

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 117B

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 117B

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Wednesday
29 November 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Mercredi
29 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

Wednesday 29 November 2023 / Mercredi 29 novembre 2023

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Chris Glover	6783
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	6783
Mr. Ric Bresee	6783

Estimates

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	6783
-------------------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	6783
Report deemed received	6783

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Municipal planning

Mr. Chris Glover	6783
------------------------	------

Transportation infrastructure

Mr. Dave Smith	6783
----------------------	------

Prescription contraceptives

MPP Jill Andrew	6784
-----------------------	------

Chronic pain treatment

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	6784
----------------------------	------

Home care

Mr. Dave Smith	6784
----------------------	------

Wildlife protection

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	6785
---------------------------	------

Transportation infrastructure

Mr. Dave Smith	6785
----------------------	------

Prescription contraceptives

Mr. Joel Harden	6785
-----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, Bill 154,

Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2023 sur un nouvel
accord pour Toronto, projet de loi 154,

M. Bethlenfalvy

Hon. Kinga Surma	6786
Mr. Stephen Crawford	6789
Mr. Rick Byers	6791
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	6793
Mrs. Robin Martin	6794
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	6794

Mr. Logan Kanapathi	6794
Mr. Joel Harden	6795
Mr. Mike Harris	6795
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	6795
Mr. Rick Byers	6802
Mr. Chris Glover	6803
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6803
MPP Lise Vaugeois	6803
Mr. John Yakabuski	6803
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6804
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	6806
Ms. Natalie Pierre	6806
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	6807
Mr. Mike Harris	6807
Mr. Chris Glover	6807
Ms. Jennifer K. French	6807
Mr. Rick Byers	6810
MPP Lise Vaugeois	6810
Mrs. Robin Martin	6811
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6811
Ms. Natalie Pierre	6811
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	6811
Mr. Rick Byers	6813
Mme France Gélinas	6813
Mme Lucille Collard	6813
Mr. Mike Harris	6814
MPP Lise Vaugeois	6814
Mrs. Robin Martin	6814
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	6814
Ms. Jennifer K. French	6817
Mr. Mike Harris	6817
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	6818
Mr. Will Bouma	6818
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6818
Mr. Chris Glover	6818
Mr. Rick Byers	6821
Mme France Gélinas	6821
Mr. Andrew Dowie	6822
Ms. Jennifer K. French	6822
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6822

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Prescription contraceptives / Contraceptifs sur ordonnance

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	6822
--------------------------------------	------

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6824
Mr. Chris Glover	6825
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	6825
Mr. Joel Harden	6826
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6826
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	6827
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	6827
Mr. John Fraser	6827
Mme France G��linas	6828
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	6828
Vote deferred.....	6829

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, 2023, Bill
134, Mr. Calandra / Loi de 2023 pour des
logements abordables et de bons emplois, projet de
loi 134, M. Calandra**

Ms. Jessica Bell.....	6829
Mr. Nolan Quinn	6837
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	6837
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6837
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	6837
Mr. Matthew Rae	6838
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	6838
Mr. Trevor Jones	6839
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	6839
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	6840
Mr. Chris Glover	6840
Mr. Dave Smith.....	6840

MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	6840
Mr. Andrew Dowie	6843
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	6843
Mr. Matthew Rae	6843
MPP Jamie West	6844
Mr. Mike Harris	6844
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	6844
MPP Andrea Hazell.....	6844
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6845
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6845
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	6846
Mr. Trevor Jones	6846
Mr. Chris Glover	6847
Hon. Paul Calandra	6847
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	6847
Mr. Andrew Dowie	6847
MPP Jamie West	6848
Mrs. Robin Martin	6851
Mr. Chris Glover	6851
Mr. Dave Smith.....	6852
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	6852
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6852
Ms. Natalie Pierre.....	6852
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	6854
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	6854
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	6854
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	6855
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6855
Third reading agreed to	6855

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 novembre 2023

*Report continued from volume A.
The House recessed from 1211 to 1300.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Chris Glover: I would like to welcome to the House Chris Seecharran, who is the president of the Spadina–Fort York riding association; and also resident of Spadina–Fort York Mona Gobran. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm so happy to recognize my good friend and constituent from the Markham–Thornhill riding here today. His name is Mr. Amratlal Mistry. He's a community leader and well-known advocate in my riding. Also, he's joined by his wife, Mrs. Lilaben Mistry, and their daughter Beejel Mistry—along with my constituency staff, [*inaudible*]. Welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

Mr. Ric Bresee: If you'll indulge me, I've got a few up in the gallery today. We have my lovely wife, Heidi Galloway Bourgoïn; my brother, in from Calgary, Rodney Bresee; my aunt and uncle Craig and Grace Boogers from Burlington; our dear family friend Donna Bowers; my staff member, of course, Chris Dopking; and most specifically, on the occasion of her 80th birthday, my wonderful mother, Leslie Bresee.

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 62(c), the 2023-24 estimates of the Office of the Assembly, the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and Ombudsman Ontario, having been approved by the Board of Internal Economy and tabled earlier today, are deemed to be concurred in.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 66(c), the 2023-24 supplementary estimates of the Treasury Board Secretariat before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs are deemed to be passed by the committee, and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Chris Glover: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas existing legislation is in place that determines minimum distance requirements for other entities wishing to be placed in proximity of schools for the purposes of protecting public health and safety of children;

“Whereas no provincial law or regulation exists to require a minimum distance between 24-hour drop-in respite centres placed in proximity of schools for the purposes of protecting public health and safety of children;

“Whereas the Planning Act is provincial legislation that sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario to provide for planning processes that are fair by making them open, accessible, timely and efficient;

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

“Direct municipalities to ensure a minimum proximity of 250 metres between a 24-hour drop-in respite centre and school be established for the purposes of protecting public health and safety of children.”

I will pass this petition to page Henry to take to the table.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the city of Toronto is a regionally, provincially, and nationally significant area for job creation and economic growth, as seen through the facilitation of domestic and international trade which significantly drives the country's gross domestic production (GDP) and is critical to the success of the province and the country; and

“Whereas Toronto is a key tourism destination, attracting millions of visitors each year through its various attractions, live music scene, culinary experiences, professional sports teams, and vibrant cultures. Those travelling to and from Toronto every day contribute economically and rely on accessible and safe transit, reliable toll-free highways;

“Whereas maintaining and expanding operations of Toronto's key infrastructure, such as the Eglinton Cross-town LRT and the Finch West LRT, the Gardiner Expressway, the Don Valley Parkway, will be crucial to ensure the connectivity of commuters and commerce from the greater Toronto area; and

“Whereas transit safety is an area of concern for many Ontarians who utilize transit systems each and every day. By increasing funding, the city of Toronto can increase police or safety officers, continue to increase cellular data services and emergency reporting tools to ensure riders’ safety while using all transit systems; and

“Whereas the government is currently tackling the housing crisis seen throughout the province. By identifying provincially owned lands within the city of Toronto which can be used to build homes on, the government can continue to build affordable and obtainable homes for future generations; and

“Whereas continuing to sustain the long-term growth of Toronto as an economic driver is beneficial to all levels of government. By agreeing upon partnerships with the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, the government is ensuring that the city continues to deliver as a tourist destination, a place to live, a place to work and a place to do business;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to advance the New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, to ensure the growth of key infrastructure, transportation, and economic prosperity for Toronto, the entirety of the province” of Ontario “and the country” of Canada.

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Scarlett.

PRESCRIPTION CONTRACEPTIVES

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled “Universal Contraception.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in Ontario, free prescription birth control is only available if a person is under the age of 25 and does not already have insurance coverage;

“Whereas reproductive health care is a human right;

“Whereas the lack of access to contraception negatively impacts people’s health;

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

“The Ministry of Health” must “expand the Ontario Health Insurance Plan to cover universal access to all prescription contraception.”

I couldn’t agree more to this. I’ve affixed my signature to this petition, and I’m handing it to Shahan for tabling. Free contraception. Thank you.

CHRONIC PAIN TREATMENT

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The petition I will read into the record is entitled “National Chronic Pain Society petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas one in four Ontarians over the age of 15 suffer from chronic pain, with 73% reporting that the pain

interferes with their daily lives and more than half reporting issues with depression and suicidal thoughts; and

“Whereas pain is the most common reason to seek health care, with chronic pain making up approximately 16% of emergency room visits and 38% of frequent visits, adding to the already lengthy wait times and delaying treatment; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) is proposing to limit the number of nerve block injections a pain sufferer can receive to 16 per year, regardless of the severity of the patient’s condition or the number of injections needed, and seemingly without any consultations with patients or health care” providers; and

“Whereas the most common treatment for pain provided by family doctors and hospitals is opioids, despite the current national crisis leading to an estimated 20 opioid-related deaths in Canada every day during the COVID-19 pandemic;

1310

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

“Prevent OHIP from applying a one-size-fits-all solution to the issue of chronic pain, and allow for consultations with health care workers and pain sufferers to determine the best way to treat chronic pain without resorting to opioids.”

I’d be happy to affix my signature to this petition and return it to the table with page Henry.

HOME CARE

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is taking the next step to better connect and coordinate people’s home care services through Ontario health teams; and

“Whereas the province has already approved 57 teams across the province that will help people experience easier transitions from one provider to another, with one patient record and one care plan being shared; and

“Whereas the government is investing over \$128 million to provide OHTs with \$2.2 million over three years to better coordinate people’s care. This would establish a new single organization called Ontario Health atHome that will coordinate all home care services across the province through the Ontario health teams; and

“Whereas instead of navigating a complex system and waiting for a call at home, Ontario health teams will be able to provide people with easy-to-understand home care plans and what care they will receive before going home from the hospital; and

“Whereas care coordinators would be assigned to work within OHTs and other front-line care settings to facilitate seamless transitions for people from hospital or primary care to home care services; and

“Whereas an initial group of 12 Ontario health teams have been chosen to accelerate their work to deliver home care in their local communities starting in 2025. With support from the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health,

these teams will start by focusing on seamlessly transitioning people experiencing chronic disease through their primary care, hospital, and home and community care needs;

“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 this government has made on building a patient-centred home and community care system.”

I fully endorse this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Jessy to take to the table.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition here signed by residents from Scarborough, from Whitby, from Weston, from York. There are hundreds of signatures on this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas thousands of compassionate citizens bring wildlife to authorized non-profit wildlife rehabilitation centres;

“Whereas on September 26, 2023, according to traumatized staff and volunteers of Mally’s Third Chance Raccoon Rescue and Rehabilitation centre, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry launched a massive military-style raid on the non-profit organization; and

“Whereas this is not the first time such unjustified actions have occurred; indeed in 2002, the ministry conducted a similar raid at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, seizing their raccoons;

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

“Explain why ministry staff conducted such a raid, if, as reported, there had been no site inspections for 18 months; and

“Transfer the raccoons seized from Mally’s Third Chance Raccoon Rescue and Rehabilitation Sanctuary to a licensed rehabilitation facility at the cost of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.”

The people deserve answers. I urge the minister to be transparent and provide answers to these questions.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the city of Toronto is a regionally, provincially, and nationally significant area for job creation and economic growth, as seen through the facilitation of domestic and international trade which significantly drives the country’s gross domestic production (GDP) and is critical to the success of the province and the country; and

“Whereas Toronto is a key tourism destination, attracting millions of visitors each year through its various attractions, live music scene, culinary experiences, professional sports teams and vibrant cultures. Those travelling to and from Toronto every day contribute economically

and rely on accessible and safe transit” and “reliable toll-free highways;

“Whereas maintaining and expanding operations of Toronto’s key infrastructure, such as the Eglinton Cross-town LRT and the Finch West LRT, the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway will be crucial to ensure the connectivity of commuters and commerce from the greater Toronto area; and

“Whereas transit safety is an area of concern for many Ontarians who utilize transit systems each and every day. By increasing funding, the city of Toronto can increase police or safety officers” and “continue to increase cellular data services and emergency reporting tools to ensure riders safety while using all transit systems; and

“Whereas the government is currently tackling the housing crisis seen throughout the province. By identifying provincially owned lands within the city of Toronto which can be used to build homes on, the government can continue to build affordable and obtainable homes for future generations; and

“Whereas continuing to sustain the long-term growth of Toronto as an economic driver is beneficial to all levels of government. By agreeing upon partnerships with the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, the government is ensuring that the city continues to deliver as a tourist destination, a place to live, a place to live, a place to work and a place to do business;

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

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to advance the New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, to ensure the growth of key infrastructure, transportation and economic prosperity for Toronto, the entirety of the province” of Ontario and the country of Canada.

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Fouegap.

PRESCRIPTION CONTRACEPTIVES

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition here from the Canadian Federation of Medical Students. It reads:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lack of equitable access to contraception prevents Ontarians from receiving the same standard of health care nationwide;

“Whereas the direct cost of unplanned pregnancy in people aged 15 to 29 is \$381 million annually;

“Whereas the indirect cost of unplanned pregnancies, including the cost of social supports like daycare, are too large to be estimated;

“Whereas giving Ontarians more control over their reproductive health gives more personal and professional autonomy to those able to reproduce;

“Whereas approximately 40% of pregnancies in Canada are unplanned, with over 39,000 unplanned pregnancies among adolescents aged 15 to 19 and 180,000 unplanned pregnancies amongst individuals aged 18 to 44 each year;

“Whereas 15.5% of sexually active youth wishing to avoid pregnancy reported using no contraceptive method at last intercourse;

“Whereas according to the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, among women aged 18 to 44 years, 38% of Inuit women and 28% of both First Nations women living off-reserve and Métis women dropped out of high school due to pregnancy or to take care of a child;

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

“(1) Provide funding to provincial health programs in order to fund universal coverage of contraception, including the copper IUD, for all Ontarians;

“(2) Sponsor public education campaigns to endorse and circulate the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada information about contraceptive methods and use; and

“(3) Implement a task-shifting model to include allied health care providers in contraceptive prescribing in Ontario for improved access.”

I am proud to sign this petition and I will be sending it with page Scarlett to the Clerks’ table.

1320

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NEW DEAL FOR TORONTO ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR UN NOUVEL ACCORD POUR TORONTO

Miss Surma, on behalf of Mr. Bethlenfalvy, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 154, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la relance portée par la croissance (cité de Toronto) et la Loi de 2023 sur la reconstruction de la Place de l’Ontario.

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: I’m happy to rise for the second reading of Bill 154, the proposed New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023. Today I will be splitting the government’s time with my colleagues the parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Finance, Stephen Crawford and Rick Byers. I will be using my time to provide an overview of our government’s plans to rebuild Ontario Place, as well as outline how schedule 2 of Bill 154, the proposed Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023, would help ensure that this important project moves forward without delays so that we can create a remarkable world-class, year-around destination for everyone.

When it comes to the risks of neglecting the importance of investing in our infrastructure, we only have to look to Ontario Place over the last few decades to see what can happen.

Many of us remember Ontario Place with fond memories, a place where you could bring your loved ones for a day of fun. There was something special about going to the waterfront with your family and your friends. There were exhibits, restaurants, rides and, of course, the Cinesphere, which was home to the world’s first permanent IMAX theatre. It was also home to Canada’s first waterslide, in 1978. Ontario Place was cutting-edge for its time, and the Cinesphere and the overall design attracted worldwide acclaim. People came from communities across Ontario, some even internationally, to visit Ontario Place. Most of all it was a place for the people, a place for everyone.

Then, years of inaction caused this iconic destination to fall into disrepair. Attendance dropped. Attendance plummeted from a high of 3.3 million visitors every year in the early 1980s to less than 500,000 only a few years ago. Ontario Place not only lost its attendance, it lost its direction.

When Ontario Place first opened, a half-century ago, Bill Davis, the former Premier of Ontario, said, “The vision and scope of Ontario Place gives promise of our vast potential.” But instead of an attraction that looked to the future, it became hobbled in its past. For years, the full site has been an underused asset on the waterfront. Aside from Trillium Park and the William G. Davis Trail, there have been no material upgrades to the site for over 20 years. Whether they were heritage structures or open spaces, trails or landscaping, seating or signage across the entire site, they were in dire need of investment, repairs and upgrades. It was no longer the family-oriented space that people remembered. In fact, just over a decade ago most of Ontario Place was closed, as it was no longer financially sustainable.

Our government has a plan to bring Ontario Place back to life better than ever and to rebuild it into a year-round world-class destination. As we rebuild Ontario Place for the future, we will once again make this a place for Ontarians to enjoy, learn and create lasting memories, a place that’s fun for everyone, a place for the people.

Our proposed legislation, if passed, would reduce project delays, streamline approvals and ensure that the new Ontario Place for everyone finally gets done. By taking these critical steps, we are creating an iconic space that will feature over 50 acres of free parks and public spaces for everyone to enjoy, bringing friends and families together right here in Ontario while also attracting tourists from around the world.

Before getting into the details of the proposed legislation, I’d like to talk a little bit about all of the exciting things that we’re planning for the new and improved Ontario Place.

The rebuilding of Ontario Place pays homage to the original architecture and heritage that made it such an impressive provincial attraction, until most of it closed in 2012. The plan incorporates the feedback we have heard from the public, Indigenous communities and our partners.

Once complete, the site will feature over 50 acres of free public space for everyone to enjoy. That’s 14 acres

larger than Toronto's Trinity Bellwoods Park and almost four times the size of Dufferin Grove Park. Once complete, you'll be able to stroll along a new public boulevard, take in the sights from a new pier, relax on a new public beach and play in a one-acre fountain. Families and children will be able to celebrate in new event spaces and enjoy delicious food and beverages all year long. There will be spaces for festivals and markets and playgrounds.

A new and improved marina will be a lively, year-round spot to socialize, grab a meal with your family, enjoy boating and appreciate the water. The recommended design concept for the marina includes a boardwalk, a pier and a marina village with pavilions and kiosks with opportunities for waterside cafés and year-round restaurants. We will also seek input from the market on the redevelopment of the marina, including opportunities to incorporate retail, dining and family-friendly activities.

The province plans to engage with boaters and select marina industry experts early next year to gather input on how the marina can be modernized and better support visitors all year round. Once complete, this marina will be the place to visit for fun with family and friends.

In addition to the free public spaces, parkland and waterfront access, visitors will also have the opportunity to experience year-round entertainment and recreational activities delivered by Therme Canada and Live Nation, as well as visit the new state-of-the-art Ontario Science Centre—a science centre for the next generation. Forty per cent of the new Ontario Science Centre will be programmatic space when compared to the current site, which only utilizes approximately 25% of exhibition floor space.

This impressive new facility will expand its programming into the iconic Cinesphere and pod complex. Building on our government's plan to support STEM education and prepare young people for the jobs of the future, it will be a science centre to help educate the next generation of students.

Madam Speaker, we are excited for our plans to reimagine Ontario Place as a vibrant entertainment destination that will remain open to the public 365 days a year—a place for fun that will draw in millions of visitors.

But we need to take important steps to ensure that we are prepared for what needs to be done. This legislation, if passed, would give the Minister of Infrastructure certain powers under the Planning Act intended to streamline certain municipal requirements, such as zoning approvals. This would help ensure that the project can move forward without delay.

The legislation, if passed, would also exempt Ontario Place from the city of Toronto's noise bylaws, as well as allow the government to impose limits and conditions on other city bylaws as required to support construction activities on site that will create thousands of jobs. It would also ensure that the site has required municipal services, such as water and waste water services needed to welcome millions of visitors each year, by providing the Minister of Infrastructure with the authority to require the modification or expansion of municipal services as may be required.

Our proposed legislation, if passed, would also give the province the ability to acquire certain city-owned lands at or around Ontario Place. This would help support the rebuilding of Ontario Place, including by supporting future construction on site.

To ensure that construction work can begin soon to upgrade the site's aging infrastructure, the proposed legislation, if passed, would exempt Ontario Place lands from requirements under the Ontario Heritage Act. But of course, given the historic significance of the Cinesphere and pod complex, the province will continue to protect these heritage structures.

1330

The province also continues to make progress to repair the Cinesphere and pods, and these structures will be conserved, upgraded and integrated into the new, state-of-the-art science centre facility so that they can once again welcome millions of visitors each year.

Our proposed legislation would also exempt redevelopment activities at the Ontario Place site from the Environmental Assessment Act. To ensure that the environment is protected and any impacts are mitigated, our government has completed a category B environmental assessment for site servicing upgrades. This includes activities to upgrade the existing infrastructure at Ontario Place, such as storm water management, water, electrical and gas services. The government also recently completed a category C Public Work Class Environmental Assessment for the future public spaces and parkland at Ontario Place.

Since March 2022, three public engagement events on the environmental assessment and public realm design were held to seek feedback, ideas and preferences to inform the design of the public spaces at Ontario Place and the environmental assessment process. Three virtual public engagement rooms were also launched online to introduce the environmental assessment process, share key information and gather feedback about current site conditions, as well as participants' vision for the design of the public realm.

Future tenants at Ontario Place will also be required to continue to work with the relevant local, regional, provincial and federal authorities.

These two robust and thorough environmental assessments engaged nearly 10,000 people—nearly 10,000 people have been consulted on the project to date.

We are confident in our plan, which is informed by consultations with Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public, and we will continue to work with our partners, including the city of Toronto, to realize the vision for Ontario Place.

Following the original announcement of the province's vision for Ontario Place, we also launched a province-wide online digital survey and two public information sessions in October 2021.

We also held a technical information session for the public in December 2021 to provide an overview of the work required to prepare the site for redevelopment.

We launched a dedicated website, engageontarioplace.ca, to provide updates about the government-led redevelopment.

ment work and to let people know about engagement opportunities.

We heard that people have positive associations with Ontario Place but see it as being old and isolated. Participants envisioned a rebuilt Ontario Place with spaces for gathering, an emphasis on the natural landscape and green space, year-round activities, barrier-free public access, and inclusive public spaces. Madam Speaker, we've listened.

That's why, in September, we submitted an updated development application to the city of Toronto, which outlines several key changes to our plan as a result of public feedback. It was an important milestone that brings us one step closer to delivering on our promise to make Ontario Place a remarkable, world-class, year-round destination. Based on feedback received throughout the consultation process, our plan also now includes additional food and beverage options, waterfront programming, activity and play zones, Indigenous elements and features throughout the site, and, most importantly, more public space. It also reflects feedback from Indigenous communities and community members.

Engagement with Indigenous communities has also been an important aspect of this project, to ensure Indigenous design concepts and place-keeping are reflected across the site to honour the rich traditions, cultures and heritage of Indigenous peoples. Native plant species will be re-introduced across the island, prioritizing those with cultural significance to Indigenous communities.

The Ontario Place site is perfectly located for people locally, regionally and internationally to visit, as it's close to transit, rail, bike paths, airports and a highway. That's why I'm also pleased to share that our updated plan includes improved mobility and transit options. We are working with Metrolinx to upgrade the pedestrian bridges over Lakeshore Boulevard, which will allow visitors to walk and bike to Ontario Place from the Exhibition Place grounds. Once the new Ontario Line subway is complete, a new pedestrian promenade will also allow visitors to walk directly to Ontario Place from the new Exhibition Station. We are also exploring a public shuttle bus option from Exhibition Station with a drop-off zone at the new Ontario Place entrance, as well as other transportation opportunities.

As part of our recently announced new deal with the city of Toronto, we have agreed to explore relocating the proposed underground parking structure at Ontario Place to the Exhibition Place grounds. This will help round out and complement the many transit and transportation options to get to and from Ontario Place. With these new connections, an improved marina and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport just down the street, people will benefit from the unprecedented choice and convenience in travelling to Ontario Place to enjoy a full day of fun.

Speaker, in order to deliver this historic project to the people of Ontario, we must not delay. Our government has already started to make important progress on the site, including repairs to the iconic Cinesphere and pods. Work has also started to upgrade the site's aging infrastructure, such as the water, electrical and gas lines that will be

needed to keep the future site operating for millions of people's enjoyment and for generations to come. As part of the next phase of work, the site will also be carefully prepared for construction, including the removal of trees and vegetation across the site.

Madam Speaker, our government is doing everything possible to protect the wildlife and habitat surrounding the redevelopment site. This includes taking action to improve and increase the long-term tree canopy on site. For every tree removed as a result of redevelopment activities, approximately twice as many trees that are native to the area will later be planted, and six times as many will be planted for larger and mature trees. We are also engaging with Indigenous communities and seeking their guidance to ensure trees are repurposed where possible and continue to be part of the future of Ontario Place.

We've also engaged a variety of environmental stakeholders throughout every stage of the process, including the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Aquatic Habitat Toronto and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Those consultations will help to ensure disturbances to natural heritage features are minimized and opportunities to improve existing features or provide net new wildlife habitat are explored as part of the ongoing design work.

As mentioned earlier, to ensure that the environment is protected, we have completed two environmental assessments, as well as consulted with Indigenous communities and stakeholders. Therme has also undertaken several studies in alignment with those done for the environmental assessment. This includes natural and cultural heritage studies, marine archaeology assessments, storm water management and coastal assessments, among others. All of those reports are available on the city of Toronto's website.

Speaker, our investments in Ontario Place will create an estimated 5,000 new jobs during both construction and permanent operations, yield millions of dollars in rental payments for the province, attract up to six million visitors each year, and more. Our investments will create the economic foundation on which the long-term viability of this iconic destination will be built and secured.

Through this proposed legislation, we will breathe new life into Ontario Place, creating a one-of-its-kind destination that will unite friends and families in Ontario and draw visitors from around the world for many years to come.

1340

We will rebuild Ontario place into a waterfront destination that will once again be fun for everyone:

—for families and children who want to enjoy an entire day of family-friendly activities from swimming, beaches and playgrounds to waterslides and splash pads;

—for foodies and friends who will have new and exciting food and beverage options to choose from including restaurants and cafes where they can enjoy a full meal together on the waterfront;

—for the arts and culture buffs who will seek out the site's new festivals and markets as well as Indigenous cultural programming, gatherings and community events;

—for nature lovers and sports enthusiasts who will have a dedicated home on the waterfront for hiking, bird-watching, boating and biking;

—for students and teachers who want to extend their science-based learning beyond the classroom as well as experience new exhibits and state-of-the-art programming at the new Ontario Science Centre; and

—for music enthusiasts and concertgoers who will have the opportunity to enjoy year-round music and live performances at Live Nation's reimagined, brand new amphitheatre.

Let's work together to bring these ideas, experiences and lifelong memories to life for the people of our province today and for generations to come.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: First, I'd like to thank my honourable colleague the Minister of Infrastructure for her remarks. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Finance for introducing this legislation. Second, I'm sharing my time with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my fellow parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

It is my pleasure to rise and speak in support of our government's proposed legislation today, Bill 154. In fact, it's a trip down memory lane for me. I worked at Ontario Place during university, so I have fond memories and I'm so excited that we're going to rebuild and reinvigorate that facility.

Interjection: What, like 10 years ago?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, five years ago.

The redevelopment of Ontario Place has both tremendous economic and social potential. Certainly, the measures in this bill have the potential to achieve multiple goals through the redevelopment of Ontario Place into a world-class, year-round and family-friendly destination.

Speaker, allow me to talk about the importance that the city of Toronto has in Ontario's economic prosperity. We know that when Toronto succeeds, Ontario succeeds. Toronto is a vibrant economic and financial hub; however, it is much more than that. It is a premier tourism destination for the province and the country. Nearly 30 million visitors are drawn to Toronto each and every year. Allow me to repeat that: 30 million people drawn to Toronto every single year. Speaker, when you consider the entire population of Canada is 40 million people, we can agree that's a significant number of people and a significant tourist trade.

