ensuring the responsible and effective management of this vital sector. The introduction of this bill is a strategic response to the increasing demands on our infrastructure and the need for streamlined, transparent and cost-effective real estate management.

The proposed bill would build upon the groundwork laid by Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act (Infrastructure Statute Law Amendments), 2023. Bill 69 aims to optimize government operations and enhance fiscal responsibility. Recognizing the inefficiencies and challenges posed by the current decentralized model of real estate management, Bill 151 proposes a framework that centralizes decision-making processes and brings cohesion to a sprawling network of entities.

Talking about centralization of realty authority, at the heart of Bill 151 lies the proposal for the full centralization

of realty authority. The legislation outlines a framework that, if passed, would empower the Minister of Infrastructure with the control of real property previously managed by four organizations and one proposed organization.

These entities—namely, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, Ontario Health, the Centennial Centre of Science and Technology, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the proposed Ontario Health atHome—would undergo modification or removal of their realty authority. This bold step toward centralization is not an arbitrary move, but a calculated effort to address the challenges posed by the current fragmented approach to real estate management.

The Ministry of Infrastructure, through Infrastructure Ontario, oversees the general realty portfolio, but the authority is distributed across five ministries and 54 entities, each operating under individual processes and protocols. The proposed centralization would provide a more holistic and efficient decision-making process.

We're talking about the realignment of realty authority through a tailored approach. In addition to full centralization, the bill also proposes a tailored approach for six organizations. These entities, including the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp., Ottawa Convention Centre Corp., the Royal Ontario Museum, Science North, and Algonquin Forestry Authority, would face legislative changes that restrict specific realty activities or require government or ministerial approval.

2110

This tailored approach acknowledges the diverse roles and responsibilities of these organizations while ensuring that their realty activities align with government priorities. It exemplifies a nuanced strategy, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all solution is not suitable for the varied landscape of real estate management in Ontario.

The potential impact of Bill 151 on Ontario's real estate landscape is profound. The centralization of realty authority promises to introduce a level of efficiency, transparency and accountability that has been lacking in the current decentralized model. The proposed bill positions the Minister of Infrastructure as a central figure in decision-making, ensuring a more cohesive and strategic approach to managing the province's extensive real estate portfolio.

By consolidating authority, the government aims to reduce redundancies, eliminate duplication of efforts, and create a more streamlined decision-making process. This, in turn, is expected to cut red tape, increase efficiency, and ultimately lead to cost savings.

The proposed changes are not merely administrative adjustments. They represent a paradigm shift in how we approach the management of one of Ontario's most valuable resources: its real estate.

The benefits of centralization have been underscored by various third-party reviews and audits. For instance, the Auditor General's annual report in 2017 highlighted the potential for increased efficiency in the Ministry of

Infrastructure's general real estate portfolio through centralized authority and decision-making.

The Ernst and Young line-by-line review in 2018 further emphasized the potential for enhanced fiscal management through a more efficient operation of the government's real estate portfolio.

Moreover, PricewaterhouseCoopers identified in 2018 that the operating model for government real estate could be a barrier to transformation. They suggested that a strategic and holistic approach could foster greater transparency and improve decision-making capabilities.

In 2019, a Deloitte report reinforced the idea that centralizing real estate decision-making would likely improve strategic alignment for the management of provincial infrastructure and assets.

The evidence from these reviews is clear. The benefits of a streamlined real estate model are not just theoretical but have been demonstrated in various jurisdictions. The proposed changes in Bill 151 align with best practices observed in governments such as the city of Toronto, Shared Services BC and Public Works and Government Services Canada. In each case, the transition to a centralized model resulted in increased efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Beyond the immediate benefits of increasing efficiency and costs savings, Bill 151, if passed, would align with broader economic development goals. The proposed legislation is part of the government's broader plan to more efficiently manage real estate, improve economic growth and save taxpayers money. The potential for unlocking service properties through the sales of assets is a strategic move that could contribute to economic growth. By redirecting resources from underutilized properties to areas that align with government priorities such as building more housing and long-term care facilities, the government is positioning itself to address critical needs while stimulating economic development.

It is important to recognize that these proposed changes come at a time when the global landscape is marked by uncertainty. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the economic shifts and geopolitical dynamics necessitate innovative solutions. The government's commitment to tackling these challenges head-on is evident in the proactive approach taken with the proposed Bill 151.