Visitors come to Toronto, they boost the economy and have fun while doing it. They cheer for—and sometimes against—the city's popular professional sports teams, although I know we have a lot of Leafs fans in this Legislature. Of course, for hockey, we do have the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Marlies. For basketball, we have the Raptors. If you like baseball like the Minister of Long-Term Care—

Hon. Stan Cho: Blue Jays.

Mr. Stephen Crawford:—we have the Blue Jays. For football fans like the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, we have the Argonauts. And soccer fans, we have the Toronto FC.

They visit the world-famous CN Tower, attend world-class arts and entertainment attractions and events like live music concerts, theatre, fabulous museums and art galleries, beautiful parks and so many other attractions.

They can even explore and celebrate all things in Canada miniature by visiting one of Canada's newest attractions, Little Canada. Speaker, if you haven't had the opportunity, I would encourage all my colleagues to visit Little Canada and be prepared to be amazed thanks to the passion of founder and chief visionary officer of Little Canada, Oakville resident and friend of mine, Jean-Louis Brenninkmeijer.

Visitors come to Toronto and dine in thousands of cafes and restaurants with every type of cuisine a person might desire. They support local entrepreneurs, farmers and artists by shopping at the St. Lawrence Market, or the Distillery District, or trendy Queen Street. We who have the privilege of serving in this House know all of this very well. Toronto is a world-class city in every way.

Let's dig deeper on all Toronto has to offer and the role Toronto plays in Ontario's strong economy. For decades, the city has serviced and facilitated vast networks of both domestic and international trade. The city boasts representation in every major business sector. You name it and it's here: financial services, technology, education, life sciences, digital media, food and beverage, and film and television.

As you may have guessed by now, Speaker, I'm a big fan of this great city. Toronto is the financial capital of this country, a recognized financial hub in North America and top 10 among global financial centres. It's an engine of economic growth. In fact, Toronto alone drives a significant portion of the country's gross domestic product, or GDP.

Don't let these facts mislead you. The picture isn't all rosy for Toronto. Without the province's support, that upward trajectory could be at risk.

Speaker, our government has proven experience with correcting the financial course of a major jurisdiction, so when the city of Toronto came to us with concerns about the viability of their finances, not only did we listen, but we took action. It was clear that addressing the city's deep financial troubles would require a significant collaboration from all levels of government.

The city's deep financial challenges are no longer sustainable. The financial pressures are unique—decades in the making and growing. Speaker, a one-size-fits-all solution for the city of Toronto's finances simply does not exist. Our governments, provincially and municipally, responded quickly and thoroughly. We worked with the city and created a new-deal working group.

In fact, it was on September 18—just mere weeks ago—that Premier Ford and Mayor Chow announced the formation of the working group, comprising of senior public servants who would explore opportunities for a new deal for the city's finances. On behalf of the province and the city, working group meetings were chaired by Ontario's Deputy Minister of Finance and Toronto's city manager.

Over the past 18 months, I've had the opportunity to work with the incredible team at the Ministry of Finance,

so I want to take a moment to acknowledge the great team that works at the Ministry of Finance.

Together, we are grateful to officials from every level of government who joined these challenging conversations with an open mind, lending enormous expertise and genuine care for the city of Toronto. I should note that the federal government eventually came to the table, late and following our lead, but they came and offered their expertise as well.

The target was ambitious. The working group was tasked with delivering recommendations before the end of November 2023. For the past 10 weeks, over the course of 13 meetings, the province has been working very closely with the city of Toronto. Through the new-deal working group, they worked to find multi-pronged solutions to help the city achieve long-term financial stability and sustainability. The group drilled down on shared priorities, including supporting transit, infrastructure, shelter and housing, as well as getting Toronto's finances back on a stable and sustainable path. They worked together to deliver a set of concrete, actionable recommendations which would protect services, avoid new taxes, and put the city back on a long-term sustainable path, also to ensure Toronto remains the economic engine of Canada. The officials fearlessly dug into the numbers and what they found was concerning.

Speaker, make no mistake: Toronto's financial situation was serious, with huge projected operating and capital deficits. Funding alone cannot solve some of these structural problems. Rather, any approach to addressing the city's financial situation and ensuring Toronto remains an economic engine must be met with a series of measures that, together, form a proportional response.

1350

As I've said, Toronto is unique among Canada's cities. This is due to its long-standing and unparalleled contributions to the province's shared success. It is, in many ways, unique in terms of the scope and scale of the challenges it faces.

In addition to the financial obstacles, the city is facing a housing crisis. This is a challenge worsened by the record numbers of new residents looking for an affordable place to call home. These new residents include record numbers of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers—all drawn to the promise of a better life and the hope of a new home right here in Toronto.

The city is also struggling with tremendous pressure on social supports, which are being stretched to capacity.

Maintaining a world-class transit and transportation network in a city the size of Toronto is a monumental task—the cause of intense discussions throughout the new-deal working group meetings.

Ontario has been guided by a desire to help put the city on a path towards long-term financial sustainability and financial stability. The new-deal working group operated with a set of guiding principles; at the core of each was a deep love and respect for this great city. For the province to lend its support, the terms of the deal had to maintain investments and supports for critical services and

programs that residents depend on—no deep cuts to front-line services or workers. We were absolutely clear that we would not entertain any new taxes on the people or businesses in Toronto.

Just recently, the Minister of Finance reported in our recent fall economic statement that Ontario continues to face heightened economic and geopolitical uncertainties. Over the past year, you've heard the minister caution that Ontario is not immune to the risk of an economic downturn. Inflation, rapid interest rate increases and continued supply chain disruptions are weighing on people, workers and businesses. The fall economic statement continues our responsible, targeted approach to navigating the uncertainties of today.

Our government has a prudent and responsible fiscal plan. It shows we can deliver a path to balance while delivering on the priorities that the people and businesses of this province have come to expect and deserve. That is why we will continue to be transparent with the people, the workers and the businesses about the fiscal outlook for the province of Ontario. As the Minister of Finance shared in the fall economic statement, our government is forecasting a surplus of half a billion dollars by 2025-26. This prudent approach will ensure we lay a strong fiscal foundation for future generations—for our children and our grandchildren—while also building critical infrastructure in communities right across the province, including right here in Toronto.

Toronto is unique among the province's municipalities. From the very beginning, and throughout the working group negotiations, we repeatedly recommended that the best way for Toronto to succeed now and into the future is through strategic areas of growth—growth in population, growth in density and types of housing, growth in efficient and safe front-line services like transit, and growth in revenue from a vibrant and dynamic economy. We maintain that growth—not taxes or tolls—is the best path to alleviating the city's financial pressures. That work culminated in an important announcement earlier this week.

On Monday, November 27, the Premier and the mayor of Toronto stood before the residents and people in the city of Toronto and announced that Toronto and Ontario had successfully reached a historic new deal—a deal that puts the city on a path toward long-term financial stability and sustainability, a deal with a set of terms that my fellow parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance will explain in detail momentarily.

I mentioned that the new deal is a combination of measures that, together, form a proportional response, and this proportional response includes legislative measures we are taking to move forward on this deal. The proposed legislation, the New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, is as important as it is timely. The New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, would, if passed, provide the necessary tools to develop, implement, and plan and to make the new deal a reality.

Schedule 2 includes proposed measures to allow the province to assume authority for necessary planning approvals for Ontario Place, which once complete, would

support the goal of economic growth for the city by attracting millions of visitors year-round.

I would like to go into detail on the importance of schedule 1, the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023. At a high level, the proposed legislation would ensure that Ontario and Toronto continue discussing important, mutually beneficial priorities. These priorities fall into the following distinct categories:

First, the uploading of responsibility for the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway to the province. This is subject to third-party due diligence. Often referred to as the Gardiner and the DVP, they are critical transportation corridors. They connect Canada's financial and employment centre to the broader provincial highway network. Uploading these highways would ensure the long-term protection and preservation of these vital assets.

Second, providing financial support to the city for the Toronto Transit Commission, or TTC, subway system, including support of public safety and security. Every day, riders depend on the TTC to get to work, school and so many other destinations. Riders want safety and convenience when they travel. This new funding for TTC safety and service improvements will help build a system that people want to ride and feel safe while doing so.

Third, further discussion on the use of provincial and municipal surplus lands that exist within the city of Toronto. These are plots of land that could effectively address housing needs, as well as other provincial and municipal priorities. A number of plots of land have already been identified for further consideration. If land can be used to relieve the housing crisis, it is our responsibility to make sure the options have been explored.

Finally, the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023, codifies the discussion of financial support for the city for shelters and other homelessness programs and services, conditional on financial support from the federal government in support of homelessness programs and services for refugees and asylum seekers.

Speaker, I want to reinforce this: Federal assistance is essential for the city to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Along with the city, we continue to call on the federal government to step up as a full partner with funding in critical areas of need, such as shelter support for asylum claimants—especially, of course, as the weather is turning colder—and transit funding for those in Toronto who depend on safe, reliable public transit.

With that, I'd now like to turn over my time to the great member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and my fellow parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Rick Byers: I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for her earlier remarks and her great leadership on this file. As well, I want to thank my colleague the member for Oakville and fellow parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

It is my pleasure to be part of today's debate at second reading of the government's proposed legislation, the New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, Bill 154. The member for

Oakville has clearly described the excellent work undertaken by the new-deal working group to secure an historic new deal between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, a deal that will help achieve long-term financial stability and sustainability for the city and the greater Toronto area.

1400

I too would like to acknowledge the hard work by officials to reach this important new deal. This was challenging but important work. We all had tremendous confidence in the level of experience among the working group, so thank you.

As mentioned, the new deal includes a set of mutually agreed-to terms, worth billions of dollars, that will protect services while avoiding new taxes. Taken together, the new deal is poised to put the city on a path towards long-term financial stability and sustainability.

It's a fact that Toronto is the economic engine of Ontario, and that the Toronto region boosts Canada's largest and most diverse economy. It's home to great and innovative tech companies, a globally recognized financial services sector, some of the top colleges and universities, and so much more. Over the past 10 years, the Toronto region has accounted for over half of Ontario's employment growth. It's an international hub for investment, trade and innovation, a world-class city known for its vibrant innovation ecosystem, talent and business excellence.

Prior to the pandemic, the region's international exports averaged \$85 billion annually. In 2022, the region's exports increased by 17%, accounting for nearly half—46%—of Ontario's total exports. But as the member for Oakville noted, even as Toronto boasts all of this, without the province's support, the city's role as an economic engine could be at risk. Toronto's financial situation, projected operating and capital deficits, would total billions.

And so the new-deal working group set to work, tasked with delivering their recommendations by the end of November 2023. For 10 weeks, the new-deal working group worked toward getting Toronto's finances back on a stable and sustainable path. They identified shared priorities, including support for the transit systems, critical infrastructure, homeless shelters and critically important housing. The culmination of that work is a set of concrete, actionable recommendations that would protect services, avoid new taxes and put the city on a path toward long-term financial stability and ensure it remains an economic engine for Canada.

My honourable colleague spoke about the legislative measures that have been proposed to make the new deal a reality. It is part of a series of measures that together form a proportional response. The final terms put forward and agreed to by both the province and the city align with Toronto's needs, divided into operating and capital relief supports. The province tabled an offer representing billions of dollars over the next decade in funding for critical priorities, priorities like transit.

Just consider, Speaker, that TTC subway lines carry more than 746,000 riders every weekday, supporting both local and regional connectivity. I saw that activity first-

hand when I was on the board of the TTC for three years, and the operational activities that they go through every single day to ensure that they're operating the system responsibly, safely and productively—it was great to see.

Funding through the new deal was targeted to support ridership growth through improving service levels and ensuring ridership safety. This includes procurement of 55 new subway trains for the TTC's line 2, to replace assets that are reaching the end of their life. Now, smart shoppers know you save money when you buy in bulk, which is why to maximize this procurement opportunity, in addition to the 55 new subway trains for the TTC, Metrolinx would leverage the opportunity and purchase 15 additional trains for two priority transit projects: the Scarborough subway extension and the Yonge North subway extension, two very important lines in the fantastic transit infrastructure investment program that this government has proposed over the next 10 years.

The offer also includes \$300 million in one-time funding for subways and transit safety, recovery and sustainability. This includes commitments on the part of the city to establishing a new transit rider safety commitment. This commitment must include increased police and/or safety officer presence on and near transit vehicles and in station areas; continued expansion of cellular and data services for transit riders across the TTC network; and enhanced emergency reporting options and response timelines for riders to signal incidents, threats and concerns to the attention of authorities.

I'm excited to see these elements coming into place on the cellular service. I take the TTC up from Queens Quay every morning and back home at night, and people are using phones on the system—they never did before. It's great to see. And it's great to see that commitment continue.

People have to feel safe when they ride transit. This new funding for TTC safety and service improvements will help build a system people want to ride, and feel safe while doing so.

The tabled offer includes annual operating funding totalling \$330 million over three years, beginning in 2024-25, to operate two new subway-integrated provincial transit projects: the Eglinton Crosstown and Finch West LRTs. This new funding will support bringing these projects online. These two provincially owned LRT lines will help move tens of thousands of people faster and more conveniently every day by creating key transit connections integrated into the broader regional transit network—including the TTC subway system—which are unique to the city of Toronto.

The tabled offer also includes a major uploading opportunity of both the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway to the province. Uploading these highways would ensure the long-term protection and preservation of these vital assets. Consider that these integral highways connect Canada's financial and employment centre to the broader provincial highway network. We're talking about nationally significant economic corridors that support the movement of goods while providing

convenience for drivers. It's important that the uploading is carefully overseen, which is why the process will be informed by third-party due diligence assessment. And let me be clear: The province will not explore tolling as part of the due diligence assessment. The last thing residents of Toronto need is new tolls or new taxes.

Speaker, our government is focused on affordability. And we know that homelessness is a pressing, persistent issue for the city. Toronto operates approximately half of all shelter beds across the province. It is a significant pressure point for the city.

I mentioned earlier that Toronto welcomes huge numbers of new residents each year. This includes rising numbers of asylum seekers fleeing unimaginable horrors around the world. This year alone, Ontario recognized the province could see more than 72,000 asylum claimants—nearly twice as many as last year. And the city of Toronto has experienced the greatest influx compared to other municipalities in Ontario.

That's why, in September, our government committed to put forward \$26.4 million in 2023-24, through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program, to support the city of Toronto to help asylum claimants and impact on social services. This funding would help refugee claimants and unhoused people move into permanent, stable housing—the first step in rebuilding their lives.

1410

We know more support is needed for the homeless and under-housed. Through the working group, the need for additional support for shelters and homelessness prevention quickly became apparent, which is why the terms include \$600 million in additional operating support for shelters and homelessness. It's one of the areas where federal support is so important, which is why the proposed support is conditional on new federal support for refugees and asylum seekers. The federal government must step up and provide its fair share.

I talked about growth, and a shining example and opportunity for growth lies in moving forward with the plan to rebuild Ontario Place, a project that will continue to support the goal of economic growth by attracting millions of visitors to the city year-round once complete. Thank you again to Minister Surma for describing the plan for rebuilding Ontario Place, an area of mutual agreement in the new-deal terms.

Ontario and Toronto have taken meaningful action through this new-deal working group. Together with the city, we are united in our belief that federal assistance is essential for the city to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Together with the city, we continue to call on the federal government to step up as a full partner, with funding in critical areas of need, such as shelter support for asylum claimants, especially as the weather is turning colder, and transit funding for those in Toronto who depend on safe, reliable public transit.

As part of the terms, the city also agreed to several measures. Toronto's housing supply and homelessness crisis have worsened and demand an urgent range of policy and financial actions to address the needs of current and future residents of Toronto. Those actions must come

from all levels of government—the city, province and federal government—and across the housing continuum.

Most importantly, the city has committed to meeting and/or exceeding their housing target. Building housing is so critically important amid the ongoing housing crisis. As part of this work, the city will identify and make available surplus city lands for building homes and increase density near transit through the tools available to them, like official plans and zoning bylaws. The city has also agreed to take further actions to find efficiencies in line with recommendations made by Ernst and Young, both efficiencies in service delivery and efficiencies in procurement, by digitizing processes and exploring how efficiencies can be found through shared services.

I want to emphasize that Ontario is able to offer more than financial support. I talked about the enormous expertise in the working group. Well, there are extensive areas in which the province is able to lend advice and expertise to the city. For example, we know the city faces high debt financing costs. Those costs are unavoidable. The working group, however, identified this as an area of opportunity to explore further. What do I mean by this? Through prudent financial management, the province benefits from a competitive borrowing rate, a rate better than the city's. We agreed to continue exploring these opportunities around borrowing rates.

What else? In the fall economic statement, our government introduced the Ontario Infrastructure Bank. The bank is a new arm's-length provincial agency that will enable institutional investors like public sector pension plans to further participate in large-scale infrastructure projects right across the province. And with experience in one of these large pension plans myself, I know that they will be excited and willing partners to engage in this process going forward.

The exact kinds of significant infrastructure projects that the city of Toronto needs include long-term-care homes, energy infrastructure, affordable housing, municipal and community infrastructure and transportation. These are the projects that are needed, and these are the projects that we expect Ontario Infrastructure Bank to participate in very actively.

Make no mistake: Institutional investor participation will help deliver more infrastructure faster, and there are other jurisdictions that have taken a similar approach to supporting infrastructure investments through the creation of infrastructure banks. Ontario is in an ideal position to help the city of Toronto partner with the bank. Doing so could support faster delivery of key city-building infrastructure while leveraging additional capital from trusted institutional investors.

Finally, the working group identified the city's potential to improve its financial returns. One way could be through potential third-party management of city reserve funds to make that money work harder. Organizations like the Investment Management Corp. of Ontario, or IMCO, do exactly this kind of work. In the case of IMCO, this is an independent, arm's-length organization that provides broader public sector institutions with investment manage-

ment services. As I mentioned in my remarks on the fall economic statement, they relate here how important this is, because smaller enterprises have a challenge of finding the scale to both do the investment of their funds as well as the administration of these funds. It's very difficult and costly for smaller programs and investment programs and pension plans to do this. So giving municipalities the appropriate link into IMCO is very, very important and an important part of the fall economic statement and of this new deal.

So you see, Speaker, just what calibre of expertise Ontario has to share. It's the same expertise that we have employed since 2018, when the Ontario government received the first of six clean opinions by the Auditor General. That's right, count them: six straight clean, unqualified audit opinions. It's the same expertise we have employed to chart a path to balance even in this time of uncertainty, responsibly eliminating the deficit while delivering on our priorities.

I should note, it is more important than ever for us to remain fiscally disciplined, to remain responsible and flexible, even as we experience uncertainty around the world. Doing so will ensure we can emerge stronger than ever before.

We are in a time of significant growth, both population growth and economic growth. We know that in times of growth, when we work together, we can accomplish remarkable things. I think what excites me most about this new deal is there are so many elements that involve so much important activity for the city of Toronto and for the province of Ontario. Both Ontario Place and science centre are a key part of that.

I'm old enough to have visited those as a young fellow. As you can tell, that was many decades ago. I think I was even around when they were built. The fact that they haven't yet been refurbished is quite remarkable given my age. But I very much look forward to these new facilities being remodeled and rebuilt, as the minister has outlined so well, for future generations, frankly. It'll be exciting to see.

As a government, we remain committed to supporting Toronto. The work on reaching a new deal has only just begun, making Bill 154 that much more important. We know that when Toronto succeeds, this helps Ontario succeed, and it helps communities like mine in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound succeed as well. It's so important for Ontario, for all of our communities and for our great country of Canada to succeed, and that's exactly why the New Deal for Toronto Act, Bill 154, is necessary, timely and critically important to the city's, the province's and the country's future success.

1420

I want to thank you for considering my portion of this debate. I look forward to further discussion, and I look forward to supporting this exciting new initiative for the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: In this new legislation for Ontario Place redevelopment plans, the government pro-

hibits lawsuits against the government with respect to anything done under the act, including misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation. So my question to the Minister of Infrastructure is quite simple: What is this government planning to do that makes it necessary to legislate this?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm happy to take that question, Madam Speaker. We shared our entire vision of Ontario Place back in April. The drawings are public. The media has written about it. The city of Toronto has consented. We will have a science centre. We will have a Therme wellness and water park facility, which will also include 16 acres of public realm and public space, including beaches and a pier. We will have 50 acres of public park space. We will have a brand new amphitheatre. We will have food and beverage on site, so that when you go to Ontario Place you can enjoy Ontario Place for the whole day—and a more inclusive marina.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the members for all their comments today. It was very interesting to listen to some of this. I'm a member from the city of Toronto. I'm very excited about this new deal for the city of Toronto, excited to know that our government's been working so collaboratively and closely with the city to come to this deal. And I'm really excited about the future of Ontario Place, because I have great fond memories of being there myself as a child. I didn't work there, but I did work at the CNE when I was young in summers. Anyway, I want to get back there, I want to enjoy Ontario Place.

Can the minister just help me with understanding the benefits for the government of having full authority over the site and how that's going to make things work?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much for the question. I'm certainly happy that you enjoyed Ontario Place. We worked really closely, on a staff-to-staff level, to make sure that we landed a good deal that was in the best interests of the province and the people of the city of Toronto. It also speaks to the Premier's ability to work with absolutely everyone in the best interests of constituents, which I think is important.

But having full access to the site, when we're talking about the land—it's important because whenever you are constructing any type of infrastructure, you need to have ownership of the land for liability purposes. The land which we were speaking about that will be addressed through this legislation are slivers of land next to the access points. That's very critical for the site-servicing piece, but also for the overall development of the site.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Ontario Place for All is a non-profit grassroots organization, a community watchdog that has membership spanning over 30,000 Ontarians. They've been at the front of every single discussion when it comes to the revitalization and the beautification and the greening of Ontario Place. This organization has raised, on

many occasions, that they have significant concerns about the lack of oversight and the lack of transparency when it comes to the redevelopment of Ontario Place. They have recently filed an injunction asking for a full environmental assessment, including over the redevelopment of the west island. This bill now strips them of that legislative, as well as legal, obligation and responsibility.

So my question to the minister is, were you able to speak to Ontario Place for All before you filed this bill? Was there any communication to them about how to proceed with that injunction?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member opposite. I really appreciate the question. I can't speak to something that's before the courts.

I will say that I've had conversations with Ontario Place for All in the past. I invited them to panel discussions directly with me, with IO and the Ministry of Infrastructure staff, all of which were working on the redevelopment proposal, to walk them through the steps, the consultation and everything that we had hoped to achieve and plan in terms of the entire vision. We addressed their questions.

But Madam Speaker, 10,000 people have participated in the consultation that has taken place for Ontario Place. In fact, I don't think that there is a project or a piece of property that has been consulted on more than Ontario Place. It wasn't just us that consulted on Ontario Place. It wasn't just the Liberal government that consulted on Ontario Place. It was previous governments before that as well. So Madam Speaker, I think it's just time to build the project and get it done and bring it back to life.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the wonderful PA for their remarks and thank you to all the presenters. Madam Speaker, generally the government downloads the services to the other levels of government, but this is a historic deal. I have to thank the minister and Premier for making that bold decision of uploading the DVP and Gardiner Expressway. They have talked about fixing—retrofitting—the Gardiner Expressway for how many, three decades? Also, the DVP: I've been travelling the DVP for 40 years. I haven't seen any changes, and the population—an influx of people is coming. The population is growing.

I'd ask the ministers, what is in it not only for Toronto and the GTA; what is in it for day-to-day Ontarians, uploading two main highways?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. It is an immense responsibility that we are taking on. But one of the reasons why government considered this was because we view it as, really, regional highways going through Toronto. We want to make sure that there's security in preserving these two highways for years and years to come. Those two highways are not only responsible for moving people and making sure that people in our labour force can get to work, but also moving goods across the province of Ontario, so I think there is a provincial interest there, certainly one to make sure that the highways continue to operate and are maintained to the best ability.

Of course that's dependent on an assessment. But this was something that both the province and the city agreed upon.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: A question to the minister: I noted, with great interest, that there's a significant operational funding investment in transit with this legislation for the city of Toronto. But the province of Ontario is, of course, much bigger than the city of Toronto. Toronto bears a particular responsibility.

However, I note back home in Ottawa, OC Transpo is posting, for 2024, a reduction of 74,000 service hours. That are a lot fewer buses out there carrying our neighbours around. Just like the people in this great city of Toronto, they need to get to their appointments on time, they need to get to work on time, they need to pick up their kids and those kids need to get home from school.

So I ask the minister, as much as I've heard the government comment today about how great this is for the city of Toronto—the 50-plus new subway cars, the \$300 million for security initiatives, the \$100 million per year for failing LRT projects under the Metrolinx leadership—what can we expect in transit for anything outside of the city of Toronto from this government?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member opposite. We are investing in lots of transit projects outside of the city of Toronto: the Hurontario Line, otherwise referred to as the Hazel McCallion Line in Mississauga, for one; the fact that the province was the biggest funder who provided financial support for the Ottawa LRT, because we support building transit infrastructure; the fact that a huge part of the \$30 billion in Investing in Canada Infrastructure funding was provided for transit operations and transit projects across the province. And we are negotiating currently today with the federal government on more infrastructure dollars, but I have yet to see any members of the NDP help in any way, shape or form on that front.

1430

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I know we don't have a lot of time left. Being a member from outside of Toronto and the GTA, I can understand how important it is when you have Toronto functioning at its highest abilities and how important that is, indeed, for the rest of the province.

I wonder if you could maybe touch a little bit, quickly, on how some of these larger-scale infrastructure projects can benefit areas that are outside of Toronto.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, I—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Sorry, minister. You're out of time. That was my bad on that one. Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise today to speak to the latest government legislation, Bill 154. This bill, I think, is inappropriately titled "New Deal for Toronto Act," because despite its title, the bill actually has nothing to do with the new deal for Toronto that was announced a few days ago. Allow me to explain why, Speaker.

There are two schedules in this bill. Schedule 1 is just one page, and schedule 1 of the bill requires the government of Ontario and the city of Toronto to discuss various matters, including the uploading of the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway, financial support for the TTC, the use of public lands for housing and financial support for homelessness programs—"discuss." That's the key word here.

I find it really odd because, (1), I've never seen discussions be legislated. One would hope that discussions are happening between the city and the province all the time on all issues that are important to the residents of Toronto, especially as the government themselves note in the preamble of this bill that Toronto has a "unique role as a regionally, provincially and nationally significant centre for job creation and economic growth and a primary destination for young people and new immigrants." These discussions need to be happening all the time. You don't need legislation for that.

And (2), there is no requirement that anybody do anything other than have these discussions. There is no apparent reason why the legislation would be required for such discussions to occur, and therefore, no apparent purpose for schedule 1. The new deal for Toronto that was announced on November 27 does not require the passage of this bill. That's it.

And so, we know that there is no apparent purpose to this schedule because at the end of page 1, which is schedule 1—the first page itself, at the end it says, "(3) This act is repealed." The only reason, really, that this schedule is in there is because the Conservatives need a cover for the true purpose of this bill. It is there so that the Ford government can pretend that this bill is about funding for Toronto so that they can get away with what is actually their plan: what is in schedule 2.

Speaker, there is no reason for this bill to even mention the deal. It's a cynical attempt by the Ford government to sanitize the outrageous legislation that gives them extraordinary powers to exempt themselves from provincial rules—also to very weakly and, for no apparent reason, again, to tie this bill politically to the provisions of the new deal. Again, this bill is not required to implement any part of the new deal. So, that's schedule 1, which brings me to the next schedule: schedule 2 of this bill.

But before I go into schedule 2 of the bill, let's take a step back and remember everything that has led to this bill. I'm going to talk about the timeline of the Ontario Place redevelopment plan. I want to give a shout-out quickly to the Future of Ontario Place project. They are an incredible resource—futureofontarioplace.org. They have a really nice timeline of the Ontario Place project.

In 2018, just months after the Conservative government is elected, they announce that the Ontario Place Corp. is being disbanded and open an international call for development proposals. There is no public consultation or full disclosure of the schemes under consideration. The site's public nature as well as its architectural, landscape and cultural heritage assets are not protected by these

development guidelines—already off to a very bad start and, sadly, an indication of what was to follow.

In response to the province's actions, the city of Toronto placed Ontario Place on its heritage registry. A public meeting at city hall drew crowds of community groups and members who were very concerned that they would lose permanent access to the site, or that its built heritage might be destroyed.

It was also the start of the government not publishing the annual reports for Ontario Place. So we had no idea how much revenue had been brought in from tenants like Live Nation, or expenses that Ontario Place incurred during this time. These reports, by the way, are supposed to be published every year around the same time. Ontario Place Corp.'s financial results are consolidated annually by the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario knew the information but did not publish it. They wanted to keep everybody in the dark.

Fast-forward to 2019: In January 2019, the Ontario government announced the beginning of a process for a comprehensive redevelopment of the Ontario Place site. In response to the government's unilateral announcement, a range of community groups organized protests and events. A grassroots group that we all know of, Ontario Place for All, launched with a public meeting that was attended by hundreds of people. The Toronto Society of Architects and Architectural Conservancy Ontario also organized events to draw attention to this issue.

In April 2019, it was announced that the Ontario Line project would bring subway service to or near Ontario Place. Important point: We're talking about building transit to Ontario Place. Ontario Place will have a stop on the Ontario Line. Do we need the garage? Well, we'll talk about it coming up.

In May, at a city council meeting, councillors voted to reach out to the Ontario government and request that the city and the province jointly plan the future of Ontario Place. At the same time, there were concerns that the Ford government planned to build a casino at the site. Torontonians remember the effort by the Fords to build a casino several years before that. The ministers of the Ford government reassured that a casino would not be part of the redevelopment plans of Ontario Place. They also claimed and said at that time that they would work collaboratively with the city of Toronto and carry out proper consultations. I think the direct quote from the Minister of Infrastructure then was that there would be "lots of consultation."

Officially, formally, in May 2019, the Ontario government launched the call for development for the Ontario Place site, and that call for development closed in September 2019. This formal call for development, if you look at the document, warned prospective bidders: "Participants should consider the adequacy of parking for their development concept," and "The government will not be making any financial contributions towards the design or construction of any proposed facilities. Proposals that require capital investments for planning, design or con-

struction from the government will not be considered." That is what the government put out publicly.

Ontario Place for All, the grassroots group, was already advocating for maintaining public access to the site and criticized the government's appeal to private development, suggesting that they would close off the park and that major landmarks were under threat. They were right, then; they knew it. There were also public concerns, based on the government's actions, that Ontario Place was going to be turned into private property. This was in 2019, almost four years ago.

Meanwhile, a public campaign led by Ontario Place for All continued to raise awareness and engage in conversations—most importantly, about how the public imagined a revitalized Ontario Place. Very soon, news of this spread around the world. It became international news, because people around the world thought that in a city like Toronto, the public was about to lose precious waterfront access.

1440

Ontario Place was listed as one of the world's 25 most endangered places by CNN Travel. Ontario Place got added to an international list of at-risk cultural heritage sites. World Monuments Watch recognized Ontario Place alongside 24 heritage sites around the globe "in need of timely or urgent action." This is in response to the province of Ontario's international call. They said, when they listed Ontario Place as an at-risk cultural heritage site, "an end to top-down decision-making and the embrace of heritage to encourage community dialogue." Architectural Conservancy of Ontario came out saying that Ontario Place needs to be preserved.

Ontario Place for All released a framework to keep this iconic park public and called on the provincial government to use their framework for a reimagined Ontario Place. This is the other thing I have to point out here: Ontario Place for All, a grassroots, community-led effort, has been doing the work that the government should have been doing all along: doing the meaningful public consultations, asking people what a reimagined Ontario Place would look like, creating a framework. This is all the stuff that the government should be doing but ignored. It's up to the public to do the work.

Then, in July 2021, the Ontario government announced that Therme Group, Live Nation and Écorécéo Group were successful participants selected from their 2019 call for development proposals. Therme Group, an Austrian company, a private company, was going to build a luxury spa on the west island—again, a private, for-profit luxury spa replacing a beautiful public waterfront park.

I'm going to read now; this is the editorial that came out in the Toronto Star. The title says, "Ontario Place is No Place for Secret Deals on Development."

"When the Ford government decided to embark on a much-needed redevelopment of Ontario Place, it asked international developers to submit their ideas for the 155 acres of prime real estate on Toronto's waterfront.

"It did not ask the people who live here what they want done with this publicly owned land. It did not reach out to

the city, which has a significant interest in Ontario Place—and owns neighbouring Exhibition Place, another 192 acres that are also in need of revitalization.

“In fact, the government didn’t even offer up a vision of its own, beyond the vague desire for ‘a world-class year-round destination...’

“This is obviously a terrible way to approach the redevelopment of such a historic and valuable parcel in the heart of Canada’s largest city. It’s no wonder so many people who care about the future of Ontario Place are holding their breath....

“Public land needs a public process.”

Towards the end, it says, “This isn’t a random parking lot or some office building that’s surplus to provincial requirements. This redevelopment will shape the city for decades to come. It’s not something the government should get to decide in secrecy.”

That’s the editorial from May 2021.

Okay, we’re going to fast-forward to 2022. In March 2022, the Ford government appointed a developer and Ford family friend as the chair of the Ontario Place Corp.—by the way, its only board member. Can you imagine? A board of one. And by the way, just a side note: This family friend also attended the Premier’s daughter’s wedding reception later that year. Also in attendance—actually, do you know what? I’m going to skip this. But the important point here is that there is only a one-person board for a crown corporation, and it’s a developer and a family friend.

Then, in September 2022, Écorécéré dropped out of the Ontario Place redevelopment plan for undisclosed reasons.

November 2022: The Ford government submitted a development application for Ontario Place to the city of Toronto, which included previously undisclosed plans for a new publicly funded underground parking garage to accommodate 2,118 cars. This government-funded parking garage represented a major change from the terms of the 2019 call for development, where it had been made very clear that the government would not fund any facilities. What changed?

December 2022: We discover that in the development application that the province submitted to the city, it included the cutting down of 850 mature trees. We also learned from reporting from the *Globe and Mail* that, according to industry standards, including costing guidelines from the Altus Group, such a garage would cost about \$450 million and the site preparation is estimated at around \$200 million. That’s 650 million public dollars subsidizing a private company for an underground parking garage.

Already, the plan is giving away public lands for free, 3.7 acres of public land, but now you’re also subsidizing this private company to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars? Talk about complete disrespect for the taxpayer: giving taxpayer money to a private company for a luxury spa that most people will not be able to afford; mind you, also handing over hundreds of millions of dollars at a time when we are experiencing unprecedented cost of living increases and an affordability crisis. To add insult

to injury, at a public meeting, just months ago, the public discovered that the taxpayers will also be on the hook for maintaining the public spaces, which includes Therme’s green roof.

On this side of the House, the official opposition NDP, we ask real questions to the government, particularly the Minister of Infrastructure, and we’ve gotten no answers. The government basically just said, “Just trust us.” Sorry, that’s not going to cut it. After everything that the government has tried to do, especially around the green belt and around the privatization of health care services, no, we don’t trust you. The people of Ontario don’t trust you. We need transparency, and we need accountability.

Then, in February 2023, Ontario Place for All and Architectural Conservancy Ontario requested a value-for-money audit, and the NDP joined the call for an Auditor General’s investigation into the Ontario Place redevelopment.

In April 2023, *Global News* reported that the terms of the government’s still-undisclosed agreement with Therme, included a 95-year lease—unheard of—of public lands to a foreign private spa company. The deal really started to stink—badly.

Naturally, we asked to see the agreement, but the Ford Conservatives refused. Why won’t the Ford government release the terms of the 95-year lease of our public lands, our waterfront that he’s gifting to a private foreign company? Why the secrecy? Who stands to benefit from this backroom deal? Not the people of Ontario—certainly not.

Also, in April 2023, the *Globe and Mail* reported that the Ford government was negotiating a sole-source deal for another Ontario Place project with a developer called Ontario Live, whose partner includes another family friend.

1450

Then, the government announced that the Ontario Science Centre would be moving the Ontario Place site—once again, no public consultations—and then the Minister of Infrastructure claimed that there was a business case that showed it was cheaper to move the science centre to Ontario Place than to renovate it. So we asked to see the business case, and then in an interview with the CBC, she said, “Oh, we are going to triple-check the numbers and then release the business case.” The minister then changed her tune and said, “Oh, no, no, no, the business case is confidential and, therefore, cannot be released to the public.”

The Premier even claimed that they were going to use the lands on which the science centre sits on to build housing. It turns out that the land on which the science centre sits on is hazard land—land that’s prone to flooding, is unstable and has a host of other issues that is not helpful for housing. It is another example of how this Ford government operates, just making it up as they go, you know?

From the communities around the science centre, of course, there was an immediate pushback when they learned of the Ford government’s plan to demolish the iconic, award-winning Ontario Science Centre and replace

it with a much smaller building on top of a parking garage at Ontario Place. Communities rightly asked why public dollars were going to a private foreign corporation but not towards renewing and renovating the Ontario Science Centre at its current site. Demolishing the Ontario Science Centre building rather than investing in its renewal is also a waste of materials—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order?

Mrs. Robin Martin: According to standing order 25(1), I'd ask, through you, Speaker, that the member stop imputing false motives to the government and to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you; noted.

Continue, please.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: As I was saying, demolishing the Ontario Science Centre building rather than investing in its renewal is a waste of all sorts of materials and resources. Mind you, there has been no public consultation on this decision; there has been no environmental impact assessment conducted. And so the communities around the Ontario Science Centre also demanded to see the business case that proved—as the government said, was necessary. So far, there's no real evidence to show that relocating the Ontario Science Centre is in the best interests of Ontarians.

There's a petition out there, Save the Ontario Science Centre, signed by tens of thousands of Ontarians, and it read:

"The Ontario Science Centre was an iconic gift to Ontarians to celebrate Canada's centennial in 1967, and was one of the first interactive science museums in the world. Today, there are more than 3,000 science centres globally: many attribute their inspiration to" the Ontario Science Centre "and purchase its innovative exhibits. The government's plan to downsize the" Ontario Science Centre "will squander the expertise and international reputation and puts the livelihoods of hundreds of Ontarians at risk."

The Ontario Science Centre "building is an important part of Ontario's cultural heritage. Built by the late Ontario architect, Raymond Moriyama, it is a thoughtful and innovative design intended specifically to host visitors in an engaging environment that encourages curiosity. The proposed demolition of the" Ontario Science Centre "has been strongly condemned by prominent architectural organizations, including the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

"Importantly, the" Ontario Science Centre "was deliberately situated in Flemingdon Park-Don Mills, away from downtown Toronto, and accessible by highways. Well over 100,000 schoolchildren visit each year from around the province. By relocating the" Ontario Science Centre "to downtown Toronto, where gridlock traffic has become insufferable, those school trips will mostly be available only to Toronto children in the future.

"Ontario should be proud to have a major cultural institution as the heart of a growing, youthful and diverse community. The" Ontario Science Centre's "connection to

the Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park neighbourhoods is strong and benefits so many.

"The government plans to close the" Ontario Science Centre "in 2025, and to open a 50% smaller building three years later. There is widespread concern that the real plan is to shutter the Ontario Science Centre forever...."

This is from the petition that is led by community and signed by tens of thousands of Ontario residents.

Now, we're in June 2023 and during testimony before the heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy committee, the CEO of Infrastructure Ontario confirmed to the NDP critic for infrastructure, the member from Oshawa, that the 2019 bid submission deadline for the call for development had been suddenly extended by three weeks and that Therme had not submitted a bid prior to the original deadline, although other bidders had. Why? Deadline extended for everyone? No, deadline extended just for Therme—for three weeks.

We also learned from the hearings that annual reports for Ontario Place did exist, that Infrastructure Ontario completed them and gave them to the minister. So the Minister of Infrastructure has essentially been sitting on these reports and not publishing them, as they should have been.

The CEO of Infrastructure Ontario also confirmed that there was no fairness monitor appointed for the Ontario Place call for development. He was unable to provide scoring criteria or score cards that had been used to assess the bids. Such things are standard for large procurements in order to verify the fairness and integrity of a procurement process. Where is that information? We haven't seen any. We've asked for it many times, but the government refuses.

Then, in October 2023, the NDP released an FOI document showing that there is absolutely no evidence that the Premier's special adviser, who had been appointed for the Ontario Place development, produced any advice whatsoever.

Also in October 2023, again through FOI-obtained documents, the Ontario NDP showed that the Ford government had actually been planning a parking garage at the Therme site nearly two years before the public found out. These documents only strengthen suspicions that Therme's bid depended on a publicly funded parking garage despite the terms of the call for development that, the government themselves said, would not fund additional facilities.

Questions remain about the fairness and integrity of the procurement process that gave Therme control of public lands for 95 years. These questions remain unanswered. The Ontario Place call for development very clearly said that the bidders needed to work with existing parking and that the government would not pay for facilities.

Was there preferential treatment? It's a question we've been asking. We know from the government's past actions that this government has a habit of preferential treatment. There are so many questions around this redevelopment plan and we have not had any real answers, even to simple questions that require a yes or no answer.

The Minister of Infrastructure has also refused to answer, when the NDP asked, if the Ford government did

any due diligence on Therme or knew the source of Therme's financing. That's a very important question. We're talking about a company—a private, foreign company—that is going to take over public lands for 95 years. Are you not interested in knowing if this is a company that is financially stable? Is there no due diligence that you feel is necessary to do? Don't you want to know what the source of that financing is?

1500

So in November 2023, the Auditor General announced that they, the Office of the Auditor General, was going to investigate the Ontario Place redevelopment, as well as the proposed relocation of the Ontario Science Centre. The NDP supported and echoed the calls made by community organizations, and so we welcomed this announcement from the Auditor General. We are waiting the investigation results by the AG's office, and we also call on the government to pause any activity on the site, including the government's plan to cut trees.

Speaking of trees, the landscape architect involved in the Ontario Place redevelopment plan recently stepped away from the project and spoke up about what is actually going on behind the scenes. I'm going to read to you from a Toronto Star article here. The headline is, "It's Time for Telling the Truth." That's the quote from the Ontario Place architect who has stepped away from Doug Ford's revamp to speak out against tree clearing.

The landscape architect's name is Walter Kehm. I hope I'm pronouncing his last name correctly. It says:

"A prominent landscape architect ... has walked away from the redevelopment of Ontario Place, citing his opposition to clearing hundreds of trees to make way for a private spa and waterpark on Toronto's waterfront.

"After it became clear he couldn't influence plans from the inside....

"Earlier this fall, the former director of the University of Guelph's school of landscape architecture resigned as a senior principal at Toronto-based LANDinc, one of two firms under contract to help design and construct the 'public realm' of Ontario Place."

This is what Walter says: "I think it's time for plain speaking. It's time for telling the truth."

Then he goes on to say, "I remember when he was planting those trees"—he's referring to his long-time friend, the late Michael Hough, who was the landscape architect who helped design the original Ontario Place. He says, in more than half a century, "the 800 trees on west island have developed their own ecological niche."

The Minister of Infrastructure and the provincial government keep saying that they are going to replace trees that are lost. But Kehm says this is faulty thinking: "Planting 2,500 'Lollipop' trees does nothing to replace the habitat that exists there.... It's not a one-for-one trade." It's not the same.

Also: "In conversations with the Star, he described his recent experience working with the province on Ontario Place's redevelopment as unlike any before it.

"Now we're dealing with a cast of 30, 40, 50 people in government," he said. 'Left hand doesn't know what the

right hand is doing. There's dissension. We're in the midst of this imbroglia within the government."

Kehm also said that "he had repeatedly advocated to preserve the trees on the west island as part of his broader vision for a forested Toronto waterfront...." But it was clear, and he said "it felt like he had become 'persona non grata' and he was informally taken off the project."

I want to thank Walter for speaking up and for giving us some insight into what's happening behind the scenes with regard to the Ontario Place redevelopment project.

Ontario Place for All last week announced that they are taking legal action to stop the destruction of the west island. I'm going to read a little bit from the statement that they put out explaining why legal action was necessary. It says:

"Ontario Place for All is announcing that we filed an application with the Divisional Court seeking an injunction prohibiting the government of Ontario from proceeding with its west island redevelopment proposal including its mega spa development until a full environmental assessment is completed."

I want to pause here. The government keeps claiming that they did an environmental assessment, but their environmental assessment did not include the west island, and it is the part of this entire site that has the greatest ecological risk and where perhaps it's most important that an environmental assessment be done.

Going back to their statement: "Ontario Place for All is committed to using all possible avenues to hold the provincial government accountable for their actions at Ontario Place and ensuring that they follow the proper process which would involve public consultation on the west island redevelopment. This filing is one of those avenues. We just want the government to follow its own laws."

So the Ontario Place for All group has asked the court to order that the province conduct a full environmental assessment of the entire project.

I don't have too much time, so I'm going to go directly to schedule 2. Schedule 1 is one page. It's nothing—it's literally just there, for all of the reasons I outlined earlier. Schedule 2: This is the real bill here. Schedule 2 enacts the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act and represents nearly all of Bill 154. The schedule gives the Ontario government extraordinary powers over the Ontario Place redevelopment, as well as legal indemnifications, that go much further than previous bills that the government has tabled to fast-track construction projects, and much further than previous bills to also limit lawsuits against the government. It allows the Minister of Infrastructure to prescribe certain lands and real property to be vested in the crown and put under the control of the minister to become part of the Ontario Place site. It says the Ontario crown shall pay compensation based on the appraised market value of the property. The minister may make regulations requiring the city of Toronto to take specified actions with respect to vested property. The lands that may be prescribed appear to be city-owned sections of the shoreline to the north and to the west of the Ontario Place west island. It also says

that no one, including the city of Toronto, may sell or encumber any of these lands, except as allowed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This would capture pretty much any proposal to sell city-owned land to the federal government, for example. I know that for a lot of people that was a question that has come up—what happens if the city sold the land to the federal government? This legislation explicitly prohibits that.

It also allows the Minister of Infrastructure to issue minister's zoning orders and unilaterally rewrite Toronto's official plan with respect to the Ontario Place site. The minister may ignore the provincial policy statement and provincial plans.

Speaker, you have to wonder—if you're going to have legislation that says, "Oh, you can ignore this. You can ignore that," you've got to really ask, what is the purpose of this project? Why is it that so many rules have to be broken in order for a project to go through?

The Environmental Assessment Act also does not apply to any undertaking at the Ontario Place site or any infrastructure project outside the Ontario Place site that furthers the Ontario Place redevelopment, including water, sewage projects, highway projects or parking facilities.

The Ontario Heritage Act does not apply to the Ontario Place site or to any buildings or structures on the site. Again, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe land, buildings or structures within the Ontario Place site to which the Ontario Heritage Act does apply, which may include the Cinesphere and the pods.

Earlier, in the minister's lead, she mentioned that the Ontario Heritage Act would not apply but that they would make sure that all of the heritage aspects would be protected. If really, truly, the intent of the government is to protect the heritage aspects, then why exempt this project from the Ontario Heritage Act? It just doesn't make any sense to me.

1510

The public notification and consultation provisions of the Environmental Bill of Rights do not apply with respect to this act. Municipal noise regulations do not apply to noise emitted from the Ontario Place site, except as authorized by regulation. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations limiting any other power of the city of Toronto in order to facilitate construction at the Ontario Place site. So you can see it's giving the Minister of Infrastructure extraordinary powers to move with this construction—at lightning speed, really.

The Minister of Infrastructure may order the city of Toronto to grant access to municipal rights of way, municipal infrastructure or municipal services, including ordering the closure of a municipal highway or a modification of a municipal service. The order may specify compensation payable to the city of Toronto, and the minister must attempt negotiations with the city before making an order. The minister may direct Infrastructure Ontario with respect to the act. I mean, we already knew that. The minister and this government have always claimed, "These are external agencies. We don't have any authority over them." But we know for sure that there's a lot that

goes between the two offices. We have seen that not only with Infrastructure Ontario but also with Metrolinx and how much control a minister's office has.

Very importantly, the bill prohibits lawsuits against the government or remedies with respect to anything done under the act, including government misrepresentations, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation. The government—this Conservative Ford government—has already pushed the envelope with such indemnification clauses. But these specific sections go much further than previous legislation. Again, this bill, the Ontario Place redevelopment act, is almost entirely about giving the Ford government extraordinary powers to bypass various laws, simply to push through the Ontario Place redevelopment on behalf of Therme, while denying civil legal remedies for any government misconduct or damages that may occur.

Many of the extraordinary powers that are enabled with Bill 154 would only be useful in the absence of a deal with the city of Toronto concerning Ontario Place. So I think that this bill is proof of the Ford government's determination to push through Ontario Place redevelopment against any opposition, regardless of any provincial law or standard of conduct.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Pursuant to standing order 25(i), I ask through you, Speaker, that the member from Parkdale–High Park stop imputing motive to the government. She clearly is speculating on government motives. I don't think that that's appropriate and it's not very parliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I'll remind the member again around imputing motive. You may continue.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Speaker. I'm actually reading sections from the bill and explaining it in plain speak in terms of what it means.

So again, this entire schedule 2, which is really the bill, is all about giving the minister and the government extraordinary powers. And if you really stop to think about it, who are they doing this for? Are they doing it for Therme? "Are you doing it for Therme," is the question that people have.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, she's doing it again.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm asking a question, Speaker. It's a question that a lot of people have. It's on people's minds. Because otherwise, none of this makes any sense. What is really going on?

Mind you, we have not seen the agreement, the lease that has been signed with Therme, the 95-year lease. So, of course, the government was transparent and released the lease—perhaps some of the questions may be answered, but until then, we've got to keep asking the questions.

On top of the questions that Ontarians already had and have about the Ontario Place redevelopment, with this new legislation, there are more questions. Why is the government giving themselves extraordinary power to push through a project on behalf of a private luxury spa operator?

Why would the government give itself power to make misrepresentations or misconduct with respect to Ontario Place? Why would the government give itself power to commit acts of misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation?

Why does the Premier feel the need to rewrite Ontario's laws to make this project happen? The government's rewriting of the laws to avoid public scrutiny of this private luxury spa project—I mean, why can't the government simply follow the process?

Mr. John Yakabuski: We are. We're bringing in legislation to change the process.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: We know. I mean the Ford Conservatives have always pledged to use their majority to build this private luxury spa, and that's what they are doing with this legislation.

Speaker, the people of Ontario can see that this is a cynical power grab of our Ontario Place. It raises serious concerns about who is benefiting from their decisions, who is benefiting from this legislation. If you think about it, why is building a private luxury spa so important that the government is exempting themselves from heritage, planning and environmental laws? You should stop ripping up environmental heritage laws and actually do a proper environmental assessment for the Ontario Place redevelopment plan.

Mind you, this government is already under an RCMP criminal investigation. They were also in hot water when the former Minister of Housing issued MZO's to benefit their insider friends. The government had to table legislation to backtrack the MZO's that forced urban boundary expansion of municipalities.

In this House, we have wasted so much time because the government had to backtrack on a number of legislations, and now they're going to let the Minister of Infrastructure issue MZO's of her own. I don't know, Speaker. There's something that's not right. Maybe there is—all these questions that people have and the changes that this government is trying to push forward. If anything, this legislation just shows that this Therme deal needs more scrutiny, not less.

When I shared with my staff, people I know, with constituents about this entire section of the bill, some of the questions that I got were, "My goodness, what has the Premier promised Therme? Why would such a section be necessary in this schedule? What is he planning to do?" Those were the questions that I got. What kind of joke—sorry, I probably shouldn't say that.

But I want to remind this government that no one is tying your hands to this project. No one is forcing you to go through with this project. No one is asking you to introduce this legislation. You are doing this out of your own volition. Why?

Now let's get to some stakeholder reaction about this legislation. I'm going to start with the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, and I'm going to read their statement in this House because I think it's important for the government side members to hear from stakeholders about their bill. Their statement is titled, "ACO Strongly Opposes New Deal for Toronto Act."

"Architectural Conservancy Ontario strongly opposes passage of the New Deal for Toronto Act. Ontario Place is recognized as a provincial heritage property of provincial significance—the highest of all possible designations, given only to sites worthy of the utmost protection.

1520

"Ontario Place has been internationally recognized as a globally significant example of 20th-century architecture and landscape design by organizations like the Cultural Landscape Foundation, Docomomo, the National Trust for Canada, and the World Monuments Fund, which in 2020 placed it on a level with the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Sacred Valley of the Incas.

"To plow ahead with developing the highly criticized Therme spa, the Ontario Heritage Act says the Ontario government would need to prove this development would not harm the cultural significance and heritage value of this internationally renowned site.

"For months, Architectural Conservancy Ontario ... has been saying the Ontario Heritage Act won't permit this to happen. The introduction of the New Deal for Toronto Act proves ACO was right. Rather than argue their proposal to cut down 850 trees and build a mega spa does not undermine the designated heritage features of Ontario Place—an argument they would surely lose—rather than play according to the rules the provincial Legislature passed for the protection of Ontario's cultural heritage, this government just says, we'll change the rules.

"Not only that, we'll give our Minister of Infrastructure ... the right to make up her own rules, via ministerial zoning orders.... By exempting Ontario Place from the protection of the Ontario Heritage Act, the New Deal for Toronto Act not only threatens one of Canada's most important contributions to modern design, it threatens all provincially owned heritage properties. If the OHA can be tossed aside for such a frivolous, irresponsible project that Ontarians clearly do not want—and that will embarrass us all in front of the world—then all provincially owned heritage properties are at risk.

"Where is the minister responsible for the protection of Ontario's heritage in all this? Why are we not hearing from" the minister? "Ever since" the minister "was appointed, ACO has been trying to meet Minister Ford. To date, we haven't even had any acknowledgement of our requests.

"ACO deplors this act of cowardice (a.k.a the New Deal for Toronto Act)."

Of course, Ontario Place for All also has a reaction to this legislation. They say: "In attempting to shoehorn in Ontario Place as part of the new deal announcement between Toronto and Ontario, the province continues to push a project for which the public has shown complete disdain, overriding the wishes of the city of Toronto itself, to privatize a significant public asset and create a luxury mega spa many cannot afford."

And I'm quoting here: "I question why Ford continues to pursue such an unpopular project in the face of viable alternatives offered by the city of Toronto, the opposition of Torontonians as well as Ontarians across the province?"

That's from Ontario Place for All co-chair Norm Di Pasquale. He goes on and asks, "Why is Ford attempting to accelerate this mega spa no one wants before the Auditor General has a chance to report and ahead of the city's regular development application process?"

"The proposed redevelopment of Ontario Place not only undermines democratic processes but also poses a serious threat to its environmental and historical significance. By removing hundreds of trees and altering the landscape, this plan disregards the ecological value and the heritage of the site, which has been a public treasure for over five decades. We stand firm in our commitment to protect Ontario Place from being converted into a commercial entity that limits public access and enjoyment...." That's from Emmy Egulu, also a member of Ontario Place for All.