The centralization of realty authority is not just about optimizing current operations; it's about future-proofing our real estate management practices. By creating a framework that is adaptable to changing circumstances, the government is demonstrating strategic foresight and a commitment to building a resilient province.

While the overarching theme is centralization, the bill, if passed, recognizes the unique roles and responsibility of specific organizations through a tailored approach. This nuanced strategy reflects an understanding that not all entities can be governed by the same set of rules. For organizations such as the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp., Ottawa Convention Centre Corp., the Royal Ontario Museum, Science North and Algonquin Forestry

Authority, the proposed legislative changes are designed to strike a balance between maintaining autonomy and ensuring aligning with the government's priorities.

This tailored approach is a testament to the government's commitment to flexibility and fairness. It recognizes that certain entities have specific mandates and functions that may not seamlessly fit into a fully centralized model. By allowing for tailored legislative changes, the government is acknowledging that diversity of roles these organizations play in the cultural, scientific and environmental landscape of Ontario.

In the context of economic recovery and growth, the proposed changes in Bill 151 present a unique opportunity for Ontario. As we emerge from the challenges posed by the pandemic, the government's focus on economic development and job creation is paramount. By streamlining real estate management, the government aims to unlock economic opportunities through strategic asset utilization and efficient decision-making.

The potential sale of surplus properties, as outlined in the bill, could inject funds into critical areas such as health care, education and infrastructure. This, in turn, has the potential to stimulate economic activity, create jobs and contribute to the overall well-being of the province.

2120

One of the key promises embedded in Bill 151 is the potential for cost savings. The evidence from third-party reviews, including the Auditor General's annual report and the Ernst and Young line-by-line review, suggests that a centralized approach to real estate management can significantly reduce overall spending across government. The potential for cost savings is not just a theoretical proposition. Real-world examples, as highlighted in the bill, demonstrate that jurisdictions such as the city of Toronto, Shared Services BC, and Public Works and Government Services Canada have successfully achieved cost savings through centralization. These savings, in turn, can be redirected to support critical areas such as health care, education and infrastructure.

A key driver behind the proposed changes is the aim to streamline processes and reduce red tape. The current decentralized model, with its multiple levels of review and approval, often results in inefficiencies and delays. By centralizing realty authority, the government seeks to create a more streamlined decision-making process that is efficient, transparent and accountable.

Reducing red tape is not just a bureaucratic goal; it directly impacts the lives of Ontarians. Streamlining processes means faster approvals for critical projects, quicker responses to community needs and a more agile government that can adapt to changing circumstances. In the post-pandemic era, where agility and responsiveness are crucial, reducing red tape is a step towards building a more resilient and efficient government.

In the pursuit of efficiency and cost savings, the government remains steadfast in its commitment to respon-

sible governance. The proposed legislation is not a call for hasty decisions, but a strategic move to ensure that decision-making remains aligned with government priorities.

The bill outlines a clear framework for the centralization of realty authority, subject to any exceptions determined by regulation. This ensures that the government has the flexibility to adapt to specific circumstances while adhering to overarching principles of transparency and accountability. Responsible governance is not compromised in the pursuit of efficiency; rather, it is enhanced through strategic and thoughtful decision-making.

The inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process is a crucial aspect of the proposed changes. Since 2020, the Ministry of Infrastructure has engaged in extensive consultations with the 14 entities named in the bill and their eight oversight ministries. This collaborative approach ensures that the proposed amendments are informed by the real-world experiences and challenges faced by these organizations. The feedback received during the consultations has been instrumental in shaping the proposed legislation. The fact that the oversight ministries for the 14 prescribed entities support the initiative is indicative of a co-operative and collaborative decision-making process. By involving stakeholders, the government ensures that the changes are not imposed but are a result of shared goals and objectives.

The Improving Real Estate Management Act, 2023, is a testament to this government's commitment to progress and responsible governance. By supporting this legislation, we signal our decision to fostering a real estate market that is fair, transparent and sustainable. I urge my colleagues to join me in championing this crucial piece of legislation for the benefit of our constituents and the prosperity of our great province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Questions for the member? No questions?

Further debate? Further debate?

Miss Surma has moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Orders of the day?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good evening, Speaker. No further business.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, November 22, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2126.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, 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: Julia Douglas, 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 (IND)	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	
Kemaghan, 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	
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
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, 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	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	