Speaker, the government does not need to go ahead with their plan. Certainly, they don't need this legislation. There are alternatives to building a private luxury mega spa on public lands. In fact, Ontario Place for All invited the province to consider a better idea for Ontario Place. This plan that they have released, the proposal titled, "A Better Idea," is a new way to approach the revitalization of Ontario Place. Given the addition of the Ontario Science Centre, the new proposal leverages the Ontario Line at both ends, connecting the natural features of the Don River Valley and Lake Ontario, while revitalizing Ontario Place, enhancing and expanding the mandate of the Ontario Science Centre, while building affordable housing.

Ken Greenberg, also a member of the Ontario Place for All steering committee, said, "We wanted to put forward an alternative idea that would work for everyone. It's clear that the current proposal is a bad idea. Instead of just saying no, we wanted to spark a dialogue about what is possible for our waterfront. We believe this is a better idea that would protect and revitalize our shared assets of Ontario Place and the Ontario Science Centre."

Speaker, this plan, A Better Idea, preserves the architectural history and revitalizes these buildings for today while also investing in green space. The proposal includes a lakeside science centre experience—a satellite of the existing science centre—at Ontario Place, focused on water, the natural environment, climate change, doing real science and education. The west island, instead of becoming a glass-enclosed mega spa, would be a park for all to enjoy, with improved connections to the Exhibition and the new Ontario Line and improved trails and access to nature.

This plan is cheaper for Ontario taxpayers as well. Leveraging the stunning existing mature tree canopy, this transformed public waterfront park can be achieved at significantly less cost—estimated at approximately \$70 million, as opposed to the current estimates of \$650 million for the new underwater parking garage and site remediation.

Speaker, we can do better. We have an alternative plan that protects Ontario Place for our future, for our kids. We know from examples from around the world that investing

in public green spaces is good for the economy, not just good for the environment. In fact, forward-thinking cities across North America are investing in these spaces. They are reclaiming their waterfronts for public use. These investments have long-term rewards and benefit a diverse community, while commercial uses typically create short-term improvements at the expense of long-term benefits. In this case, this mega spa will benefit foreign owners, and the province, again, has signed an unprecedented 95-year lease with the unproven Therme Group.

I ask the members of the Conservative government to please check this out—A Better Idea. You can visit the website, ontarioplaceforall.com/abetteridea. It is not too late.

I want to end with a quote, and then I also want to talk a little bit about this plan and the context of the times that we're living in.

The quote that I want to share is from a former Conservative Premier of Ontario, Premier William G. Davis. He said, "Ontario Place is and was a crown corporation so as to serve the public of Ontario—those living in the GTA and visiting from away. It would be a shame and a disservice if commercial gain replaced the public interest on the present site of Ontario Place." This was from a Conservative Premier.

Finally, let us not forget the context and what is happening around this province while we debate this legislation and we put our efforts to keep public lands in public hands. There is an affordability crisis. People are struggling. The number of people who are unhoused is increasing every day. In Toronto alone, there are over 10,000 unhoused people. There is a homelessness crisis; there is an overdose crisis; there is an affordability crisis. There are children who are going hungry in Ontario every day. There are emergency rooms that are closed in communities across this province.

1530

All of these issues that are so urgent, that provide the services that people so desperately rely on, are not being addressed. The funding and investment are not there. But yet the government has \$650 million for a spa to be given to the benefit and use of a private company? This is completely unacceptable. This is completely out of touch with the reality of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for her remarks on this. I will confess to being a touch puzzled for several reasons. Firstly—I'm kind of itemizing the key Toronto benefits of this deal. A few of them:

- providing \$600 million in operating support for shelters and homelessness;

- \$300 million in one-time funding for subways and transit;

- \$750 million for 55 new subway trains; and

- annual funding for new LRTs and upgrading the Gardiner and the Don Valley Parkway.

These are significant benefits to the city of Toronto.

I think there are about 10 members from the GTA on the opposite side. So a quick question to the member: Do you not want these benefits for the city of Toronto? Would you prefer to ignore them and have them never launched? Just curious.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: If the member had listened to my presentation, I said right off the start that this bill is all about schedule 2. Schedule 1 simply requires that a discussion happen. This bill has nothing to do with the deal. Let's get that straight: This bill has nothing to do with the deal. It's been announced, of course. These are important investments that the city of Toronto desperately needs. We have been advocating for these investments, and I would also add that there are many other municipalities that also need investments, so I hope the government will follow suit.

But let's get to this bill. This bill is all about schedule 2. It's all about the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I really appreciate the comments from the member today. You know, in this bill—and I'm reading right here: This government is giving itself the power to override the environmental laws and to override the Heritage Act. So it's giving itself the power to break its own provincial laws, and it's also giving itself the power to be in breach of contract, of misfeasance—I'm reading right from the bill—to act in bad faith, to breach trust, to breach fiduciary obligations.

Why would this government act in a way that they believe they need to pass legislation that allows them to break laws and to break all of these legal principles?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member from Spadina–Fort York for his question. I have to say, it's been really a pleasure to work alongside him and many of our community groups and our constituents in our fight to save Ontario Place and to keep the public lands in public hands.

Speaker, the question that the member asks is the very question that I, too, have. It's the question that many Ontarians have. Why does the government feel that it is necessary to include these sections in the bill? I've asked the Minister of Infrastructure that question; I did not get a real response.

So, from the government side, if you have a good explanation, please, we would like to hear it.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member from Parkdale–High Park, I was listening attentively to your remarks. Obviously, you are an MPP from Toronto, and I would have to guess that you've been hearing from your constituents already this week since the announcement was made on Monday. I'd have to think and assume that those constituents are probably pretty excited about some financial sustainability for Toronto.

So my question to the member: When your constituents are hearing the provision of \$1.2 billion to help over the next three years, are you going to stand with your constituents and support this bill, or are you going to say no

to housing and no to growth and no to that financial sustainability for your constituents?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her question. I'm quite confused by the member's question. As I said, there is nothing in this bill that actually has anything to do with a deal for Toronto, so whether, from the opposition side, we support this bill or not will depend on what's in the bill, which is schedule 2. In fact, as I said in my presentation, schedule 1 does not even require that, after discussions happen, any actions be done, and section 3 of schedule 1 repeals the act after those discussions are had. So literally, schedule 1 has no purpose. It's all about schedule 2. I'm going to be voting on what's in the bill, which is in schedule 2.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: We had many, many discussions about the greenbelt earlier on, and it was continually raised that it didn't pass the smell test. And now, of course, it's being investigated by the RCMP—and the MZO's, and the Conservatives have brought in two bills to protect people from what the Conservatives tried to do to the people of Ontario.

So my question about this bill is: We've got these sections protecting them, to block legal remedies for misfeasance, bad faith, and breach of trust or fiduciary obligation. Is this an attempt to inoculate themselves from further RCMP investigations or investigations into preferential treatment, through this bill? I'm just dumbfounded by the protections they're trying to build in.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for her question, and do you know what? Everybody is dumbfounded. Ontarians are dumbfounded by why these sections are included in this legislation. I'm telling you—and I shared it, again, in my speech, when I shared with the people in terms of what is actually in this bill in terms of inoculating themselves from future lawsuits. It only raises more questions. If anything, it just proves that this deal deserves more scrutiny.

So the official opposition NDP, we are awaiting the AG's investigation report. We hope that will be able to shed some light, as it did with the greenbelt investigation, and we know what happened after that: The RCMP pursued a criminal investigation, which is ongoing right now.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for doing an hour on this. It's got to be challenging at times.

She talks about schedule 1 not being relevant or not important. It is in the bill; it is part of the deal. And even those people who maybe don't agree with everything do say that this is a tremendous deal for the city of Toronto, of which you're a member. With the uploading of the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway, which we know is crumbling—but it seems that the party on the opposite side here is fixated on one thing, and that is denying the people of Ontario an Ontario Place that rises from the ashes of this falling apart—and achieves that

glory that it once had as a world-class facility that everyone can enjoy. It's not private; everything will be open to the public. It is an opportunity to bring Ontario Place back to life.

Why is this party so fixated on destroying that dream for Ontarians?

1540

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member for his question. As he was asking me the question, I just had a flashback to our greenbelt discussions. If members of the House will remember, when we opposed paving over the greenbelt, we had similar questions from the government side, saying, "Why are you so opposed to building housing? Why won't you allow Ontarians to have the dream of owning a home?" when the greenbelt legislation had nothing to do with housing.

It's the exact same thing here again. This bill has nothing to do with the deal. This bill has everything to do with the Ontario Place redevelopment project. So again—and by the way, I have to add to the member, one would hope that discussions are happening regardless between all levels of government, between all municipalities and the province. Those discussions don't need to be legislated.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I am happy to rise today to speak to and support Bill 154, New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023. This act covers two schedules: the first, Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023; and schedule 2, Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023.

On November 27, the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto announced an agreement that will help achieve the long-term financial stability and sustainability of Toronto's finances. This deal was achieved after 10 weeks of productive working group discussions to find collaborative solutions to the city's operating and capital deficits. The agreement reached will put Toronto on a path forward that will in turn create greater economic growth for the province and, quite frankly, for Canada, as when Toronto succeeds, Ontario succeeds and thus, Canada succeeds.

The following outlines this historic agreement:

Firstly, this new deal includes up to \$1.2 billion in provincial operating supports over three years for critical priorities, like safe and reliable public transit and shelter supports for our homelessness. The province will also provide significant capital relief, including by uploading both the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway.

Secondly, the province will take steps to assume authority for necessary planning approvals to rebuild an Ontario Place that, once completed, will attract millions of visitors to the city year-round, with an agreement to explore relocating the parking structure to the Exhibition Place grounds.

Thirdly, Toronto has agreed to meet or exceed the province's housing targets and, as part of that work, identify and make available surplus city lands for building homes.

Lastly, our government and the city of Toronto continue to call on the federal government to step up as a full

partner, with funding in critical areas needed, such as shelter support for asylum claimants and transit funding.

As part of this new deal, Ontario has agreed to an investment of up to \$1.2 billion in provincial operating supports over three years and significant capital relief over the next 10 years, including \$300 million in one-time funding to increase transit ridership, promote subway safety and ensure sustainable operations—this one-time funding will build back ridership through more frequent service, as well as the affordable, convenient, efficient and safe operation of the subway system—and over \$750 million in funding for 55 new subway trains for the TTC's line 2, conditional on matching federal supports. Procurement of new trains for line 2 is a top priority for the TTC. To maximize this procurement opportunity, Metrolinx would purchase 15 additional trains for two priority transit projects: the Scarborough subway extension and the Yonge North subway extension.

Annual operating funding over three years, beginning in 2024-25, for a total of \$330 million for new subway-integrated provincial transit projects: the Eglinton Cross-town and the Finch West LRTs. These two LRT lines will help move tens of thousands of people faster and more conveniently every day by creating key transit connections integrated with the broader regional transit network, including the TTC subway system.

Uploading the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway highways to the province will ensure the long-term protection, preservation and enhancement of these vital assets from the risk of disrepair and help to maintain these assets for the benefit of drivers and commerce as toll-free highways, subject to a third-party due diligence assessment. The city will use the financial benefits of the upload of the Gardiner and the DVP to support investments in housing and the infrastructure that supports and enables growth, such as transit, water and waste water infrastructure, and local road improvements.

The Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway are nationally significant economic corridors tied to the provincial highway network that support the movement of passenger, transit and commercial vehicles carrying critical goods and services that support regional, provincial and national populations, communities and the economies in one of the largest employment centres in all of Canada. The province will provide operating and capital support for these highways in 2024 while a third-party due diligence process is under way.

Regarding the long-term protection, preservation, maintenance and enhancement of the DVP and the Gardiner, I know that many people living in my riding who commute to their work in the city use the DVP daily, as it is an extension of the main provincial highway corridors. There are also many people living in the city and commuting north to York region to work who use the DVP and the Gardiner every day. These are crucial arteries to get to and from the heart of downtown Toronto. I know that by uploading them to the province they will continue to help many Ontarians get to work and come back home quickly to their family and loved ones.

Speaker, I'd like to now speak about some of my own stories. I don't do that often here, but I'm going to now. One story is, I remember back in the 1970s—yes, I know, I was a very young child at that point, but yes, in the 1970s I remember my family was living at that time between Hamilton—we also lived in Georgetown. We always took the QEW and the Gardiner to get to grandma's house. Grandma lived in the Beaches. Everybody who knows the Gardiner, you get on the Gardiner and it ends in the Beaches. I recall as a child our whole family in the car going along the Gardiner, even watching the CN Tower be built up.

Speaker, I'm telling you this story because, since I was a young girl, the Gardiner Expressway has been part not just of Toronto, but of Ontario, of our everyday exposure to this great province. So why would the Gardiner not be part of a provincial asset? The QEW goes straight into the Gardiner. It just makes sense.

Another story—and I tell you these stories because it relates to my constituents. Every day I commute from Aurora down to Queen's Park along the DVP—from the 404 right down the DVP; again, the corridors connect. I know I have constituents who go the opposite way because they live in Toronto. They get on the DVP and go north and on the 404. It is critical for York region, for all the GTHA, for people in Toronto that these corridors are highly maintained, and that is what the province is looking to do.

1550

Another example: I remember a point in time where I lived in the Beaches and I was working out in Woodbridge. Again, the DVP, going north, was a habitual, regular daily schedule for me. For years and years, these roads, to me, are the provincial corridors that get us around this great province, to come in to visit family and friends, to go to work, for commerce coming in. It just makes sense.

Speaker, this bill will help the city to explore opportunities to assist Toronto with their debt financing, including potential options to lower the city's borrowing costs; help Toronto to partner with the Ontario Infrastructure Bank to support faster delivery of key city building infrastructure, while leveraging additional capital from trusted investors; and support Toronto in exploring options to improve financial returns through potential third-party management of city reserve funds, such as through the Investment Management Corp. of Ontario, an independent, arm's-length organization that provides broader public sector institutions with investment management services.

Next, our government is taking action to bring Ontario Place back to life, making it a remarkable, world-class, year-round destination that's fun for everyone. Years of inaction have caused this iconic destination to become less attractive to tourists, including GTHA community members. We are creating an iconic space that will bring friends and families together right here in Ontario, while attracting tourists from around the world.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would help mitigate against potential project delays, help streamline

certain approvals and ensure that the new Ontario Place for everyone gets done. By taking these critical steps, we are creating an iconic space that will feature over 50 acres of free parks and public spaces for everyone to enjoy. As I said before, bringing friends and families together: That's what this is all about, while also attracting all those tourists.

There will be community-oriented science programming at the legacy Ontario Science Centre location as part of a potential future multi-use complete community at Ontario Place. This will build a future for all Ontarians to enjoy visiting as a destination location. The redevelopment of Ontario Place will create thousands of new jobs and attract up to six million-plus visitors each year.

An announcement was made earlier today by the Minister of Infrastructure that Infrastructure Ontario has released its business case for the relocation of the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place. This business case confirms that the relocation will save Ontario taxpayers \$257 million over a 50-year period when compared to the cost of remaining at the current site, and will also provide a greater share of space for programming than is the case at the current site. The total capital investment required to remain at the Don Mills site exceeds the cost of constructing a new Ontario Science Centre facility at Ontario Place.

In addition to providing significant taxpayer savings, 40% of the new Ontario Science Centre will be programmable space, compared to approximately 25% at the current site. Ontario Science Centre's relocation and modernization can be a single capital investment that will benefit two government priorities. Once relocated in Ontario Place, up to one million people will visit the brand-new facility every year, which will increase traffic into Toronto, bringing new science-based educational programming to the heart of the city and saving hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in the process.

This plan will also be beneficial to the environment as it will have a smaller footprint, with high-quality exhibits, all within a new energy efficient sustainable building.

Additionally, as part of this new deal, Toronto has agreed to meet or exceed the province's housing targets and, as part of that work, identify and make available surplus city lands for building homes. The city and province have also committed to the highest and best use of their own lands to meet the goal of building more homes of all kinds faster, inclusive of rental, affordable and attainable housing.

Furthermore, the city has consistently pointed to operating and capital deficits as being the primary barrier to its success. Ontario agreed to tackle the city's financial challenges head-on. The city will use the financial benefits of the upload of the Gardiner and the DVP to support investments in housing and the infrastructure, again, that supports and enables growth such as transit, water and waste water, infrastructure and local road improvements. Toronto will meet or exceed the city's annual housing targets and support density near transit. This will help keep the province's goal to build 1.5 million homes so that all

Ontarians, no matter where they live across this province, can realize home ownership: having a roof over their head to call home. And that may look different to everyone: a rental in a building, a condo in a building, a bungalow, a townhome, a semi-detached etc.

Finally, while Ontario and Toronto have taken meaningful action through this new deal to advance key provincial priorities, federal assistance is essential for the city to achieve long-term financial stability. The city and the province continue to call on the federal government to step up as a full partner, with funding in critical areas of need such as shelter support for asylum claimants. That is why \$600 million of the \$1.2 billion will be used as operating support for shelters for homelessness, conditional on the federal support for refugee and asylum claimants. This support for Toronto's shelter system recognizes the pressure the city faces as it operates approximately half of all shelter beds across this province.

Toronto is unique among Canada's cities, both in terms of the challenges it faces and its long-standing and unparalleled contributions to the province's shared success. Contingencies built in and around federal supports required—for example, for asylum seekers and homelessness—are critical as immigration falls under the federal government and the increasing number of immigrants, including the asylum seekers who need the assistance. What we have seen is that asylum seekers come to Toronto for work but are also being relocated to other parts of the GTHA as there is not sufficient shelter or housing in Toronto. When they relocate to York region, the cost associated with the sheltering is then borne upon the region.

On April 4, the Ontario government announced an additional \$202 million annually, including an additional \$48 million for the city of Toronto in homelessness prevention programs to help those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and to support community organizations delivering supportive housing. This new funding, announced in the 2023 budget, will be provided through the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program and builds on the government's investment of nearly \$4.4 billion over the past three years to grow and enhance community and supportive housing.

1600

Additionally, on September 18 of this year, the Ontario government announced that we were investing another \$42 million through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit Program to support the city of Toronto and other impacted municipalities across the province in providing urgent assistance to a rapidly growing number of asylum claimants and other at-risk populations.

Speaker, I know my time is running short, so I want to conclude by noting how our Premier said that Toronto is a major contributor to Ontario and Canada's economic success. Governments need to work together to deliver solutions that provide services, avoid new taxes and put the city on a path toward long-term—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Thank you. Questions and responses?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her presentation. I asked this question to the Minister of Infrastructure. I didn't quite get a reply, so I'm hoping that the member opposite can answer this question for me.

In this legislation, the government prohibits lawsuits with respect to anything done under the act, including misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligations. So my question is quite simple: What is part of the Ontario Place redevelopment plan that makes it necessary to include this in this legislation?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for the question, and I know the minister did respond to the question.

Obviously, we do have a shared vision of Ontario Place. At the end of the day, we want to ensure that Toronto succeeds, because if Toronto succeeds, Ontario succeeds, and that is critical, because we know that Toronto is a vibrant economic and financial hub of this province. The city needs support, and in keeping with this tremendous intake of people that they are experiencing, \$600 million in operating support for shelters and homelessness, conditional on the federal support for refugee and asylum claimants, will be provided. These are just a few ways that we are using this deal to build a stronger Toronto and Ontario together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions and responses?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I want to focus my question around highways. It's been a great week for Ontario and for Toronto, and we know that what happens in Toronto has impacts across the province, and especially for people in my riding in Burlington as part of the GTA. That's why getting this new deal was such an important and historic moment for all of Ontario.

We've all seen the news about uploading both the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway to the province. I'm hoping the member will go into detail about why this is so important to ensure a better commute for Ontarians not just in Toronto but for many of our cities.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to thank the great member from Burlington for her question. I know this will impact her constituents, just like mine as well, because when we upload these highways, we're going to ensure the long-term protection and preservation of these vital assets, and that's what this is about. Consider that these integral highways connect—as I was talking about, they connect with Canada's financial and employment centres. Each of our major highways connect into these. That means our economic engines are all connected together.

Speaker, just to be clear to this House, the province will not explore any tolling as part of this due diligence assessment. The last thing residents of Toronto need are new taxes or tolls.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Will Bouma): Questions and responses?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for her presentation. There were many fanciful things that were included within this.

When we look at the legislation itself and we think about this deal, it truly is a sweetheart deal that this government is handing over to a private luxury spa operator. It's very curious.

I'd like to know from the member, why does the government need to give itself such extraordinary power to push through this project on behalf of a private luxury spa operator?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

We know that the Ministry of Infrastructure has been working really hard over these past three years with Indigenous community partners, stakeholders, the city of Toronto, all in the effort to realize our government's vision for the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

We have also held extensive public consultations since 2021. In fact, there are well over 9,000—9,200—participants who have shared their input and ideas for the redevelopment of Ontario Place, and I have to say that this is going to allow our government to proceed with the redevelopment in a timely manner.

We will continue to consult with our partners, stakeholders and Indigenous communities so that we can rebuild Ontario Place and make it the iconic place that it was and that it deserves to be today and into the future.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I want to go back to what the member from Burlington was highlighting in regard to the Don Valley Parkway—I think most of us here know it better as the Don Valley parking lot—and certainly looking to see some much-needed investment in that highway. It's a huge link, I know, to the member from Newmarket–Aurora's community. There's some great work already going on with Highway 404.

I'd just like to get a little bit more as to how you think the province is now going to be able to work a little bit better, collaboratively, to build out, expand, maintain that piece of the highway that is such a crucial piece for not only the people of Toronto but people across Ontario.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for the question.

Yes, the DVP is critical for my constituents, and many people I know call it the DVP parking lot as well. It's important that the uploading is carefully overseen, thus the due diligence going on. The member, as well, is correct. When I drive on the 404, I can go quite nicely, but once you hit the DVP, when you merge onto that, all of a sudden—it takes approximately an hour-plus to go 12 kilometres to my exit, which is crazy. So I see the province being able to provide greater expansions, like we're currently doing on the 400-series highways.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for your comments today.

I'm glad to hear that this Conservative government isn't planning on imposing new tolls on the Gardiner or the Don Valley Parkway, because, certainly, people in the GTA are already suffering enough under the tolls on the 407. The last Conservative government sold the 407 for \$3.2 billion, about a tenth of its actual value; although we will be suffering under those tolls for another 65 years.

This deal that we're talking about is a 95-year deal that this government is making with an Austrian corporation. In this legislation, it says specifically that the government is protecting itself from breach of trust, acting in bad faith, breach of fiduciary obligations, and misfeasance. Misfeasance is the wrongful exercise of lawful authority.

So my question is, what wrongful exercise of lawful authority has this Conservative government exercised—that they feel they need to protect themselves from with the legislation?

1610

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I thank the member from Toronto—what is that? Toronto Centre—no, that's—

Interjection: Spadina–Fort York.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Fort George, yes. Fort George.

Interjection: Fort York.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Okay, North—or, whatever. Okay, thank you.

To answer the question, Madam Speaker, as noted, Toronto and the province have a shared vision and this is why this deal has come together. And that shared vision is to ensure that the redevelopment of Ontario Place can continue as planned. The new deal brokered between the city of Toronto and our government actually addresses the need to advance the approval process so that our government can get the job done—

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Yes.

By streamlining certain approvals, this new deal, coupled with this legislation, would help mitigate against future delays and will ensure that our government delivers for the people of Ontario for this project.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to be able to stand and add my voice as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways on Bill 154, which is called An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023. It's a finance bill, but the meat and potatoes of it are around the Ontario Place redevelopment and all that that entails.

Anyone tuning in from home might think that this is a debate around the well-being of Toronto, but interestingly, for the first time in my nine-and-a-half years being here, I see in a piece of legislation a legislated conversation. So, normally, when we see articles and items in legislation, it's things that are legally binding and whatnot—it's creating the law. But this is creating a discussion plan, and I've never seen that before. It's interesting.

While the government members have been debating a recent government announcement about the deal for Toronto, which folks are looking at with interest—lots of people looking at it with hope from all sides and hoping that, indeed, Toronto will get more of what it needs to be able to invest in infrastructure that is needed in the city. But that is based on a government announcement, right? And the press conference and the announcement that folks have been hearing about is not in this bill.

In this bill, schedule 1 is a page long, and I'm going to read straight from the bill because, if you're listening to the debate, you would have no idea that what is in the bill isn't binding and isn't even compelling. It is about:

“Discussions between the province and the city

“1(1) The government of Ontario and the city of Toronto shall continue to discuss the following”—and “shall continue to discuss” is what it says in the bill, and it's a five-point plan—four-and-a-half. The first point is, “The F.G. Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway, including the”—wait for it—“possibility of those highways and the associated rights of way becoming provincial responsibilities.” So, everyone is talking about the up-loading as being a done deal, and I hope that it is, if that's what is on the table and that's what folks are expecting. But what it says in the legislation is, “The government of Ontario and the city of Toronto shall continue to discuss ... the possibility of those highways and the associated rights of way becoming provincial responsibilities.” It's a maybe.

Point 2 that they shall discuss is, “Financial support for the Toronto Transit Commission subway system, including for initiatives to improve public safety and security.” They are now being legislated to have a discussion around those points. Okay.

By the way, they're allowed to talk about these things without the legislation. There is zero requirement for a law that says “thou shalt discuss the following points,” okay? This is all a fun way of naming a bill—what is the fun name for this? What's the short title? New Deal for Toronto Act. I think what they'd like to do is to get us up talking against this bill, and then they'll spin it and say, “Oh, the NDP hates the new deal for Toronto,” or what have you, when the whole bill except for one page is about the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

Point 3 of this legislated discussion is, “The use of provincial and municipal surplus lands within the city of Toronto to more effectively address housing needs, including the supply of all forms of housing, and other priorities of the province and the city of Toronto.” So this is about the legislated discussion that they have to have.

Point 4 of the legislated discussion that they must have is, “Financial support to the city of Toronto for shelters and other homelessness programs and services”—wait for it—“conditional on financial support from the government of Canada for homelessness programs and services for refugees and asylum seekers.” So they have to discuss it—it's point 4 of their legislated discussion—as per schedule 1 of this bill, but it's conditional upon financial support from the feds. If the feds pony up the cash, then the

province will have this discussion about money. That will only happen if the feds pony up.

The fifth point is, “Any other matters prescribed by the regulations.” So there's a legislated discussion about other matters that are yet to be determined because cabinet hasn't decided what they are yet.

This is not something you can sink your teeth into, and it certainly doesn't echo what we have seen in the announcement. This is legislating a conversation. But don't worry, folks. Section 3 of this schedule is, “This act is repealed.” So we're legislating a discussion that doesn't need to be legislated, because levels of government can always have discussions. Then, it will be repealed. It says that section of the act being repealed, like it never happened, “comes into force on a day to be named by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor.”

So all of this brouhaha and all of the magic that the government is committing to Toronto is not written down—there's that. This bill is not about the new deal for Toronto. That is happening between the province and the city, and a lot of people have a lot of interest in that. But let's not pretend it's written down in a bill. And let's not pretend that you need a piece of legislation to have a conversation with the mayor of the city of Toronto. That's not a thing. It's creative; I'll give you that. This bill is about the government irresponsibly giving itself power to bypass and even break multiple provincial laws in order to jam through the Ontario Place redevelopment, on behalf of a private luxury spa operator, with near-total impunity.

It has been really fascinating to be part of this discussion while some of the government members have hollered at us, “We're legislators. We make the laws. We're not breaking them, because we make them.” Well, existing legislation, existing laws, obviously ain't fitting this bill—or isn't meeting the needs of this minister and this government, which is why we have before us all sorts of new workarounds and all sorts of new protections to protect itself.

Schedule 1 of the bill—like I said, there is no requirement that anybody do anything other than have these discussions. It doesn't say what must come out of those discussions. It's legislated conversations, which I've never heard of before—but okay. There is no apparent reason why legislation would be required for these discussions to occur. There is no apparent, clear purpose for schedule 1. You've made your announcement. You have everyone's attention on what will happen with those discussions in Toronto. Putting it in legislation—there ain't nothing here that is binding or required, so it's just more of a game of, if we vote against the legislation, we vote against Toronto. That's all that is being set up here.

Schedule 2, however, is a totally different bucket. It is an actual piece of legislation. Schedule 2, the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, starts on page 3 of the bill, and it goes all the way to page 16. It's substantive, and it gives the Ontario government extraordinary powers over the Ontario Place redevelopment, as well as legal indemnifications that go much further than previous bills to fast-track the construction process, to fast-track this project.

1620

It allows the Minister of Infrastructure to prescribe certain lands and real property to be vested in the crown—so expropriated, but not under the Expropriations Act; it's a whole new thing—to put under the control of the minister to become part of the Ontario Place site. The crown shall pay compensation based on the appraised market value of the property. The minister can make regulations requiring the city of Toronto to take specific actions with respect to that vested property. It gives the Minister of Infrastructure a whole whack of power and authority. No one, including the city of Toronto, may sell or encumber any of these lands, except as allowed by cabinet. It allows the Minister of Infrastructure to issue minister's zoning orders. So it confers that power upon this minister and unilaterally rewrites Toronto's official plan with respect to the Ontario Place site. The minister may ignore the provincial policy statement and provincial plans.

The Environmental Assessment Act does not apply to any undertaking at the Ontario Place site.

The Ontario Heritage Act does not apply to the Ontario Place site or to any buildings or structures on the site.

The cabinet can decide for maybe the pods or the Cinesphere or something—if they decide that it has heritage, they can make those decisions.

Noise regulations don't apply.

It's taking it outside of the rules and making it its own—it puts it outside of the existing laws.

And so, I'm going to watch my wording, because I know that the member opposite has been hollering all day that we're legislators and we can legislate laws, so we're not breaking them because we're making them, but existing laws exist for a reason. Why on earth does this particular project have to step so far outside of those? Like, what are the plans? Why do we have to have these magical protections and—where's the bill? Here's the bill. We've been talking about it all day. The protections—I want to find it because it's just a whole list of misfeasance and all of these bad yucky things that the government will be—oh, I found it: no remedy. Right, the “no remedy” section:

“No costs, compensation or damages, including for loss of revenues or loss of profit, are owing or payable to any person and no remedy, including but not limited to a remedy in contract, restitution, tort, misfeasance, bad faith, trust or fiduciary obligation, any equitable remedy or any remedy under any statute, is available to any person in connection with anything referred to in subsection (1) against any person referred to in that subsection.”

I wonder what that means. I wonder what that's going to look like. I wonder. With this project, I'm hoping—we hope that all projects in Ontario run smoothly. But if it doesn't, it sounds like folks are not going to have a way to get restitution or remedy because the government, again, has kind of put itself above existing laws, re-writing them to protect themselves. I guess I wonder what they're expecting. Anyway, it's disappointing.

I want to talk about the infrastructure estimates process. I had been a part of it in June as a critic, and I sat opposite the Minister of Infrastructure and Michael Lindsay from

Infrastructure Ontario. That was where we learned a lot about the Ontario Place redevelopment and that's where we found out there was no fairness monitor, as I had asked and been told. There wasn't a scoring process for the bids. In fact, that section was interesting, because I said, “Was there a fairness monitor for the call for development process?” and Mr. Lindsay said, “We worked closely with entities like Colliers and others to make sure that there was a fair and transparent process that was put in place in reviewing the call for development.” So the folks got in a room and reviewed them.

And when I asked about it, I said, “Who certified the score cards for the Ontario Place redevelopment procurement?” They said, “We had an evaluation team drawn from across government, along with subject matter experts that reviewed all the bids. There was an evaluation logic. As I said, it's specified in the 2019 call for development proposals ... and it was against that criteria that the bids were ultimately evaluated and ranked.”

So a bunch of folks get in a room—and this is a process that Colliers was involved with, and others. I had asked for the list of who was involved in that process and I was told they would take it back to the ministry—so I don't know. But a bunch of guys were sitting in the room where it happened, right? We'd all love to know. I'm not going to start singing Hamilton, but that's what I'm thinking. This is the room where it happened and no one gets to know how this decision was made, what put Therme at the top of the heap, and why was the deadline extended? Therme hadn't submitted its bid. There was extra time. In fairness, Therme wasn't the only bid to submit after that extension, but it was the one that got the free parking garage. I say “free”—it was the one that had the add-on of the parking structure paid for with public dollars when no one else got that offer.

This is a 95-year lease with a private company with an Austrian spa owner. No one gets to have the terms of the lease. Mr. Lindsay talked about it respecting the global relationships and business, but the folks in Ontario also have a right to know what is in that lease. Certainly, with the injunction that has been filed by Ontario Place for All, they have asked for the lease. They're hoping that the courts will ensure that Ontarians have some access to this information.

Just looking back at the notes, for folks who are interested in that original conversation, it was quite interesting. It was the day that we learned, not only about there not being a fairness monitor and that the process was not transparent, but it was the day we found out about Ontario Place and the parking garage having the science centre on top. That was new.

Speaker, the Ontario Place deal has been problematic from the beginning. I have spent a lot of time in this House talking about that process, asking for the business case. I know that we've got something business case-adjacent today about the science centre. But, again, that tells a story of it's so much less expensive to do the repairs, to be good landlords and to maintain a building that has a potential life of 250 or more years, as Moriyama had said.

Although, the other day, I had asked the Minister of Infrastructure a question around why we can't look after the science centre. It came back that it's a 50-year-old building and that that, essentially, puts it past its prime, as we stand here in a 120-some-odd-year-old—

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm 53 and I'm past my prime.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Hey, if 50 is the cut-off for past your prime, I am still not there yet, so I'm fine.

But the minister likened it to cars and houses, like, 50 years—can we just acknowledge that that's not a long time? And I think a 95-year lease with a glass-and-water structure seems a lot riskier than a 50-year-old concrete building.

I don't think anything sits well with Ontarians about this deal, and because nothing is transparent, of course, we have problems. Of course, we have questions.

This particular bill, in schedule 2, as I said, allows the Minister of Infrastructure to issue ministerial zoning orders and unilaterally rewrite Toronto's official plan with respect to the Ontario Place site. The Environmental Assessment Act does not apply to any undertaking at the Ontario Place site. The Ontario Heritage Act does not apply to the Ontario Place site. A question about that as well: Do we have a minister responsible for heritage in the province? I'm actually asking as a real question because I am looking at a minister opposite that I know is sports, culture and tourism—yes, I'm getting a nod—and then the other minister that I would have thought responsible is the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Nowhere do I see the word “heritage.” Have we just moved it into committee and we're good? Are there still bureaucrats and folks at a ministry for heritage?

1630

Mr. Dave Smith: MCM.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: MCM is what you're saying, so that's the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, but we don't say the word “heritage” any more in terms of title. I guess, then, it's not a surprise that we're not going to factor heritage in when it comes to the Ontario Place site necessarily, which is disappointing.

But this bill is almost entirely about giving this government extraordinary powers to bypass various laws in order to push through this Ontario Place redevelopment on behalf of Therme. It denies civil legal remedies for any government misconduct or damages that may occur. That is really not how a government should be undertaking a project that they tout as being a rejuvenation or a next chapter that Ontarians should be excited about. Ontarians are nervous, and they have reason to be, because it's this government.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member from Oshawa for her comments. I have been to Oshawa. It's not too far from where Ontario Place is—Thickson Road, very nice.

I just want to comment on three things that we know at this point:

(1) We know that Ontario Place currently is very dilapidated. It has very few visitors. It's been run down—

not maintained by the previous government, supported by the opposition.

(2) What we know is, this redevelopment will create thousands of jobs and have millions of visitors in the future—so a great economic engine for the GTA.

(3) What we know is, on the science centre—it was announced today that the business case for the replacement of the science centre has a benefit of hundreds of millions of dollars, so hugely positive.

My question is, does the member prefer the current dilapidated state of Ontario Place as the vision for the future, or will she embrace this exciting vision that the government has?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: What we know in terms of your 1, 2 and 3: The Ontario Place Corp. chair, a good friend of the Premier, said that they had almost three million visitors last year. So, while the Minister of Infrastructure had sold that as—well, basically she's trying to sell us on that story, but it is nonsense. People absolutely have been there.

The Ontario Science Centre—I think you called it a “business case” that came out today. We've been waiting for a long time for that and the government has had reports on its desk that have not been shared—oh, wait, no. That's from Ontario Place Corp. We're talking about the science centre. I blend them together because there's so much nonsense happening at the same time.

But the Ontario Science Centre has been let to fall into disrepair by its landlord, none other than the illustrious Infrastructure Ontario, right? And in terms of you could invest into the repairs—that is far less expensive than moving it. And you're not just moving it; you're diminishing it. It's going to be smaller than the original, and that is a shame. That is a shame.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Oshawa. I'm very concerned about section 17 and what I see is: “Extinguishment of causes of action,” “No remedy,” “Proceedings barred,” “Retrospective effect.” And then we have all of these terms: “owing or payable to any person and no remedy, including but not limited to a remedy in contract, restitution, tort, misfeasance, bad faith, trust or fiduciary obligation, any equitable remedy or any remedy under any statute” and so on and so on.

So, all of this is barred and it's even made retroactive. It really begs the question, what has already been done that needs to be suddenly made legal when it wasn't legal before?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don't know. You are asking the exact right questions, because the thing is, when we look at projects happening around the province, we would want to see transparency, right? And different communities that have had bad things happen or—like, I'm looking at projects that are missing deadlines and are costing a lot more money. Folks want answers and the government either doesn't have them or won't share them because oftentimes it's the P3s and things that are hidden in behind and you just get to find out when it's handed back to you at the end.

I don't know whether this is just protection for "just in case" or if there already are things that have gone sideways, but I know that no one in the province trusts this government anymore. That's disappointing, because historically the province builds stuff. We all rely on that infrastructure. Where we see this kind of proactive—I don't know that it's proactive; I don't know if it's protectionist; I have no idea why it's there. I believe that section is a mistake and unnecessary; it is heavy-handed. But it does beg the question, what on earth is it for?

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for her comments. I have the Ontario Science Centre modernization business case and the key findings here in front of me. The business case considered previous reviews and enlisted the expertise of Ernst and Young to ensure that the findings were comprehensive and applied best practices for analysis and enlisted the expertise of Lord Cultural Resources, who provided cultural advisory services relating to the science centre, including functional programs etc., and a range of stakeholders etc. were consulted.

But the results of the business case analysis conclude that the total capital investment required to remain at the Don Mills site actually exceeds the cost of constructing a new Ontario Science Centre facility at Ontario Place, and relocating the science centre will save taxpayers \$257 million over a 50-year period when compared to the current site—just the opposite of what the member just said.

Are you going to review the business case and are you going to support the movement of the science centre to Ontario Place?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Of course, I'm not going to support the teardown and destruction of a building that has potential to continue lasting and being a treasure for that community and for Ontarians for 250 years.

When you are talking about the total capital investment and functional programs, it was the minister herself who said, at the infrastructure estimates committee, "We will have a water park, a wellness centre, and a brand new science centre with more exhibition space."

That was then and this is now. The RFP for a diminished science centre at Ontario Place highlights the space constraints. What we see about the functional program, it says that three elements that were originally in that functional program that you referred to there had to be cut from it "due to a required reduction in the size of the building/square footage, requiring rationalization of the current activities."

So there won't be anything like the Telus Rain Forest or the planetarium or all the things that were originally listed as functional programs. Is it going to cost less because you're cutting out massive parts of it and it's going to be such a reduced footprint and experience? I don't know.

Why don't you invest? An ounce of prevention is worth a pound—

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague the member from Oshawa for the work that she did at the heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy committee, when the CEO of Infrastructure Ontario was there and she had the opportunity to question him about the call for the redevelopment of Ontario Place. One of the things that she learned in that line of questioning was there was no fairness monitor appointed for the Ontario Place call for development, there were no scoring criteria or score cards, apparently, that had been used to assess the bids.

I wondered if the member could comment on the appropriateness of determining the outcome of an RFP process without a fairness monitor, without any scoring criteria or score cards.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It doesn't make anyone feel confident. Mr. Lindsay had outlined, as I said—folks can read Hansard—the process of everyone discussing the bids afterward and coming to a decision. But when I ask who was in the room, I don't have that. It was going to be taken back to the ministry. Who were the fat cats in that space? Who were the experts? Who were the qualified professionals? I don't know. I have to guess who was making those decisions, and that does not inspire confidence in the process.

Colliers Capital Markets helped design and oversee the procurement process for the Ontario Place redevelopment. We've been talking about Colliers lately because they're the folks who were embedded within Infrastructure Ontario for over a decade, and they have the mega-contracts for project management in the province. Everybody is interconnected. So why on earth wouldn't you want to put our minds at ease and have an accountable, transparent process, like score cards, criteria, a fairness monitor? We shouldn't have to beg for those things.

1640

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for her comments. Growing up, Ontario Place was always an area and attraction where I spent time as a teenager and in my early twenties. It was a real destination and a place we liked to go spend time around the marina, go to concerts. This redevelopment of Ontario Place will bring it back into the tourist attraction it once was. I'm just curious why you're opposed to seeing Ontario Place become the world-class destination it once was.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have 20 seconds to answer that, and I'll read to you about Ontario Place for All, which is a citizens group that has filed an injunction to halt construction: "Make no mistake: This is a government-led project. From the development application, to the site servicing, to managing the public realm on the west island for 95 years, the government is all over this project." This is not a project for Ontarians; this is a project for you.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Bill 154, as with many of the government bills, has some good elements to

it and some very alarming elements. This is how it seems to roll here. Schedule 1 provides large financial supports for Toronto, which is a good thing. I know my community in Beaches–East York will be happy to have new subway trains running on line 2, as many of them live close to Coxwell, Woodbine, Main Street and Victoria Park stations. And like most ridings across Ontario, we also see the homelessness crisis first-hand, and the additional funding for shelters and other programs is welcome.

The off-loading of the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway will be a huge financial relief for the city of Toronto. It will help to make a dent in the large debt Toronto faces, driving, literally, Ontario's economic engine. Our mayor, Olivia Chow, is showing that she can get things done for Toronto, and I know it was the right move for her to make this deal. Unfortunately, the city did not have a ton of pull when it came to the Ontario Place debacle in the first place, so I can understand why Mayor Chow decided to back down in order to secure the sufficient funding from the province.

But now, on to the problem: Why, why, why is the government sacrificing so much for an Austrian company's spa? A secret 95-year lease, exemptions for provincial planning—why even have planning departments if we're not going to abide by the rules?—lack of environmental assessments, noise emissions, heritage protections—all that out the window, and now the price of two highways and then some. The why of it all has been keeping me up at night, Madam Speaker. This all comes while this government is still under an RCMP criminal investigation for the \$8.3-billion greenbelt land swap.

I'm a bit hesitant to trust the members on the other side of the House when it comes to these secret deals—forgive but never forget—and just like the greenbelt, the government is doing a rush job on Ontario Place. And, well, maybe they learned from the last time, and now they want to cover themselves. Hidden deep in the "Miscellaneous" section of Bill 154 lay the subsections that in principle prohibit lawsuits against the government with respect to anything done under this act, including misrepresentations, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation. Does this government actually respect Ontarians? Do they respect the judicial system? Are they trying to gain back the trust they lost during the greenbelt scandal? Because boy oh boy, this is not the way to do it.

Ontario Place is a haven on Toronto's beautiful and serene waterfront. Unlike what the minister keeps spouting, it is well used. Walkers, hikers, bikers, joggers, swimmers, bird watchers, orienteers—I just created that word—alike enjoy the wide-open public space on our gorgeous waterfront. Can there be improvements? Absolutely—but not a bougie mega spa on the edge of Lake Ontario.

I, as many of you as well, grew up going to Ontario Place with my family, enjoying the outdoor amusement park and the lake views. To this day, I walk my dog, Lucy McMahon—some of you have seen her—down there to unwind and marvel at the beautiful biodiversity. Yes, it is in need of restoration—we've said that—a little bit. But

for many of you, I would challenge you: When was the last time you were down there? I would agree with the government on that.

However, the choice to sell off our waterfront to a private company for 95 years, bypassing multiple planning and environmental assessments to do so, so that folks who can afford it can get their feet rubbed? And don't forget, they'll be able to park close by at the most expensive parking lot ever built, thanks to the taxpayers of Ontario.

The group Ontario Place for All has been working tirelessly to fight this plan. I have joined their crusade at multiple events and heard from many, many of my own constituents and residents from all across Ontario, actually, about why this remodel is problematic. Clear-cutting over 800 trees? Building a colossal glass box, in a climate crisis no less? And now, this can all be done without any environmental oversight. What? Where even are we? Where are we living if this is the kind of lack of regulation that goes on? You cannot make this stuff up, Madam Speaker.

The rest of the world is getting on board with strong climate action, and we are going backward into the last century with this kind of mindset: lake filling sections of Lake Ontario, obliterating dozens of species that make their home on its edge. Do we care about clean drinking water or fresh air? Obviously not, if we can just skirt environmental laws and assessments whenever a foreign company comes calling with their wallets open. What precedent does this set? Environmental protections can be avoided whenever the government so pleases?

It brings me back to about a year ago when they used the "notwithstanding" clause. The members on the opposite side of the House must believe that the rules don't apply to them.

I strongly encourage the Minister of Infrastructure to try what the Japanese call *shinrin-yoku*—forest bathing—at Ontario Place before this bill passes. I'm happy to join her down there to simply stand in the glorious nature and engage with the smells, sounds and sights that Ontario Place provides.

Another element of this project that concerns me is the water and sewage systems at Ontario Place. We do not know what kind of capacity is required by a spa and water park. I actually asked on the order paper a question to the Minister of Infrastructure. It read, "Would the Minister of Infrastructure please disclose if the city of Toronto or Ontario tax dollars will be used for the upgraded pumping stations, waste water, and sewage systems that will be required to service the Therme spa facilities being built at Ontario Place?"

Lo and behold, I actually just received the minister's response today. And in paragraph—let's see—4, she finally somewhat answers my question, I guess: "Our government has committed to making the site 'development-ready' by providing any infrastructure required to support all users on the site." Okay, well, that's brief.

So I did some digging of my own, and I found that the government will be spending basically the same amount of money on infrastructure for this spa as they are for the water and sewage upgrades for the entire province of

Ontario over the next three years: \$200 million. Ontarians are paying the colossal price tag for a facility they may not be able to even afford to use. And who gets the payday? A private international company, no less.

On top of all this, the government's plan involves ripping out the Science Centre from its beloved community in Thorncliffe Park and bringing it down to Ontario Place, where it will be hosted in a much smaller venue that is less accessible to many communities that need the resources and use it regularly.

Just today, the long-awaited business case for moving the Science Centre was released. Madam Speaker, the math for any savings by this government only works because they're slashing the footprint in half. This means fewer Ontarians will have access to the enriching programming offered by the Science Centre.

My colleague and friend the member for Don Valley East has been working hard to save this gem in his community. Along with Save Ontario's Science Centre, close to 35,000 signatures have been recorded in support of keeping the science centre where it is. At a time like this, we should not be cutting essential educational programming venues; we should be expanding them.

1650

On that note, why not create a secondary science centre site at Ontario Place, a Great Lakes institute that is focused on our precious Great Lakes and valuable fresh water? It would be perfectly located on our wonderful waterfront and could inspire and educate generations about the need to preserve our fresh water and more, including sharing Indigenous stories and science-based research, similar to something they have in Cleveland and also Governors Island in New York City.

To the Minister of Infrastructure: My office door is wide open if you want to talk about this idea further. I would love to work together to create a legacy at Ontario Place that will actually provide something of value to our residents.

Toronto is so lucky to be a vibrant city on a great body of water. Why not showcase that on a regional and global stage? What will a spa tell people about our province's heritage and environment? You've taken the Ontario out of Ontario Place. This plan does not represent the people of Toronto, Ontario or Canada. It's secretive and shady, and benefits a wealthy international company. Release the lease and fix this bill. What is the rush? You are not and should not be above the law environmentally, on the heritage front, on noise or otherwise.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for her comments. "Rush job," I think I heard her say. I was just reflecting a little bit on the calendar, because I believe the Minister of Infrastructure said that 2016 was when the Liberals first considered this, and our government in 2019 again—I think those dates are right. That sure doesn't feel like a rush to me. In fact, it feels like—two words sprung to my head: "Liberal incompetence," in terms of not proceeding with things back when they should have.

The benefits here, the jobs, the tourism and the visitors, as the Minister of Tourism loves to say: Isn't that a vision that the member opposite could support for this?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the member across the way. Incompetence? That's interesting. I guess I might look that up in the dictionary, but I don't know. When you're proposing legislation and then you reverse it, and then you propose it and you reverse it, and then the Auditor General is investigating you, the Integrity Commissioner, the RCMP, a criminal investigation for \$8.3 billion, that's not incompetence?

I don't know. You can define it as you as you think, but I would not think that that's leading. That's not a competent government, to be under criminal investigation and to be reversing every decision they see.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: In line with what the member was just talking about: Why do you think that a government under RCMP investigation needs to put a piece of legislation forward that prohibits lawsuits against the government with respect to anything done under misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation? Why would any government need a bill that keeps people from bringing the government in front of the law if they do misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, thank you very much to the member from Nickelback—

Interjections.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —or Nickel Belt. I always say the band. It could be both.

That's a great question. Actually, when I read that, I thought I was reading a screenplay for a Netflix show. Honestly, it's unbelievable that that's in there, but it's in there, because this government is getting into all kinds of trouble instead of what we are to be doing: building housing in a housing crisis, shovels in the ground. Get 'er done. Get 'er done now, instead of wasting a year on reversing every decision that basically comes forward. I don't know how you hold your face up and walk down the street when you're having all these people investigate you—Auditor General, Integrity Commissioner etc.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for a very eloquent presentation pointing out some very important elements; namely, accountability and transparency, and the importance of that for a government when they make decisions.

We know that Therme is an Austrian company—and it seems odd to me, when we have a government that claims to be about supporting and protecting all Ontarians. We don't know much about this company, do we? I'd just like to know, does that worry you?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Absolutely, it worries me, and I feel that all of us in here should be worried about this.

First of all, we want to see the lease. Release the lease. Speaker, 95 years is ridiculous—to a foreign company, and we don't know who's the parent company. Follow the money. Follow the trail. Normally, we would see transparency, and we would know who the parent company is, and we could follow it through, it would be open—everyone would know, but with this, we don't know. This is prime real estate. This is precious property on our lake, and it's including lakefilling—Lake Ontario—in sections. Ridiculous.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I find it interesting that the Liberals want to kind of cast stones at glass houses, or something along those lines—17 times, carved into the greenbelt; the Ornge air ambulance scandal. And to top it off, we had the gas plants, under Dalton McGuinty. Their chief of staff actually went to jail. In recent history, it's the only chief of staff I can think of who went to jail for deleting emails. But they don't want to talk about that.

I'll tell you what we want to talk about. We want to talk about building Ontario. And we want to talk about building an Ontario Place for everyone.

I can remember being a youngster, when my father spent a lot of time here in this House, and I had the opportunity to get to Ontario Place now and then with my mom, and we had a lot of fun; it was a great place to be. I want to know why this member will stand up and support a previous Liberal government that did absolutely nothing, let it fall into disrepair and ruins, when we, now, as a Conservative government, want to see it get back to its former glory—why she wants to stand in the way.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's funny that you mention a glass box, because that's exactly what's going in on the waterfront: a 13-storey glass box—a bougie spa on our waterfront—in a climate emergency. How many energy-efficient measures and features will be in that? Not many.

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Have you been?

The member said he enjoyed going to Ontario Place as a child, a long time ago. I'm just wondering, when was the last time that member was actually down there to see it? It is still well used by many people, as I mentioned—cyclists, joggers, birdwatchers, hikers, walkers, people orienteering. It's still quite lovely. Yes, it needs a little touch-up here and there. But why give our—what other country is giving their waterfront away to a foreign company?

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: To the member from Beaches—East York: Thank you for your comments. You talked a lot about hiking and biking and birdwatching. It's not that long ago, actually, that I was able to kayak around Ontario

Place, during a night session. It was spectacular. It was gorgeous.

My question is, given how Ontario Place has always been family-oriented, do you see this luxury spa fitting into that family-oriented concept?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: No, I do not. When you think of the Ontario Place we went to as kids, there was something for everyone. A luxurious, fancy spa is not someplace I would be going with my children. Why not preserve what's there and augment what's there? Leave the science centre where it is. Look at the Great Lakes institute—I'll give you that idea; you can champion that. There's a good idea for you.

1700

But why is some of this development, to prep for it, on the backs of taxpayers, like the parking lot? I'm sorry. We're in an affordability crisis. I don't think Ontarians want to be paying for a parking lot.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Beaches—East York. You know, I went to Ontario Place a lot as a child and I've been more recently, mostly to see concerts at Ontario Place, but frankly, some of the things I went for in the past just haven't been there in a long time, and one of those was the water park. That was always my favourite part when I was a kid, was to go to the water park, to be around the lakeshore and everything else, but to go to the water park and squirt my brother and squirt all the other kids with those things, and I understand the Therme spa is going to include a water park. Doesn't the member opposite think it would be great? Maybe you visited the water park as a child. Would you like to see that again?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Absolutely. I was on the bike—I think it was the bike—that you pedalled, and you could squirt your siblings or your family members. It was great. You could still have that. You could still have that without this bougie spa, and, you know, the water infrastructure alone—\$200 million to deal with the wastewater and sewage treatment there, which is more than the entire province is spending in the next three years. I don't think Ontarians want to spend that kind of money.

Last time I checked, affordability crisis—

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

Further debate?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm happy to rise for second reading of the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023.

As the Honourable Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure, has outlined, the government is actively working to build infrastructure for the people of this province. Our capital plan is the most ambitious in Ontario's history and we will invest more than \$185 billion in infrastructure projects over the next decade. We are investing in infrastructure that will make a difference in people's lives while creating good jobs in communities across Ontario: transit, roads and bridges that we rely on everyday to get where we need to go safely and on time; housing, to ensure

our infrastructure grows to support rapid population growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe; hospitals and long-term-care facilities, to help care for our loved ones; schools that will help our children grow and thrive; and recreational destinations, like the Toronto waterfront and Ontario Place.

Madam Speaker, we are building infrastructure faster and more efficiently to ensure that residents of Ontario have opportunities to thrive in their communities. This includes helping residents get to where they need to go—to work, a park, to a restaurant or a retail store. We are supporting them by investing in transit in communities across Ontario.

For example, our government is currently building the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, the Scarborough subway extension and the Ontario Line, and plans to build the Yonge North subway extension. This is the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. Madam Speaker, work is already under way to deliver transit-oriented communities along the new Ontario Line, Yonge North subway extension and Scarborough subway extension, creating approximately 79,000 new jobs and about 54,000 new residential units, including affordable housing.

In October, we were excited to announce transit-oriented communities proposed at five stations on the Ontario Line, including the Eastern Avenue transit-oriented community, located near the future East Harbour transit hub, along with the Gerrard-Carlaw South, Pape, Cosburn and Thorncliffe Park transit-oriented communities. We also announced that we are proposing to build the first transit-oriented community on the Scarborough subway extension, close to the Lawrence and McCowan station.

Other transit-oriented communities proposed on the future Ontario Line include those at East Harbour, Corktown, Exhibition, King-Bathurst, Queen-Spadina and Gerrard-Carlaw North, and those at the future Bridges and High Tech stations on the Yonge North subway extension. These transit-oriented communities will bring more housing and jobs, public spaces and parks, access to retail and community amenities, and more—all next to transit stations. Some will serve as transit hubs to local TTC bus, streetcar and subway service.

We are continuing to work closely with the city of Toronto and York region to identify and plan additional opportunities to bring more transit-oriented communities to subway stations. We're also creating new housing and mixed-use communities around GO and light-rail transit stations around the greater Golden Horseshoe, such as the proposed Woodbine GO station. We're exploring opportunities in many communities which could result in new or improved GO stations built by third parties, saving taxpayer dollars.

Now, more than ever, we are investing in infrastructure that will deliver critical services, while creating good jobs in communities across Ontario. In doing so, we're finding ways to build much-needed housing, as quickly as possible, for the people of this growing province. As I said earlier, our government is moving forward with the most

ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history. These investments are fundamental to the province's plan for growth and long-term prosperity.

Infrastructure plays a central role in supporting the quality of life enjoyed by Ontarians. It's what brings us together, connecting us every day to our families, friends, workplaces and activities. Our investments are already getting shovels in the ground on hundreds of priority projects across the province through various provincial and jointly funded programs, many of which are already making a real difference in people's lives.

While we remain hopeful that the federal government will follow through on commitments for new infrastructure funding, we're moving ahead to getting critical infrastructure built that the people of Ontario need and depend on. Just this month, our government announced an investment of \$200 million over three years through a new Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund to repair, rehabilitate and expand critical water, waste water, and stormwater infrastructure. This program will provide targeted funding for critical water projects that will help protect the health and safety of communities and unlock more housing opportunities in communities across Ontario. This includes a full range of housing options to meet the needs of all Ontarians, such as supportive housing, community housing, market and rental housing, high-rise, low-rise and long-term care.

We're also contributing to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which represents up to \$30 billion in combined federal, provincial and partner funding over 10 years for local infrastructure projects, including \$10.2 billion in provincial infrastructure investments. These include investment streams in public transit, green, community, culture and recreation, and rural and northern infrastructure projects.

Madam Speaker, another way we're contributing to build Ontario is by delivering major infrastructure projects like bridges, highways, hospitals, subways and correctional facilities by partnering with the private sector.

1710

Infrastructure Ontario's market update demonstrates our ongoing commitment to effectively deliver major and critical infrastructure projects across the province. The last update, in March, includes 38 projects, with a value of more than \$35 billion in estimated design and construction costs. Some of the highlights include two projects for which requests for proposals closed this fall, including: Ottawa Hospital's new civic redevelopment, a new campus that will be one of the largest and most modern teaching hospitals in Canada; and the Ontario Line subway, with two major works packages, the Pape tunnel and underground stations and the elevated guideway and stations contracts.

Our agency, Infrastructure Ontario, has spearheaded innovative approaches to infrastructure delivery. Through the accelerated build pilot program, for example, Lakeridge Health announced the completion and opening of its new long-term-care home in Ajax after only 13 months of procurement and construction, and I'm happy to share that

the final three long-term-care homes were completed this year. Humber Meadows Long-Term Care Home started welcoming residents this past spring, and Wellbrook Place east and Wellbrook Place west towers in Mississauga opened on November 7, which together have added another 952 much-needed long-term-care beds to the greater Toronto area.

To improve the lives of the people on Ontario, we're also making an investment of \$4 billion so that every community has access to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. To date, Ontario has finalized agreements of over \$2.4 billion for nearly 200 high-speed Internet and cellular projects that will bring reliable Internet access to over 510,000 homes and businesses across the province. These investments are helping Ontarians to be able to work and learn online, operate and grow their businesses, connect with loved ones and access critical public services when and where they need them most.

The province has also passed legislation and taken other regulatory and policy measures to encourage municipalities and other sectors to speed up the construction of designated broadband projects. Ontario has made incredible progress, and we're relentlessly working to ensure we are on track to achieve our goal by the end of 2025.

We also continue to rebuild and improve Toronto's waterfront, including working with the government of Canada, the city of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto to flood-protect the Port Lands. This will provide exciting new opportunities for significant residential, commercial and recreational development. Ontario is working with partners to create a world-class waterfront in Toronto, building vibrant communities and bringing more housing opportunities, entertainment, parks and green space to the waterfront.

Ontario is aligned with the city of Toronto and the federal government on the need to build more homes. As the province is building 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years, housing must be the central focus of the next phase of waterfront revitalization. To date, the government of Ontario along with the government of Canada and the city of Toronto have jointly invested more than \$2.75 billion, of which the province contributed more than \$900 million in provincial funding for waterfront initiatives.

As a direct result of Waterfront Toronto's work, Toronto has over 69 hectares of new or improved parks and public space and more than 4,300 new units of housing. Since its inception, Waterfront Toronto has added over \$3 billion to the economy and over 26,000 full-time years of employment. In the last year alone, Waterfront Toronto added approximately \$374 million to the economy.

Waterfront Toronto is currently undertaking one of the largest waterfront revitalization initiatives in the world, transforming a vast amount of formerly industrial, under-used lands into new mixed-use communities. We recognize this is a priority. As part of the new deal between Ontario and Toronto, the city of Toronto has committed to work with the province to advance immediate opportunities for Waterfront Toronto to build all forms of housing

on their available property, as well as accelerate all existing housing development projects to address the shortage of social, affordable and market housing in Toronto. By working with our tri-government partners and Waterfront Toronto, we can ensure Toronto's waterfront is a source of pride and prosperity for all residents and visitors, now and for generations to come.

Speaker, another way our government is looking to the future and rebuilding Toronto's waterfront is by following through on our historic plan to bring Ontario Place back to life as a year-round, world-class destination. Once complete, the site will feature approximately 50 acres of free public space for everyone to enjoy. It will include a new public boulevard, pier, public beach and one-acre fountain, as well as event spaces.

Visitors will also be able to experience health and wellness services as part of Therme Canada's new well-being destination. This all-season, family-friendly facility will have something for all ages and interests, including pools and waterslides; botanical spaces to relax; sports, performance and recovery services; and restaurants with an exciting dining experience. Plus, Therme's updated plans will increase the free and accessible park and green space on the west island, while also expanding access to the waterfront.

Therme's latest drawings show the volume of their building has been reduced by 25%, including the height of the main building, the terraces and the pavilion. Additionally, Therme's redesign now means public parkland on the west island area has been increased by 35%, to almost 16 acres, which means even more public space on the west island. Public pathways on the west island have been made even wider, and spaces for additional food concession areas have also been included.

Live Nation Canada will revitalize the existing amphitheatre into a modern, sustainable, indoor/outdoor live music and entertainment venue that will continue to provide great experiences for fans and artists alike. Protecting the iconic amphitheatre lawns, the new venue will have an expanded capacity with the ability to host events year-round.

As Minister Surma outlined, the Ontario Science Centre will move into a custom-built, state-of-the-art facility, bringing exciting science-based educational programming to the heart of Ontario Place.

Speaker, our plan to expand and enhance the public spaces and parkland at Ontario Place, as well as a family-friendly water park and wellness facility, and a new music and entertainment venue, will attract world-class artists and events, while also drawing up to six million visitors and tourists to the site annually.

As you can see, rebuilding Ontario Place is going to bring something very special back to Toronto's waterfront: a place where beautiful parks and facilities can be enjoyed, where fun recreational activities can be experienced and shared, and where life-long memories can be created for new generations of visitors. The Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023, if passed, would support the rebuilding of Ontario Place by reducing delays and

streamlining municipal approvals, helping us move forward with a new Ontario Place for everyone as a world-class, year-round destination.

Our government has been very clear: We will always find ways to strike a balance between environmental due diligence and finding ways to make sure infrastructure that Ontarians need and deserve gets built faster. Nobody wants a hospital, school, bridge, road, highway, or in this case, Ontario Place, to take 20 years to get built.

1720

All work on the site has benefited from the significant environmental protection work that has taken place over a number of years, including two publicly available environmental assessments. Environmental due diligence, Indigenous and public consultation have always been key components of this rebuild. To date, over 40 different studies, reports, plans and drawings, including arborist, geotechnical, shoreline, stormwater and natural heritage impact studies have been completed. These reports are available on the city of Toronto's website.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would also streamline municipal approvals by providing the Minister of Infrastructure with the authority to amend the city of Toronto's official plan and zoning requirements for the Ontario Place site, creating an exemption from further environmental assessments—especially considering that we have completed two assessments to date—and providing authority to impose limits and conditions on city of Toronto bylaws.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would provide the province the authority to advance all necessary planning approvals for Ontario Place and ensure that the new Ontario Place for everyone gets done, as we have promised.

We'll continue to work with the city, as we always have, to move forward with this project in a timely manner to realize our goal to rebuild Ontario Place into a world-class destination that will provide people of all ages with something to enjoy.

We'll continue to engage with, and collect feedback from, Indigenous communities, the public, and stakeholders, which will help to further inform the government's redevelopment plans.

In the public consultations that have seen more than 9,200 people take part since 2021, participants envisioned a rebuilt Ontario Place with spaces for gathering, an emphasis on the natural landscape and greenspace, year-round activities, barrier-free public access and inclusive public spaces. Madam Speaker, we have listened and we will be providing what they are asking for, with all the many benefits a rebuilt Ontario Place can offer.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask the member a question as we've been discussing Bill 154, which is all about the redevelopment of the Ontario Place project. The member's speech was a lot about infrastructure goals for the province, but I'm not going to get into that because I'm going to stick to the bill.

What was interesting in the bill is that in schedule 2, the government removes itself from impunity; it gives itself a lot of protections. I guess my question is, the government

is giving itself the power to make misrepresentations or commit misconduct with respect to Ontario Place—to commit acts of misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligations with impunity. Maybe it's giving itself protection so it can; maybe it already has.

Would the member clarify what those protections are there for?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: As Minister Surma highlighted this morning, all the governments from the last 30 years have been discussing Ontario Place. We wouldn't be discussing Ontario Place if the opposition would have taken action. The previous government is responsible for leaving this historic place in a state of neglect and disrepair. The opposition is equally responsible for that negligence, Madam Speaker.

This government believes in taking action and getting things done, and under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Surma, we are bringing Ontario Place back to life, making it a remarkable world-class destination for people of all ages to enjoy. We remain committed to the people of this province that we will be doing the comprehensive redevelopment of Ontario Place in a sustainable way, also respecting historical and natural features. We will bring it back to life.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It was really great to see the Premier and the mayor of Toronto sit down and discuss what Toronto really needs to continue to be a world-class city here in Ontario. I know one of the things that struck me—I've talked a little about it already today—was the discussions that we're having around the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway. I know the member from Brampton is very excited to have a new highway running through his city, the 413, and I know that is one of the reasons why this Progressive Conservative government now holds all the seats in Brampton, because they're excited about seeing that infrastructure expansion.

I'm hopeful that the member can maybe talk a little bit more about what highways that are run, expanded and maintained by the province mean to him and his community, and how this will help everyone in Toronto and the GTA.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to my friend for that wonderful question. Madam Speaker, he's absolutely right. Uploading these highways would ensure the long-term protection and preservation of these vital assets.

The member is right that Highway 413 is a big deal for our community. That is why there are no members on the opposition side—because they oppose Highway 413. But the people of Brampton have seen the traffic congestion rising day by day. Not only would that highway reduce the traffic congestion, it will create thousands of jobs and will significantly boost the provincial GDP by millions.

This government believes in taking action. We are not only making unprecedented investments in transit; we are building highways like 413 and also uploading the DVP and the Gardiner Expressway.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for his presentation today. It seemed as though it was full of holiday wishes, all sorts of wonderful things that were not actually provided for within the bill. However, my question is going to deal with what is actually within the bill.

Within the bill, the government gives itself power to make misrepresentations, commit misconduct, commit acts of malfeasance, bad faith or breaches of trust or fiduciary obligation. So my question for the member is, what has this government done in terms of misrepresentation, misconduct, malfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation already, or which of those acts does it plan on committing by giving itself the inoculation from this with this legislation? What are they planning on? Why is this here?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'll highlight what this bill does, Madam Speaker. This bill is a historic deal that Minister Surma and the Premier signed with the city of Toronto.

I mentioned that governments of all stripes have talked about redeveloping Ontario Place for over 30 years and we are the first government in decades that has taken action to rebuild Ontario Place into an iconic year-round destination for everyone to enjoy. Just years of inaction and a lack of investments have left Ontario Place in a state of disrepair, and we are doing the work necessary to get the job done. As the Premier has said many times, there's no better time to bring this iconic destination back to life, and this government is bringing it back to life, making it a remarkable world-class destination for people of all ages to enjoy. We are bringing Ontario Place onto the world map.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I really appreciate engaging with my brother from across the way over there.

A friend of mine is fond of saying, "You only get in trouble for the things you do and for the things you say." And for 15 years, I think that's why the Liberal government almost never got in trouble—supported by the NDP. However, the people of Ontario eventually saw through that. I think one of the great things about our government is the fact that we're willing to take risks. We're willing to do things in order to make Ontario a better place to live, work and play, and this is what this is.

We're also not afraid to say we made a mistake and backtrack. It's interesting; if we weren't doing anything on Ontario Place, the opposition would be yelling at us. Now that we are, they're yelling at us. So it doesn't matter; they're going to do whatever they're going to do.

I want to ask the member to say a little bit more about why he's proud to be a member of this government and a member of this ministry that's ready to get things done for the province of Ontario.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to my friend for that wonderful question. Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of this government that believes in getting things

done. We are making one of the largest investments—unprecedented investments—in infrastructure: \$185 billion over the next 10 years.

Infrastructure is our priority, unlike the opposition, Madam Speaker. They always say no to infrastructure. They will say no to a development, no to jobs and no to making life affordable for the people of this province.

On this side of the House, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we believe in getting things done and built, and that is why we're not only doing the comprehensive redevelopment of Ontario Place. We're building highways. We're building schools. We are building hospitals. We are building medical schools. We are leaving no stone unturned when it comes to building infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question? 1730

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Like many Ontarians, the official opposition has lots of questions about what is actually in this bill.

I want to draw the member's attention to subsection 17(2) of schedule 2, which says that it indemnifies the government from any cost, compensation or damages, including loss of revenues or loss of profit—"not limited to a remedy in contract, restitution, tort, misfeasance, bad faith, trust or fiduciary obligation, any equitable remedy or any remedy under any statute, is available to any person in connection with anything referred to in" this bill. It's curious why the government would put in this exceptionally, in many ways—it's unknown to have such extensive indemnification in legislation. Why did the government decide to include this in this bill?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Our government is delivering on its historic plan to build a strong Ontario. As part of this plan, our government is working with our partners. We are bringing Ontario Place back to life, making it a remarkable world-class destination for people of all ages.

If passed, the proposed legislation would also help mitigate against certain potential project delays, streamline certain approvals, and ensure that the new Ontario Place for everyone moves forward.

This proposed legislation would reduce delays and ensure the site is ready for redevelopment—as well as exempting it from the Ontario Heritage Act and the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Madam Speaker, our government has been very clear that we'll always find ways to strike a balance between environmental due diligence and finding ways to make sure—infrastructure that Ontarians need and deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? The member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Madam Speaker—*Interjections.*

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to my colleagues. It is 5:30, and I'm still getting a round of applause when I stand up, so I appreciate that.

We're talking about this Ontario Place bill, and I will tell you, I am deeply, deeply concerned about this. I am the NDP critic for democratic reform, and I'm concerned

that this bill is another attack on our democratic rights in the province of Ontario, and I'm going to be focusing on that.

There are three things that I worry about with this government. The first is the corruption—and we've seen the greenbelt scandal; the RCMP are already investigating it. I'm concerned about their horrible record on the environment. And I'm concerned about their undermining of democratic rights.

With this bill, the Conservative government is giving itself the power to break Ontario's environmental and heritage laws and to prohibit lawsuits for anything they've done, including misfeasance. Misfeasance is the wrongful exercise of authority. I've never seen a piece of legislation with those clauses in them in the past. What is it that this government has done? What wrongful use of authority have they committed or do they plan on committing that they are trying to protect themselves with this legislation?

Schedule 1 of this legislation is about—it's called the New Deal for Toronto Act. It's about re-uploading the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway, which were downloaded onto the city by the former Conservative government, even though the city never had the tax base to actually afford to pay for those things. The re-uploading of those is about building housing and things. But this schedule means nothing, because it doesn't actually re-upload those highways; it doesn't actually build housing. All it does is, it gives the government the power to have a discussion with the city about those things. The government—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: The member from Oshawa is asking me, does the Ontario government need legislation to have a discussion with the city of Toronto? No, they don't need to come to the Legislature and ask for permission to have a discussion. So this schedule 1 about the new deal for Toronto is a diversion. It gives the government something to talk about in this legislation, because they certainly don't want to talk about what they're doing at Ontario Place. They want to be able to talk about something else, so you look at this—

Hon. Kinga Surma: How's the business case, Chris?

Mr. Chris Glover: Ah, yes, the business case. I will get to the business case about Ontario Place and about the taxpayer subsidy for the redevelopment of Ontario Place, because I think most taxpayers in Ontario do not want to see \$650 million in taxpayer dollars go to a private, for-profit Austrian spa company. We don't want to subsidize—we've got a homelessness crisis. We've got an affordable housing crisis. We've got a food crisis. If there are 650 million taxpayer dollars that can be spent, let's spend them on housing. Let's spend them on making sure everybody can eat in this province, not on a spa, not on a luxury mega-spa down on the lake, that's for sure.

Let's see. I'll go more specific into this attack on our democratic rights. This government is giving itself the power to break Ontario laws, including the Ontario Heritage Act, the Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental Bill of Rights. This legislation is specific-

ally designed to foil Ontario Place for All's injunction and avoid responsibility for the actions that they've taken.

Ontario Place for All has got an injunction. They said a week ago that they're going to be filing for a court injunction because they believe this government is breaching the Environmental Assessment Act, the Environmental Bill of Rights and the Ontario Heritage Act. And so this government brings in this legislation that says, "Well, do you know what? We don't have to follow Ontario laws anymore."

This is a very dangerous precedent, that when the government is found to have breached the laws of Ontario, instead of allowing people to have recourse through the courts, they're going to bring in legislation that strips Ontarians of those legal rights. That's really a frightening action by this government. Anybody who cares about our democratic rights and our legal rights has got to be concerned about that, and this is not the first attack on our democratic rights in the province of Ontario by this Conservative government.

I'll go into detail about that in a minute, but the other piece in this is that this legislation gives—the government is giving itself the power to protect itself from acts of breach of trust, breach of fiduciary obligation and misfeasance—in other words, the wrongful exercise of authority. If you look at it in reverse, when the government is giving itself the power to breach the laws of the province and giving it protection against legal recourse, it's actually stripping Ontarians of their rights to legal recourse when the government of Ontario breaks the law, and that is a very, very dangerous precedent to be having.

I mentioned that this is just one more attack on the democratic rights of the people of this province. It starts in 2018, when this government was elected. One of the first things they did was they passed Bill 5. Bill 5 changed the rules of Toronto's elections in the middle of the election campaign. It changed it from 47 seats to 25 seats. It also cancelled four regional chair elections that were already under way.

In a democracy, how is it that a government can step in and say, "Do you know what?"—and the word was that they didn't like one of the people running for regional chair. One of the people running for regional chair was Patrick Brown, and obviously there was some bad blood between the current government leadership and Patrick Brown. The question was, did the government actually cancel that regional chair election as a way of getting back at Patrick Brown? And that is really dangerous. When the government is exercising these extraordinary powers in order to get back at somebody, that's really dangerous—changing the rules of an election in the middle of the campaign.

This interference in Toronto's municipal elections was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in a 4 to 5 decision that Canadians do not have the right to democratic municipal elections. Under section 2 of the Charter of Rights, we have the right to provincial and federal elections; the Charter of Rights is silent on municipal elections. What the judges decided at the

Supreme Court was that because it's silent, we actually don't have that right. We do not have the right to democratic municipal elections, so the Ontario government can do anything they want. In the city of Toronto, we elected a new mayor, Mayor Chow, about six months ago. The next day, if the Premier wanted, he could have said, "You know what? I don't like who you elected. I'm going to appoint my own mayor for the city of Toronto."

1740

In fact, that's what he has done—something similar to that—in the regions of Niagara, Peel and York. This government has given itself the power to appoint the regional chairs for those communities, and that regional chair has the power to govern with only one third of the votes of the council members. Then, they expanded this, what they call strong-mayor powers—that's a bit of a euphemism. The strong-mayor powers actually strip Ontarians of the right to majority-vote democracy in our municipalities. It's incredibly, incredibly dangerous what this government is doing. This legislation that's before us today is one more step in that dangerous stripping of our democratic rights in the province of Ontario.

I talked about corruption and what this government has been doing with this. The government, right now, they're in the greenbelt scandal. Since June, when the Auditor General's report came out, the government has been under scrutiny because of the greenbelt scandal. Their friends and some of the Premier's wedding guests bought 7,500 hectares of farmland protected by the greenbelt. This government, two months after the wedding, introduced legislation to strip the farmland of greenbelt protections.

The estimate from the Auditor General was that that farmland had been bought for somewhere around \$250 million, but with the greenbelt protections removed, it became worth \$8.3 billion. So there's an \$8-billion profit for those developers who were sitting beside the Premier at his daughter's wedding and donating to his daughter at that wedding. The other developers were sitting, apparently having a massage, with the Conservative minister in Las Vegas. So this scandal just keeps blowing up, because that greenbelt, that 7,500 hectares, was just the beginning.

There are also the municipal boundary expansions. Again, the same developers—the same names keep coming up. These developers bought farmland just outside of municipal boundaries. This government passed regulations to remove the greenbelt protections and expand the municipal boundaries for that property. That property that they built, the municipal boundaries, is 35,000 hectares. So the Auditor General estimates that there was an \$8-billion profit to be made on the first greenbelt scandal for 7,500 hectares; this is five times as large. I don't have figures on this, but to estimate, if the developers are making the same profit margin on the municipal boundary expansions, that would have been \$40 billion that they would have made on the municipal boundary expansions.

The corruption in this government just keeps expanding, and the Therme deal—the Ontario Place deal—is under investigation right now by the Auditor General. So if you wonder why the pressure, why the rush to get this piece of legislation through, why does the government

want these extraordinary powers, why are they stripping Ontarians of some of our democratic rights so that they can rush through this legislation and get Ontario Place started and start to clear-cut the 850 trees on the west island and destroy that wildlife habitat—why are they in such a rush?

You've got to wonder if it's because they're afraid that when the Auditor General report comes out, the Auditor General will find that this is a horrible deal for the people of Ontario. Already, the facts that we've been able to cover, in spite of this government's lack of transparency: the \$650-million taxpayer subsidy for this spa, \$450 million for an underwater parking garage on the shore of Lake Ontario, \$200 million in infrastructure renewal, only to hand over the property. This is public parkland. So we, as taxpayers, are paying \$200 million to fix the Ontario Place site and prepare it for Therme. Then, we're going to hand it over to them in a 95-year lease.

The other gift to Therme: the value of that property. Property in downtown Toronto sells for about \$200 per buildable square foot. That's commercial property. This is a 700,000 square foot mega spa. By that calculation, the value of this property that is being given—so far as we know, because the government refuses to release the lease and let us know the terms—for free. It's a \$1.4-billion piece of property in downtown Toronto that is being given to the Therme spa for free for 95 years, and the government is handing them a \$450-million taxpayers-subsidized parking garage and \$200 million in infrastructure renewal. So this is just a horrible, horrible deal for the people of this province. No wonder they want to get this thing started and under way, so that it can't be stopped once the Auditor General report comes out.

The other thing: The Minister of Infrastructure keeps talking about this project as if it's a wonderful project, because she says, "Nobody goes there." That's a direct quote from the Minister of Infrastructure. She says, "Nobody goes to Ontario Place." She has been saying that for six months. In those six months, you know, there have been a number of reports. We got, through a freedom of information request, a report from Ontario Place in 2022 that said that it wasn't that nobody went there. In fact, 2.9 million people visited Ontario Place in 2022—

Mr. Joel Harden: That's not no one.

Mr. Chris Glover: That's not no one, no. That's more than zero. That's not nobody. You can't say "2.9 million" and "nobody"—yes, absolutely right.

The other thing is Ontario Place turned a \$5-million profit in 2022. This is public parkland, and not only—it's turning a profit.

Interjection: Is there a massage table?

Mr. Chris Glover: Well, see, the massage table—the problem is this government is obsessed with spas. They don't want to have to go all the way—they didn't want their minister to have to go all the way to Las Vegas to get a massage. They want to spend \$650 million so they could get their massages right here on the waterfront in Toronto.

You know, a colleague of mine was at one of the Therme consultations in the summertime. She went up to one of the Therme staff members there and asked, "Why are you building it here? Why in the downtown water-

front? One of the most beautiful pieces of public parkland in the country in the heart of downtown Toronto—why not build it somewhere else?” The response from the staff member was—and I don’t have the person’s name and I wouldn’t give the person’s name, anyways, because I don’t think they were following the script they were supposed to—cheap rent. That’s what they said: “cheap rent.” Well, you’re not kidding, it’s cheap rent. You’re getting a \$1.4-billion piece of property for free, for a 95-year lease; you’re getting a \$650-million taxpayer subsidy for free. Yes, that’s cheap rent. That is really, really cheap rent. It’s cheap for Therme; it’s not so cheap for the taxpayers in Ontario, which is the really, really unfortunate part.

The other thing about this that I want to talk about—I’ve got a few minutes left. I want to talk about the environmental impact and this government’s record on the environment. You know, this—

Interjection: It’s horrible.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, it’s a terrible—

Interjection: You need another 20 minutes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, I need another 20 minutes, that’s what my colleague is saying. I need another 20 minutes to talk about their environmental record. I’ll just run through a few of the things.

Let’s see, there have been at least three attempts to pave over portions of the greenbelt. Under the Liberals in Ontario, the province was paving over 190 acres of farmland a day. The Conservatives thought that wasn’t enough. They’re paving over 320 acres of farmland a day and those numbers are from Statistics Canada. They gutted the Ontario conservation authorities of their authority and of their power to protect conservation and to protect wetlands in this province. This action was so egregious that it led the former Toronto mayor and Conservative MP, David Crombie, to step down from his position as chair of the conservation authority because he was so appalled with what this government has done. They paid hundreds of millions of dollars to rip down wind farms. They ended Ontario’s \$3-billion cap-and-trade climate program. They ripped out electric-vehicle charging stations at GO train parking lots. They slashed funding for Indigenous conservation efforts. They are building Highway 413 right through the heart of the greenbelt.

1750

And you know what’s on the side of the 413? You know what’s on the sides there? All this property, and do you know who bought the property on the sides of the 413? I’ll tell you: It’s the same developers who were at the Premier’s wedding.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: His daughter’s wedding.

Mr. Chris Glover: Daughter’s wedding, yes, not the Premier’s—the Premier’s daughter’s wedding. Thank you to the member from Oshawa. I’ll correct my record: It was the Premier’s daughter’s wedding where those developers were donating money to the Premier’s daughter.

Anyways, when you look at their environmental record and you look at what they’re planning at Ontario Place, they’re going to clear-cut 850 trees. The West Island is the habitat for 125 different bird species. It’s also the habitat for wildlife, including beaver and mink. This is not in

northern Ontario. This is a wildlife habitat in the heart of downtown Toronto. It’s such a rare thing.

And it’s right on the bird migration route across Lake Ontario. Birds are migrating south at this time of year, and they migrate north in the summertime, and when they cross Lake Ontario, one of their resting spots is this West Island at Ontario Place. All of that is going to be destroyed by this government because they have made a rigged deal with Therme to build a mega spa at the taxpayer’s expense, and it’s absolutely inexcusable. Their attack on our democratic rights is absolutely inexcusable with this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for his comments. I’m curious, because he spent a lot of time on the democratic rights that he feels are being stripped. I just want to probe that a little bit because I find it an interesting element.

So let’s look at the participants in this stripping of democratic rights. First of all, you have the Progressive Conservative Premier of Ontario—an outstanding Premier, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many other objective observers on this side of the House. Then, you have Mayor Olivia Chow, new mayor of Toronto and, I think, an NDP supporter, former wife of Jack Layton—a very well-respected fellow.

So you have two political opposites who have come together to do a transaction and arrangement for the benefit of constituents in the city of Toronto. I think that’s a—

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

I’ll ask the member for Spadina–Fort York to reply.

Mr. Chris Glover: First of all, I know you like the Premier, but this Premier that I am accusing of stripping us of our democratic rights in the province of Ontario is under criminal investigation by the RCMP. Is he somebody that we should trust with our democratic rights?

As far as Olivia Chow, she has nothing to do with this legislation. This legislation, the stripping of our democratic rights, is about this government’s desire to build Ontario Place as fast as possible before the Auditor General report comes out. Olivia Chow has nothing to do with that.

In fact, it’s really kind of offensive to bring Olivia Chow into this discussion because she is a champion of democratic rights. She has worked her entire life to make sure that more people actually can participate in our democracy, whereas this government is stripping us of our democratic rights, including at the city of Toronto where they interfered with our 2018 election by changing the rules in the middle of the campaign.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to read that, in the bill, it says it prohibits lawsuits against the government with respect to anything done that has to do with misrepresentation, misconduct, malfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation. I must say that I’ve been here for quite a while, Speaker. I have never seen a government needing to protect them-

selves against misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary obligation. I have seen the previous government and this government wishing that they could have this, but they never actually put in a law that says, “We will be above the law.” Any idea why this government would need to protect themselves from misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for the question. This is one of the scariest parts about this legislation. What is it that the government has done that they believe they need to bring in legislation to protect themselves and their ministers—it specifically says “and their ministers”—from any action that they’ve taken or will take that could potentially lead to lawsuits for breach of trust, breach of contract, acting in bad faith, misfeasance—which is the wrongful exercise of lawful authority.

It’s a good question, and it’s an open question. What is it the government has done? This government is completely non-transparent. I wonder, if the government actually was transparent and released the lease they’ve signed with Therme, if we would find out what it is they’re trying to protect themselves from.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Spadina–Fort York for his speech. I remember the first time I went to Ontario Place, which was 1994, back when the NDP were actually in government, and I remember that jarring image of faded signs, closed attractions. Back in 1994, it was in decline, and any subsequent time I went back, it was further in decline. So seeing a possible revitalization, especially something that would work year-round, seems to be very intriguing.

Given that this is the only government that seems to be taking a redevelopment seriously, I struggle to understand how you can be against a redevelopment that’s been talked about and talked about and talked about for the better part of the last 30 years and never implemented. I’m hoping that the member might be able to explain why the status quo is better than the improvement.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his question. I don’t know where you were in 1994. I first went to Ontario Place in the 1970s, when it was a new place and I was a kid. I was going with my parents, and it was a fantastic, fantastic place to go. In 2008, I bought a season’s pass for my children and me, and again it was a fantastic place. There were all kinds of rides; there were all kinds of activities to do. We went there at least half a dozen times through the summer. Every time, we had a wonderful time.

I am upset, and the one thing I will agree with the government is that the Liberals should never have shut down Ontario Place in 2011. That was a huge mistake. Ontario Place is our place. It was originally designed to showcase the province to the world. It was designed by an Ontario architect, Eb Zeidler, and an Ontario landscape architect, Michael Hough, and McMillan designed the

Children’s Village. The Children’s Village was the first place in the world that had a ball pit. And the other thing that it had was IMAX, the world’s first IMAX theatre, which is—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am sorry to cut off the member and his reminiscing, and that’s great, but here we are talking about a really big mistake in schedule 2, where this government is giving itself powers to reimagine laws. They’re breaking existing laws with this legislation. It gives the minister the power to issue MZOs. It does all sorts of heavy-handed stuff, which is disappointing.

We don’t see the lease. We have no idea. This is like a weird snow globe on the water, or a spa globe—I don’t know what to call it, but a big bubble that is damaging your memories, but the potential of that site, and it’s going to make it inaccessible for so many Ontarians.

I guess what I want to know is, what is the government getting out of this? You had talked about that it’s cheap rent for Therme. What does the government get out of it? There’s got to be something. Do you know?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We need an answer from the member for Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: That’s—
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Go on.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay.

1800

That’s the question: What is the government getting out of this? Why would the government make a deal that is so obviously bad for the people and taxpayers in Ontario? That’s the question.

And then, to take these extraordinary measures to strip Ontarians of their rights to sue the government when the government breaks its own laws or commits breach of trust or breach of confidence or misfeasance: Why would the government take these extraordinary measures? It’s a good question. I wish the government would release the lease, or at least wait until the Auditor General report comes in, so that we can get to the bottom of this.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): It is 6 o’clock. We need to move to private members’ public business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRESCRIPTION CONTRACEPTIVES CONTRACEPTIFS SUR ORDONNANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health should expand

the Ontario Health Insurance Plan to cover universal access to all prescription contraception.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today not just to present a motion for debate, but to ignite a conversation that is overdue in this chamber. Our role as policymakers goes beyond governance; it involves creating space in the highest office of Ontario for meaningful change, opportunities for advocacy, sharing lived experiences and harnessing the power of research to inform our decisions.

I will say the Minister of Health has been collaborative with myself. However, it has been over 250 days since I brought the motion forward, and I decided to push debate on universal contraception, because it deserves to have space made for it. Today, we are discussing a critical public policy that intersects with health, gender equality, gender equity and social justice: the implementation of universal, no-cost contraception. This is not only a health initiative; it's a huge step towards gender equality. I stand before you to champion this cause because it has the potential to transform lives all across Ontario.

However, let's talk practicality as well. Beyond the social implications, universal contraception is sound public policy. It is efficient and cost-effective. Studies by organizations like Canada's family planning council reveal a clear truth: The financial burden of unintended pregnancies in our health care system far exceeds the cost of providing contraception.

Consider the policy impact within the frame of our current health care resource crisis. This is not only about money; it's about freeing up the resources that cannot be bought with money: freeing up hospital resources, operating rooms and the invaluable time of health care professionals. We are looking at health care savings in Ontario that could exceed \$75 million annually. In a health care crisis where people and space matter a lot, it is about strategically allocating resources that are currently stretched so thin, to more effectively use the resources we have.

These are hard facts, yet sometimes facts do not capture the whole story. I want to bring to light the voices of numerous organizations and individuals who have shared why universal contraception is vital. I reached out widely, and the response was overwhelming. Over a thousand compelling voices responded on why this matters. I want to be crystal clear: These are not just names on petitions; these are real stories from real, live people who took the time to tell them.

Not one public health organization, women's group, health care body, community group or research institution hesitated to endorse universal contraception for its benefits to health outcomes and gender equity. This issue transcends partisan politics. It's about cost efficiency, promoting gender equity and enhancing health outcomes. I have endeavored to strip away the partisanship in framing this debate.

In front of me is a stack of papers that represents the voices of those who reached out. Their voices need to be

heard and listened to. Today, I will share as many of their stories as time permits.

However, agreeing in principle and acting in concert are two different things. Acknowledging the benefit of publicly funded contraception while failing to make it universally accessible is contradictory.

The Ministry of Health highlighted earlier this week that existing programs provide six million Ontarians with contraception coverage, like OHIP+ and the Ontario Drug Benefit Program; this had deeply, deeply concerned me. The Ontario Drug Benefit Program is a seniors' drug program, as an example. Ontario provides support to some low-income and women and gender-diverse individuals 25 and under, but it leaves out millions and millions of women who would benefit from the removal of this barrier. Let's be honest: The fertility period lasts 30 years. I hope that those inflated statistics are not used in this discussion today, because at best, it is intentionally misleading, and at worst, it ignores the experience of women and gender-diverse individuals in Ontario.

If we acknowledge the utility of providing contraception to some individuals—as I know in this chamber we'll all do—logic and fairness dictate we extend this to all. What I'm proposing is not an immediate overhaul, but a beginning. Let's start with opening consultations. Listen to the voices of each individual that has reached out. It will help all of us understand why this move is reasonable, equitable, and above all, cost-effective. There is no valid argument, be it political, economic, social, or based on equity to oppose this initiative. British Columbia has done it. Manitoba has committed to it. It is time for Ontario to act and provide universal contraception as well.

I will now dedicate the rest of my time to sharing words of Ontarians who stand behind this cause:

Nicole Regehr, Gillian's Place women's shelter—these are the people who have written me: “On behalf of Gillian's Place, a Niagara organization providing emergency shelter and essential support services to victims of gender-based violence, I express my strong support for the provision of free contraception.” She goes on to say it's “a matter of reproductive rights but also a crucial aspect of addressing complex challenges faced by survivors of gender-based violence.”

Marlene Hamm, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses—we met with them this morning: “OAITH is in full support of ensuring access to contraception becomes a reality. No-cost contraception will give agency, reduce barriers and ensure affordability doesn't get in the way of our health and well-being.”

I've received many letters of support from provincial organizations, and I will not have time to read all of them for you, but from them all I have hand-picked a few that have been especially active in this study.

Coalition of Ontario's YWCAs: “A unique opportunity stands before the government of Ontario today to act collectively as elected officials to improve the lives of women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Ontario. A bill that will give access to women, girls and gender-diverse people to free contraception is a step toward ensuring

reproductive rights and self-determination.” I want to thank the Ontario YWCAs.

Co-executive director of Abbey House of Niagara Regional Native Centre—and I really want to read this fully out, because it really did touch my heart. The next three—I put them in order: “I am writing on behalf of the Niagara Regional Native Centre to support the motion for open and universal contraceptives. There is much need to have access to contraceptives, especially for victims of domestic and gender violence.

“I have worked with victims of domestic and gender-specific violence, where most of the time pregnancy is a result. Women should have an open access to contraceptives and the right to their own body. Access to prescription contraceptives should be acceptable at no cost and covered by health benefits.

1810

“I am hoping that this motion is supported in legislation because this is a fundamental right for women to have access to contraceptives at all times.

“Women should have a say in reproductive justice and this motion provides more than free access to contraceptives but also helps alleviate barriers and policy to health care for women and gender-diverse people for reproductive health issues.”

Many physicians wrote in, but this one from Dr. Nour Bakhache told a heartbreaking story—and I want you to listen up, because this is really heartbreaking. These people took the time to write in:

“I recently saw a young patient at risk of human sex trafficking by her abusive partner.

“Despite being under 20, she was not eligible for OHIP+ coverage as her partner had private insurance which provided her with private but not confidential coverage. Her ideal choice contraceptive was an IUD due to its confidential and reliable nature.

“However, she could not anonymously access drug coverage through her private insurance and she was not eligible for OHIP+ We did not have any available free IUDs” at the time. “She opted to pay out of pocket for birth control pills,” the cheapest option she had. “She’s at great risk of abuse and violence should her partner catch her taking these pills. I worry about her safety regularly. It was painful to know that the mere cost of her medications and the current patchwork of coverage put her in” very bad “harm’s way.”

Dr. Aubin and Dr. Snider also told compelling stories.

“I’ve seen countless pregnancies in women who could not afford contraception, who had to wait for their next paycheque to pick up an IUD, and became pregnant, in the interim, who are socially disadvantaged, and believe there is no option for them. The cost to these women is extraordinary, and the cost to the health care system of unintended pregnancies is enormous.”

I’m going to go on.

“I am OB/GYN in Ottawa and prescribe contraception medications frequently for a variety of reasons. There are many effective products that can vastly improve quality of life, and sometimes even save lives, but are not accessed

due to cost. I wholeheartedly support this call for contraception being covered under OHIP.

“It would make a tremendous difference—far less unintended pregnancy ... less work absenteeism due to heavy painful periods”—endometriosis as well—“and overall improved quality of life and tremendous saving of health dollars within two years of implementations.”

Madam Speaker, I have all kinds of letters from different people from all over Ontario, and anyone is welcome to come to my office to read them, but it’s a pretty big book.

I hope that this government stands up and really looks after the bill.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I stand in my place this evening to speak to private member’s motion 36. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, I’d firstly like to emphasize that the ministry has implemented programs and measures to address the issues presented in today’s motion. Our commitment to the well-being of Ontarians is unwavering, and we are taking significant steps to ensure everyone has access to essential health care services. Our focus remains on ensuring Ontarians are receiving the high-quality connected and convenient care they need.

I have received several emails from my constituents asking me to vote against this motion. They have expressed that we should be focusing on other areas of medical need like cancer care, cardiac treatments and more.

Je suis ici pour parler à la motion 36. En tant qu’adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé, je tiens à souligner que le ministère a déjà mis en place des programmes et des mesures pour aborder les problèmes présentés dans la motion de ce soir. Notre engagement envers le bien-être des Ontariens est inébranlable, et nous prenons des mesures importantes pour garantir à tous un accès aux services de santé essentiels.

Notre priorité demeure de veiller à ce que les Ontariens reçoivent les soins de santé connectés et pratiques de haute qualité dont ils ont besoin. J’ai reçu plusieurs courriels de résidents de ma circonscription me demandant de voter contre cette motion. Ils ont exprimé que nous devrions nous concentrer sur d’autres domaines de besoins médicaux, comme les soins contre le cancer, les traitements cardiaques, et plus encore.

Depuis 2018, notre gouvernement a augmenté les dépenses de santé de 14 milliards de dollars, avec des investissements records cette année atteignant 75,2 milliards de dollars. Nous avons lancé la plus grande campagne de recrutement de professionnels de la santé avec plusieurs programmes de l’histoire de la province. Cela inclut un plan décennal de capacité de main-d’oeuvre en santé pour nous assurer d’embaucher le personnel nécessaire au moment opportun. Notre gouvernement facilite déjà l’obtention de prescriptions pour les Ontariens, notamment pour la contraception. Les avancées récentes dans l’accès aux soins de santé ont été cruciales. Notre gouvernement a

élargi le champ de la prestation des soins, permettant aux sages-femmes qualifiées et aux infirmiers et infirmières autorisés de faciliter l'accès pratique aux prescriptions de contraception.

Notre gouvernement a annoncé le 6 novembre que « à partir de janvier 2024, l'inscription devrait s'ouvrir aux infirmiers et aux infirmières autorisées intéressés par l'achèvement des exigences supplémentaires en éducation pour travailler de manière plus autonome dans leurs milieux communautaires. À mesure que davantage d'infirmiers et infirmières autorisés complètent la formation, plus de personnes auront un accès plus rapide à la contraception. »

Nous savons que tous les Ontariens ne peuvent pas se permettre des médicaments. C'est pourquoi l'Ontario dispose de l'un des programmes les plus généreux au Canada. Notre province dispose de certains des programmes d'avantages pharmaceutiques les plus complets du Canada. Le Programme de médicaments de l'Ontario, le PMO, et l'assistance OHIP+ offrent une couverture substantielle pour les médicaments sur ordonnance aux résidents de l'Ontario, en particulier les Ontariens de moins de 25 ans qui ne sont pas couverts par des plans d'assurance privés.

Reconnaissant que tout le monde ne peut pas se permettre des médicaments, notre gouvernement a pris des mesures proactives pour apporter un soutien. Notre gouvernement propose six programmes de médicaments financés par l'État pour les Ontariens ayant besoin d'aide pour se procurer des médicaments essentiels, garantissant ainsi qu'ils puissent mener une vie plus saine.

Je vais passer mon temps à ma collègue, madame la Présidente, donc je voudrais bien finir avec : l'Ontario investit désormais près de 80 milliards de dollars dans les soins de santé chaque année. Nous abordons déjà ce à quoi cette motion fait référence et, avec mes électeurs qui m'ont écrit cette semaine, je suis contre la motion 36.

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

1820

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a real honour, and I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for bringing forward this motion to make sure that women have universal access to contraception that's covered by OHIP. This is an issue that we should be taking action on, and I'm really, really disappointed that the Conservatives have just said that they're not going to be supporting this motion. I think that's an attack on women's rights and women's reproductive freedom.

Jessica Bawden, nurse practitioner at Women's College Hospital, writes, "It saddens me to see women visit me for a termination because they could not afford to purchase birth control. I have several instances where women could not afford to purchase their OCP in order to put food on the table for their families. Countless studies have proven the health benefits of no-cost contraception—let's make it a Canadian reality."

Jessica, who works at a community health centre, says, "I work with lots of low-income, non-insured folks who have difficulty accessing contraception. Not surprisingly, this population also has a higher rate of unintended pregnancy. Being able to access no-cost contraception would increase accessibility to empower these folks to control their bodies and family plans of their own accord."

Amanda Black, the president of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, writes, "The direct cost of unintended pregnancy in Canada is \$320 million per year and does not factor in longer downstream costs to the individual and society. Cost modelling has demonstrated that it costs less to provide free contraception for everyone than it does to pay for unintended pregnancies."

I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for pushing for free, OHIP-covered access to contraception for everyone, because every woman should have access to contraception, regardless of their ability to pay.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to rise to follow my co-parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health to speak on this private member's motion today. Our government continues to work to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the health care that they need, when and where they need it, and that includes contraception.

For example, the Ontario Drug Benefit Program provides prescription drug coverage to eligible Ontario residents with approximately 5,000 drug products available to eligible Ontarians, including many commonly used prescription birth control products, as well as over 1,000 additional drug products upon meeting specified criteria through the program's exceptional access program. Through the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, Ontario has invested over \$60 million on contraceptives for, for example, fiscal year 2021-22, and this program currently provides coverage for 85 drug identification numbers for prescription contraceptives as a general benefit. With almost half of all Ontarians covered under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program—approximately six million Ontarians—this program is ensuring that Ontarians get the health care they need, when they need it.

Our government offers six publicly funded drug programs for Ontarians who need help getting the medications they need to live a healthy life, and OHIP+ assistance is available to Ontarians 25 years of age or younger who are not covered by a private insurance plan.

As announced in budget 2022, Ontario will continue to work with key stakeholders, subject matter experts and federal, provincial and territorial partners to identify additional initiatives to achieve long-term sustainability of public drug programs. We are continuing to work to reduce barriers for Ontarians to access health services, and that includes getting the prescriptions they need, such as birth control.

Earlier this month, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health announced that our government is expanding the role of registered nurses to prescribe and administer more medications, including contraception. Expanding the scope of practice will connect Ontarians to faster and easier access to care, while helping to reduce wait times at our community clinics and hospitals.

As part of our Your Health plan, the province is making it easier for regulated health professionals to work to the full extent of their training and expertise to provide patients with a more connected and convenient health care experience. This scope of practice expansion for registered nurses, which was warmly received, builds on our announcement at the start of the year that pharmacists can prescribe for common medical ailments. I'm proud to say that pharmacists have completed more than 530,000 assessments for common ailments across 4,500 pharmacies, representing 92% of pharmacies in Ontario.

Our government is making great strides to support women's health, including our recent announcement that Ontario is connecting more women to breast cancer screening earlier by lowering the age of eligibility to receive publicly funded mammograms to include those aged 40 to 49. This historic expansion will help more than 305,000 women connect to important screening services that will help to detect and treat breast cancer sooner. This is a true game-changer.

The Ministry of Health is also working with Ontario Health to include HPV testing as part of the Ontario cervical screening program. This is a multi-year transition that will ensure Ontarians have access to the most effective cervical screening test based on the best scientific evidence available, and it is aligned with the World Health Organization and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer action plans to eliminate cervical cancer. As part of the transition to HPV testing, the ministry is procuring the test system and laboratory partners to perform HPV testing, as well as the evidence-based recommendations for cervical screening and colposcopy.

I see that my time is running out. I just want to say that education and communication outreach to our health care providers who perform those kinds of screens is going through this transition. It's very important. We want to work to support women and families with all of these announcements and all the things we're doing to support midwifery and cancer screening across the board and for contraception, and that's why we make it available. Even in many public health units, you can get birth control pills, for example, free of charge.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Your neighbour. Thank you, Speaker, and thanks, most importantly, to my friend from St. Catharines for your leadership in putting this on the floor for debate. Thank you.

I also want to begin by thanking two incredible residents of our city: Dr. Amanda Black and Dr. Vivian Tam, both of whom have been leading the fight on this for a very long

time. Both of them have pointed out in research shared with me that this should be a no-brainer, that this could save the province a significant amount of money, and that polls indicate across partisan stripes that 83% of Canadians approve of free prescription birth control access across Canada. Seven out of 10 feel it to be urgent.

The question I think we should ask is—and I'll take my time this evening to think about it—why are we hearing government members stand in the House this evening and opposing this measure? Who are the neighbours contacting the member from Newmarket–Aurora saying that this shouldn't be a priority and that we have to somehow trade it off for cancer care? Why are we even thinking that way?

Well, I know for a fact, Speaker, because we have some pretty intrepid researchers back home and they follow the activities of anti-choice organizations that do not want women to have safe reproductive health. These organizations increasingly are targeting governments who are providing access to universal contraception. And what do they say? They say it is unchristian to prevent the meeting of the sperm and the egg. They say it is tantamount to violence to have state-sponsored contraception.

I know there is a member of this House, the member from Niagara West, who once stood in a rally outside this building and said it was his objective as a legislator to make abortion unthinkable in our lifetime. Those were the words from the member for Niagara West outside this building, unsanctioned by this party opposite.

I want to ask the government members seriously tonight: When you have the evidence in front of you, why aren't you acting for women's safety, and who are you listening to?

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague the member for St. Catharines for bringing forward this motion. I just wanted to share a story. This was in the CBC in December 2022, a story about a teenage girl in Chatham-Kent who went to the health unit looking for birth control. She was asked if she had access to private insurance. She said yes, she did, but she didn't want her parents to know that she planned on being sexually active, and one can understand that there would be a lot of young people who might be in that same situation. So OHIP+ is not working for those young people who don't want their contraceptive devices or pills or prescriptions to go through their parents' private insurance plan.

1830

Anyways, she was told by the health unit that she would have to pay for birth control pills—\$10 a pack, which she couldn't afford. Now, I know that many health units like Middlesex-London Health Unit offer low-cost contraception, often will give it for free for people who can't afford it, but the cost is prohibitive. You think of a 26-year-old woman who is not eligible for OHIP+, graduated with a huge student debt and is looking at a cost of \$350 from the health unit for an IUS or \$335 from the health unit—we have an affordability crisis. That is a huge barrier to reproductive choice for those women.

Speaker, \$1 invested in universal contraception saves up to \$9 in health care costs associated with unwanted pregnancies. The province of BC understands this. The province of Manitoba understands this. My question is, why doesn't Ontario?

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for bringing forward this private member's bill to make prescription contraception, in other words, the forms of contraception used by women, available under OHIP.

The Minister of Health spoke this morning about OHIP-covered contraception for women 25 years old and younger, but as the member from St. Catharines so eloquently stated, women are fertile for at least 30 years, far more than the years covered by the OHIP+ program.

The Minister of Health also spoke about access to contraception for those with low incomes under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, also called Trillium. But let's be real: To access Trillium, you need to know about the program, have filed your income taxes, have the language skills to fill out the application and, on top of that, there are deductibles. You have to pay up front and then wait for a refund to arrive. It's a limited fix that leaves many women behind, especially women caught in situations of abuse and sex trafficking. And what about the women living in tents and shelters right now?

What is baffling is that offering contraception under OHIP would provide much larger cost savings to health care. This government appears to be locked in an ideological loop completely divorced from reality. Whether a woman seeks to terminate a pregnancy or carry a pregnancy to term but is unable to support a child, the costs of unwanted pregnancy on a personal and societal level is enormous.

It's hard to accept that in 2023, women—all women—do not have access to contraception in Ontario when it is available in other provinces. This is a matter of equality, but it's also simple economics: spend a little now to save a lot of money down the road.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre in support of this motion tabled by my colleague and friend the member for St. Catharines—a motion to provide universal access to comprehensive birth control for all Ontarians regardless of age as well as income.

I want to speak to this particular intersection, one that has not been spoken about at great length today, and that is about making sure that comprehensive health care support is extended to survivors and victims of human sex trafficking. Extending OHIP coverage to encompass comprehensive birth control for these individuals is truly one critical step in restoring personal agency and dignity to those who have faced unimaginable hardships, their lives often marred by coercion, exploitation and the loss of

control over their own bodies. They endure profound trauma and have been thrust into situations where access to basic health care, let alone reproductive health care, is severely limited or non-existent.

Access to birth control offers them a measure of control over their reproductive health, enabling them to make informed choices, again, and somehow gain some small sense of control over their bodies and their futures.

Offering comprehensive health care, including birth control, is pivotal in preventing revictimization. By providing access to contraceptives, we empower survivors to avoid the unwanted pregnancies that could potentially trap them in cycles of abuse and exploitation for years to come.

By dismantling those barriers in access to contraception in Ontario and following in the footsteps of British Columbia and Manitoba, we are not only levelling the playing field, but we are now allowing those individuals to select the contraceptive methods, with their health care providers, that best suit their needs.

Speaker, I'm so disappointed to hear that the Conservative government is not supporting this simple motion. It is clearly something that women and gender-diverse people in this province are asking for. They deserve better. I hope the Conservatives will actually reflect upon that and reverse their decision.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I want to congratulate and thank the member from St. Catharines for bringing this forward. I didn't know about her motion until I was in a scrum the other day, and in the middle of all the questions about things like Ontario Place, this question popped up. It caught me by surprise, so it took me a couple of seconds to answer, because I wanted to think about it. I simply said, "Yes." The media said, "Well, can you explain why?" So I said, "Well, first of all, it's 2023—and of all we know about women's health." I think it's the right thing to do for women, and it's the right thing to do for families. There is an affordability crisis right now. That should add more pressure on us to do things like that—this, in particular.

I listened to the debate. The parliamentary assistant, who I have a lot of respect for, said there are six million people under ODB; well, probably three million, maybe 2.5 million, are over 65, and the rest are on assistance. So what about the people between 25 and 65—45, 50? What about people who are just struggling to put food on the table or pay their rent because we've lost real rent control in this province? What are we doing for them? How are we helping them? This is something that is basic, straightforward.

I heard the PA talk about OHIP+. Well, there's a problem with OHIP+ too: Not everybody knows about it. That's a surprise, eh? I know of some pharmacies where people go to get their prescription with their kids, and the pharmacy charges them the on-the-barrel price because they don't have a private insurance policy. I have a physician friend who pointed that out to me—that it happened to him on more than one occasion. They charge

the on-the-barrel price, the most expensive price, and don't say to them, "You're on OHIP+, so you pay a lower price—it's a lower price, but you don't have to pay at all." There's a problem with people knowing about OHIP+.

So when you're talking about contraception for under-25-year-olds—I think this government has to do a better job not only for under-25-year-olds for contraception, but all drugs, and for kids.

This is a motion, and what it's saying is, we should intentionally move towards this thing, so to hear the government kind of reject it outright by making arguments that say—"Well, there are six million people on ODB, for whom half it wouldn't do any good" is not a logical argument. So I just would encourage the government to look at this motion and take it for the spirit that it's in, which is, there are people out there, there are women out there, there are families out there who need help with contraception. They need to have their costs taken away because they're having a hard time just paying the bills. There are a whole bunch of people stuck in that spot. So if you don't want to do it all the way, just do something—move, intentionally, in the right direction, and the first step in doing that is passing this motion, which says we're going to do something about this.

I thought I heard the minister make some positive noise in the media about this. Is that correct? I think it is. So why would you vote against the motion? Why can't we just all agree that making sure that women and families have access to contraception that they need free of charge is something we can all agree on? Maybe we don't get perfection, but maybe we move intentionally in the right direction, which is the right thing for us to do for all of our families, for all of the families in this province, and because it's 2023.

1840

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, nous avons l'opportunité de rendre la contraception universelle et accessible à tous. Les soins de santé sont un droit fondamental, et l'accès équitable à la contraception est un élément essentiel pour un grand nombre de personnes. Avec cette motion, nous allons aider à réduire les obstacles financiers à la contraception et aider les gens à faire des choix concernant leur corps et leur vie.

La députée de St. Catharines a présenté cette motion le jour de la journée mondiale de la femme. Aujourd'hui, elle a lu des témoignages signés par des centaines de femmes qui ont écrit pour soutenir cette motion. Des femmes nous écrivent pour dire qu'elles sont forcées de choisir entre payer leur loyer ou acheter la contraception parce que le coût de la vie est tellement inabordable aujourd'hui. Cette motion est une façon facile d'avoir un accès immédiat et durable.

Je demande aux membres du Parti conservateur de soutenir cette motion et de l'adopter. Les six premiers mois du programme de contraception universelle en Colombie-Britannique ont mené des milliers de personnes, la plupart âgées entre 20 et 29 ans, à bénéficier d'une contraception

universelle à travers leur plan de soins de santé. Nous avons une opportunité aujourd'hui de faire la même chose, de rendre un pas de plus vers l'équité des femmes.

C'est tout ce qu'on vous demande. On sait qu'il y a beaucoup de personnes qui ne sont pas capables d'avoir accès à la contraception à cause du prix. C'est aussi simple que ça. Elles savent qu'elles en ont besoin et elles savent qu'elles doivent les utiliser, mais elles ne sont pas capables d'y avoir accès à cause du prix. Aujourd'hui, on peut sauver de l'argent pour le système de santé, on peut sauver de l'argent pour la province de l'Ontario et rendre la contraception accessible à tous.

J'espère que vous allez voter en faveur.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Okay. You have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Well, thank you, Speaker.

In discussion with Canada's top researchers, including academic and medical leaders, these insights were invaluable. Professor Wendy Norman of the Contraception and Abortion Research Team, crucial to the CART analysis influencing British Columbia's policy, shared a compelling point: "In all our models, excluding groups from contraception coverage led to higher government costs for pregnancy management than savings on contraceptives. It's more cost-effective to provide universal coverage." This highlights a vital truth: partial coverage perpetuates inequality and inefficiencies. A comprehensive approach is not only fairer but more economical for our health system, and at the same time promotes gender equity.

Time constraints prevent me from sharing every supportive letter and story from front-line workers and individuals, but the ministry has the means to review them. We understand the benefits of universal contraception, its cost-effectiveness, health improvements and significance for gender equality. It is time to progress this debate to action in Ontario. Madam Speaker, let us move past the partisan rhetoric. This policy's positive impact is clear and multi-faceted. The burden of the cost of pregnancy disproportionately impacting women and gender-diverse groups does not stop at your 25th birthday, as the government has stated. We can follow the lead of British Columbia and Manitoba. Let us make universal contraception a priority right here in Canada. Together, we can make meaningful changes and we can move mountains to help.

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

Mrs. Stevens has moved private member's notice of motion number 68. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

1850

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AFFORDABLE HOMES AND GOOD JOBS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR DES LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES ET DE BONS EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur les redevances d'aménagement et la Loi de 2023 sur la modification des limites territoriales entre St. Thomas et Central Elgin.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm pleased to be here. I am the member from University-Rosedale; the university helps me get elected. It's very good to be here on a Wednesday evening at a quarter to 7. Hello, friends; hello, colleagues.

I'm proud to be here to speak to Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. I love the government's use of headlines; I always have—and this is another one. It is true that sometimes there is a difference between what the headline says and what the bill means, and I'm going to be getting into a little bit of that tonight. But I think it's very safe to say that we certainly are in a housing affordability crisis and a housing supply shortage today. We are certainly in that today, and our office—like I'm sure many of your offices—frequently receives calls and emails and letters from people who are really struggling with the high cost of rent, who can't find a home, who have a home that doesn't meet their needs—it's too small; maybe they're sharing with another family; maybe it's not properly maintained. It's pretty common. And there are many people who call and they have just completely given up on the dream of buying a home.

Just before I came here, we organized a tenant social at Knox church at Spadina and Harbord. I was talking to one of the staff there, Anna, and she talked about how she's given up on the dream of home ownership. She's like, "I can't see it. I always imagined it would be something for me." She's an actor; she works part-time, and just the idea of living in the city and buying a home has gone up in smoke. The dream has gone up in smoke for a lot of people: for a lot of newcomers, for a lot of people in their twenties and thirties and sometimes forties. It's very difficult.

I want to start off by reading some recent letters about some recent issues that have come up in our riding. The first one that I want to read is from an individual, Mary, and her husband, Curtis. This is pretty typical, okay?

Mary is a medical device reprocessing technician. She works in the health care sector. Her husband also works

full-time, in shipping and receiving—he's a specialist. In her words, they make "good money." They are also homeless, and they are homeless with three children because they just got evicted. They "have called every resource for help and all shelters are full." They cannot find a home that works for them. In their view, they feel that some landlords do discriminate against large families, and so they are not able to get a home, even though, in their case, they can pay the rent. They have called the mayor, city hall, every local church, Salvation Army, family shelters, and they do not know what to do. She fears that she is going to lose custody of her children, which happens when you are homeless, because she was evicted.

That's a pretty hard email to read, and I sincerely hope that Mary and Curtis find a home.

This is also something that happened fairly recently in our riding. It was the encampment. We have an encampment at St. Stephen's on College Street and Brunswick Avenue. There's an encampment that's been there for quite a while. There are people there—it's right next to a church; it's on city property—who have had hard lives. They have had hard lives, and they need a lot of help and support to get their lives back. They need permanent supportive housing, and they need wraparound supports, and, unfortunately, that's not available. That shelter was cleared over the past few days. It started last Friday, and there were a lot of people that were very unhappy about that, including the residents, because they don't have anywhere to go.

If you look at the city of Toronto shelter availability—I frequently check it out—most shelters in the city of Toronto, and I think you'll find that's the case in most of your ridings as well, are full. They're at 99% capacity. They're at 100% capacity. There's nowhere for these people to go, and if they do find a place, if they are offered a place—because the city says, "We'll offer you a place"—what they get is so far from what they need to get their lives in order. One individual was offered a hotel in Scarborough, away from their friends, their family, their support network, their caseworker, the people they see, and they're not provided with any certainty of how long they're going to be staying in that hotel—maybe three weeks. That's not permanent housing. That's not supportive housing. That's pretty typical of what's happening in my riding, and I'm sure it's happening in a lot of your ridings today too.

Here's another one—it's daily that it comes out. This is a new study that came out, and it looked at the number of people who are going to emergency rooms—people who are homeless—because they just want a safe place to stay warm. So these researchers collected data from hospitals all across Ontario—this is not just a Toronto problem—and they found that across the board, non-urgent emergency department visits among people who are homeless has increased by 24% across the province.

An emergency room is not where someone should go if they are cold and homeless and just want a warm place to sit for the night. That's not where they should be going, but they are going because there is nowhere else for them to go. In Toronto, it's gone up by 68%. Toronto residents

know this. They can see it. We can see the homelessness crisis and the housing crisis every day.

I just wanted to give you a snapshot of some recent things that have happened in University–Rosedale, in this riding, that really gets to the heart of what is wrong with our housing sector today. Shelters are full. There are too many homeless people, with no home, across Ontario.

We are seeing rents at record highs. CMHC just came out with a new study looking at how much average rent has gone up in the last few years. It's gone up 16%. And we're not talking average available market rent for new units, we're talking average rent across the board, affecting all tenants: people who are in rent-controlled homes and people who have just moved here in a non-rent-controlled home. It's gone up 16%, but wages haven't gone up 16%, and that's why people are really struggling. It is a huge concern. I'm always shocked when I see how much rent has gone up in Toronto. To now rent a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto, the available rent, it's \$2,500. That's a lot. That is so much money. You probably need to be earning about \$80,000 a year just to make that work. That is a one-bedroom apartment. Who is going to have children in a city as expensive as this? You're like, "Wow, this city is not made for me anymore." That is a huge, huge, huge problem.

I've been following what the Conservatives have been doing on housing for the last five years, and housing has never been more expensive to rent or buy in Ontario. This government—you've been in power for five years now. So my hope is that you look at what you are doing and you're saying, "Things need to change." I know we're really fixated on the supply piece—good; I'm all for it; let's build. But that, in itself, is clearly not going to solve our housing affordability crisis. It's just not. Even the building sector tells us that, and that's just the reality of it. A new purpose-built rental retails—in a nice building near the University of Toronto, you can get a two-bedroom for about \$4,000 a month in a new purpose-built rental. There's not a chance that that purpose-built rental is going to go down to \$2,000 a month because we build a whole lot of new homes. It's just not going to happen. We need supply and we need to address affordability. They are twin problems, and we need solutions for both.

Now we get this bill, Bill 134, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the St. Thomas–Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, 2023. Every time I open up one of the government's bills, I always get a little excited, because I'm like: Okay, maybe there will be something good in here. When I look at this bill, it's not so bad. It's not so bad. I mean, the standard is low, but it's not so bad. So I'm going to summarize the bill.

It's a very slim, little bill—very slim. It came on the backs of the greenbelt scandal, where the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner and reporters everywhere revealed the facts. And the facts are that developers talked to the Conservatives. They bought land on the cheap that was zoned for farmland and then, miraculously, that land was then suddenly rezoned for development. The Conservatives reversed their repeated promises that they weren't

going to open up the greenbelt, but meanwhile, they gave these developers an \$8.5-billion opportunity to build very expensive homes on land that is not serviced. What we're finding now is that a lot of them weren't even planning to build, they're just going to resell it, because that's where you make the most money. My thinking is that this bill was partly to just kind of change the channel a bit.

So there's two pieces: The first one, schedule 1, makes changes to the Development Charges Act and redefines what kind of affordable home a developer needs to rent out or sell the home at in order to be exempt from development charges. That's the concept. The idea is that basically a developer has two options: You can have a home that is rented out at 60% of a household rental income in that area, where that household income spends about 30% of their income on the rent. So it's very technical. And then the other piece is around sale price. So you can be exempt from development charges if you sell a home for 90% of the average sale price in that area. That's pretty complicated.

What I want to start off with is by giving a bit of an understanding of what that actually means in real life. What does that actually mean for people who rent? I'm going to find the little report here. I asked the Conservatives for this data, but you were like, "Yes, yes. I'll give it you," but in the end, you never did. I asked a few times. I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in committee; I didn't get it. I asked the committee, I asked the ministry; I didn't get it. But then we had someone come into committee and do the number-crunching for us. I'm going to spend a minute finding that report now so people understand what it is.

They have these little tables at the back. What is an affordable rental unit? I thought you might like to know this information too, Conservative members that are here. For the 60th percentile of renters living in Toronto, for you to move into one of these affordable rental units, you need to be earning a household income of—let's see here—\$84,500. If you have a household income of \$84,500, you would typically be eligible to move into these affordable units that are going to be built—\$84,000. That does not include low-income people. It does not include the thousands of people that are on social housing wait-lists in municipalities all across Ontario. It doesn't include moderate-income people. It doesn't include people on minimum wage. It includes people with household incomes in the city of Toronto of \$84,500. Okay, so we're talking middle-income people.

1900

Unfortunately, when you go down and look at the prices for other municipalities, you don't see a big amount of difference. If you go to Durham, these homes would be affordable for households that earn about \$81,800. It's a lot of money, so they're not that affordable. They're affordable for middle-income people.

If you live in—let's see here—Peel, it's a household income of \$92,000. It's surprising that we need to rely on stakeholders to get this information, but that's what we had to do. For the county of Northumberland, we've got

\$85,100 that you need to earn. For the city of Brantford, \$69,000—okay, a little less; for Algoma district, \$59,000.

So it's a lot. My point is, it's a lot. It's a lot of money. There are a lot of people who would assume that these affordable homes that are going to be built would be for them, but, in reality, it's not that simple. So that's what it is for affordable rental.

Then when you look for affordable sales prices—this is where a developer built a home and then sells it for 90% of the average market price, and they get a big development fee exemption for that, okay? I just want to have a little look at what those homes prices are going to sell for to be eligible, so you will know what they are. In the city of Toronto, if the home sells—this is, yes, city of Toronto, 10%—\$1,031,800, okay? Ten per cent less of the average sale price—that's what it is in the city of Toronto. That's not affordable. In Durham, it's \$803,000 that the home would have to sell for, at 10% less than the average purchase price—not affordable. For York, it's \$1,143,900.

It's not affordable. That's the reality of it. It's not affordable. Hopefully I'll get a question on that. Maybe when you speak, I can ask you a question on that. Maybe that will be a more realistic way for how—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: You know, I've got to be helpful.

Okay, so that's essentially it. I'm going to go into more detail about the affordability piece, but the other piece around this bill is changes to the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, essentially to allow the city of St. Thomas to provide additional support, grants, aid to the new battery power plant that is going to be sited there. That's a good thing; we support it. Good. I'm not going to be spending a lot of time on that. It's a good thing that that's there.

All right now let's get back into the affordable housing definition. The next thing I'm going to do is I'm going to spend a bit of time reading some of the submissions that people gave. We didn't have a lot of stakeholders come in and present, but the information they shared was really telling. It was really telling. So I'm going to summarize a little bit of that.

The first one I'm going to read is from Ontario for All. Sean Meagher came in. He's the coordinator for this organization. It brings together hundreds of non-profits across the GTA to help inform public policy from a front-line perspective.

I have a lot of respect for Sean Meagher. He's been a leader in the work to bring about inclusionary zoning in the city of Toronto and in other municipalities. He has a lot of expertise when it comes to thinking through, how can we make sure that cities pay their fair share to build affordable housing and buy affordable housing, and how can we make it economical for developers to also pay their fair share towards constructing affordable housing? It makes a lot of sense to me.

This is his summary:

“This bill rightly recognizes that to make housing affordable, it needs to be something that falls within a manageable share of the incomes that people have. That

doesn't seem like a big step, and it is worth taking, but it's not one virtually any governments in this province have taken before now. Right now, with the current definitions, housing is deemed 'affordable' even when it is not something that the majority of Ontarians can actually afford. Housing based on market rates doesn't tell us what is affordable. It just tells us what is the least expensive. Those are, in the current overheated market, far from the same thing.

“The average 2022 market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Ontario was \$1,350 a month. A single person with one income, on average in Ontario, earns enough to pay about \$900 a month for rent. That puts an 'affordable' one-bedroom apartment, under the current definition, 50% higher than what most individuals can pay.”

Now he's digging into this bill a bit: “While this bill retains the market-based tool for setting the affordability rate, it wisely”—and I agree with Sean here—“allows that to be overridden by an income-based rate where the latter is lower.” When I was reading out the household incomes, that's the income-based rate that I was referring to. “An income-based definition is more appropriate”—I agree—“more accurate and frankly quite common all across North America.” In fact, it used to be the definition that was used here in Ontario until you folks brought in Bill 23, the mega-bill—not sure if you remember it; I certainly do, and I lost a lot of sleep over that one—where you changed the definition so it was just based on market rent and market rates. But, goodness me, you've seen the light—greenbelt, greenbelt—and now you're moving back to a definition that's income or market rate, whatever is lower. But, as I've explained to you, it's not really affordable. All right, I'm going to go on.

“Unfortunately, Bill 134 takes some shortcuts in creating an income-based affordability definition that creates some serious problems.”

So the reason I'm reading this—I know we're in third reading. We introduced a lot of nice amendments. We explained them, I thought, pretty well. You didn't accept them, but I am always hopeful when I read these things out that a future bill—like the new housing supply bill you're going to bring next year—will include some of these changes. Because I have found, over time, we suggest some things, municipalities suggest some things—you ignore us during the bill process. I get it. You need to stand strong. You're right; we're wrong. But then, later on, I do see some positive developments in future bills. So I am hopeful, and I'm going to spend a bit of time reading that now.

“The bill bases the 'affordable' income-based rent rates on all renter incomes. This will set a rate that is too high for smaller households to pay. There is a wide gap in incomes among renters, and that will create two distinct problems for this policy.

“First, no one who needs a bachelor apartment, or a one-bedroom, will be able to afford an 'affordable unit' based on all renter household incomes”—because they earn less. If you live in a bachelor apartment, you're earning a lot less on average than someone who lives in a

two-bedroom apartment or a three-bedroom apartment. But this bill lumps all renter household incomes together. So they're saying that's going to create a problem; it's going to create a problem. "The average renter income in Toronto, for example, is about \$50,000. The average income for individuals living alone is about \$42,000 per year"—so it's less—"so what they can afford to pay will fall 20% below an 'affordable' rent set according to the income of all renter households combined." It's a good point.

The second thing: "If we use a rent rate based on all renter incomes, no developer will build larger affordable units." That's what the market needs. We need more two-bedroom units and three-bedroom units that are more family-friendly in size—we're talking 1,100 to 1,400 square feet—because that's what's missing in our housing market. What's also missing in our housing market is more student housing, housing for people who want to downsize, that can't live in their single-family home anymore. They want to find an accessible place with transit and services, but they can't find a place. There's these key areas within our housing sector and our housing supply shortage which really need to be targeted, and what Sean Meagher is saying here is that this affordable housing definition—it might not create the kind of housing, the affordable housing that we need. "A rent that is based on the income of all households will be far lower than what a family of four would expect to pay. Multi-bedroom affordable apartments, already the hardest to finance, will get harder than ever to build under Bill 134." It just doesn't pencil.

Those are some of his issues and this is another one: "Equally problematic is the fact that the bill only proposes to make homes affordable to renter households in the 60th percentile of income"—some \$80,000 in Toronto, for example. "That means it will define 'affordability' at a level that is not affordable for 59% of Ontario renters. Making 'affordable' something most households can't afford is a bad idea. More importantly, it misses the core of the issue. The vast majority of households that are struggling with affordability are households whose incomes fall below the 60th percentile." So if you're earning \$80,000 a year, you're more likely to be able to find a rental home than somebody who's earning \$40,000. That makes sense.

1910

"Setting affordability at a level that will fail to address the challenges of most people in core housing need means the legislation will necessarily fail to achieve its primary goal. Incomes used to set affordable rents should certainly not be above the 50th percentile." This is a modest ask: Take it down from 60 to 50. We're trying to be realistic here. "To get at the heart of the housing crisis, they should, in fact, be set lower."

This is the third point, which I think is really useful too: "Under the draft legislation, there is no objective measure used to set rents. The minister decides what the 60th percentile is 'in the minister's opinion'"—that's the language in the law—"with few real constraints on how the

minister forms that opinion. It's not the CMHC, StatsCan or an independent demographic body—it's a political decision. Evidence-based public policy doesn't allow politicians to decide what the key stats are. The income used to set rents should be set by an objective, independent third party."

They have really good points. I think they are really useful points that Sean Meagher from Ontario for All brought up. Maybe I'll get some questions on that.

I also want to bring up a summary from Watson and Associates Economists. They came in. They are land economists, so this is their speciality, and they work with municipalities, so it's pretty clear they had a lot of experience on this issue. I think everyone in committee was pretty impressed and pretty interested in what they had to say, from all parties. That was my assessment. They had similar things to say to Sean Meagher from Ontario for All, and I'm going to read out a few of them.

One thing they pointed out—they're the ones who did that deep dive, looking at CMHC data and StatsCan data to give an estimate of how much these affordable homes would actually be rented for or sold for, so they actually made that effort to present that table, and then they also did a bit of a deep dive and they found some interesting things which concern me. They found, "The rent at which a residential unit would be considered affordable is higher under the Bill 134 proposal," compared to the current affordable housing definition—I'm assuming that's the one that's in Bill 23.

In Bill 23, you came up with a definition of affordability that would allow developers to get the developer fee exemption. That was tied to market rent. It had to be 80% of average market rent. So you listened to stakeholders and you came up with this new definition that said it could be based on income or it could be based on 100% of average market rent, whatever is lower. I'm assuming you were saying this is a good thing.

These guys did the number crunching, and they said, "Actually, in some cases it will lead to a definition of affordability that's worse than what we got with Bill 23," and then they went into detail to explain why. I highly recommend you read this stakeholder submission, because they made the effort to do the government's work and look at what this affordable housing definition will actually mean for Ontarians: How much can they buy a house for? How much can they pay to rent an affordable home.

They found that for affordable homes that are going to be sold, it works; Bill 134 is a better definition. But when you're looking at affordable homes that are going to be rented, Bill 23 actually has a better definition and the homes will be more affordable, so that's a concern. And then they also brought up similar concerns to what Ontario for All had around this government not factoring in unit size or the average household rental income for people who typically live in that unit size. It was very thoughtful stuff. I really enjoyed reading it, and I'll make sure to send it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, so he can take a look as well, because, my goodness me, he has a lot of power over this issue right now.

I didn't actually print out this stakeholder submission, but I found it very interesting, and I encourage you to look at it and read it in Hansard. We had a bunch of people come in and say the definition of affordability isn't going to work because the vast majority of people who need affordable housing are not going to be able to afford the rent or the sale price. But then we also had the Ontario Home Builders' Association come in, and they had a very different story to tell. Their story is that developers are not going to be building these affordable homes because the numbers don't work out for them. Literally, it is cheaper for them to just build for-profit homes and sell them for the going market rate or rent them out at the going rental rate—they will make more profit doing that than they will if they apply for the developer fee exemption and work to build affordable housing. They're literally not going to build the homes. They basically said that.

So you've got this situation where this bill is caught between a rock and a hard place, where you've got housing advocates saying these homes are going to be too expensive, and then you've got the development sector saying, "We're not going to be building these homes because the profit margin doesn't work for us. So we're not going to be building them." "There's not going to be a lot of uptake" were their exact words. That's a concern, and it's a concern because—well, who is this bill for and what is this bill going to achieve if the homes aren't going to be affordable and then the development sector is saying they're not going to build them? Maybe this is part of a big grand plan, I don't know, but the take-home message I got from committee is that this bill isn't going to work, the bit around the development fees and the affordable housing. So that was a concern, and it was quite eye-opening to hear.

I want to talk a little bit about what we did in committee and what amendments we introduced—and we introduced quite a few, unsurprisingly, because we wanted to make this bill as good as possible. So did the MPP for Beaches—East York. She got busy too, which is good to hear. We introduced a bunch of amendments. I'm going to go through them in turn. And this legislation is already written out, so if you feel like, in the goodness of your heart—or you just want to help Ontarians, you can take this legislation and insert it into your own bills. We don't need the credit for it; we just want to see it implemented. That would be lovely.

The first thing we did in committee is we introduced this amendment that would lower the average market rent from 100% of average market rent—we wanted it lowered to 80% of average market rent; basically, bringing in a definition of affordability, a reasonable definition of affordability, that meant that the homes that were going to be built were going to be more affordable for a greater percentage of renters—moderate-income renters, minimum wage renters. The government unfortunately rejected that motion. I think it was pretty sensible, and also, what was so interesting—wow—is that that was the definition of affordable rental in Bill 23. Huh, isn't that

weird? I thought we were being so modest, but they didn't say yes to that.

Then we introduced a motion—oh, I love this one—around who gets the units that are being built. Who gets the units if they get built? And I'll explain with a little bit of a story.

What's happening in the city of Toronto is there have been some—not many, but some—big projects that have been built where there's been a percentage of affordable homes that have been created in that development. The example that's in my riding is what's happening at the Honest Ed's site. That's the Bathurst and Bloor corner. There's a bunch of big towers going up. It's about 1,000 purpose-built rental units, and I think there's about 97 of those units that are going to be affordable rental. Those units were paid for by the municipality and the federal government. They gave the developer—Westbank, I believe—a lot of money to set aside these units to be affordable for a period of time. Okay. There has been some quiet analysis done indicating that the federal government actually gave Westbank more investment for those affordable homes than was needed for those homes to be built, but that's what we got.

1920

But then the question is, who actually gets to move into these homes, and who gets to decide? How this bill is currently written and what's actually happening in the city of Toronto is that the developer gets to decide. We were actually following Honest Ed's process—the new development—pretty closely, because there were some people in our riding who wanted to move into these affordable housing units. You had to be very Internet-savvy, put little reminders in your calendar each week to check, email the developer to find out when the process was going to be opened up, patiently wait and then apply when the application process opened.

It wasn't advertised; we just knew about it because I walked by the building all the time. We don't even know who got those units. It was not very transparent. We just don't know who got them. Someone got them, but we don't know who. Was it fair? I hope so; I'm assuming it was. But there's no oversight. There's just no oversight. And municipalities are asking for this oversight.

We contacted the city of Toronto, we contacted municipalities, and we said, "Hey, if this bill passes, I'm not sure if it will, but it might stimulate the construction of more affordable purpose-built rental. Do you want to have some say over the process that's used to determine who gets to move into these homes to ensure that people who are most in need, maybe people who have been waiting the longest, maybe people who have accessibility challenges or seniors or single parents"—I'm not sure, but the city has processes to determine need. "Do you want to have some oversight over that process?" And the city was like, "Yes, we do want to have some oversight over that process because it's not transparent right now."

So we introduced an amendment, a very reasonable one, saying any municipality needs to have oversight over what process is used to determine who gets into these units

to make sure it's fair, if they have one. It's free, free, free. It doesn't cost you anything. It's free. You might call it red tape; I don't know. I actually think it's pretty good for you guys. I wouldn't call it red tape.

You guys rejected it, and that's a pity because this is going to become an issue and municipalities are going to want the authority to make sure the process is fair. You voted that down, but I am hopeful because it's free.

Okay, so then we introduced this other amendment, and this is to change the definition of affordability for sale price to make it 80% of average sale price instead of 90% of average sale price. This is a pretty modest ask. It's a pretty modest ask, and the government, unfortunately, turned that down. I read out some of the definitions of what affordable sale prices would be and I'm just going to do it again. In Toronto, according to this government, a home that sells for \$1,031,800 is affordable; in Muskoka, \$828,700—affordable; in Simcoe, \$712,300—affordable; and in York, \$1,143,900—affordable.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Wow.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Right? That's expensive. Yes, that's expensive. And developers get a development fee exemption, so it's not just like they—they get a development fee exemption. I'm going to just spend a little bit of time going through the development charges because there's a lot of talk about developer fees, development charges.

These are the city of Toronto's development charges. This is what developers would get an exemption for. I'm going to summarize what development charges help pay for, according to the city of Toronto bylaws, so we are all clear of what this development fee exemption means, because it means that everyone else has to pay more for the services that we all rely on.

If we're building affordable housing—okay; it's good. But if we're moving forward on building housing that will cost \$1,143,900 in the city of York, and then they're getting these development charge exemptions, and then all our residents are getting a property tax hike? It just makes me feel a little weird.

I'm going to summarize. This is what development fee charges pay for in the city of Toronto: the Spadina subway extension; transit; parks and recreation—and this really matters. Sometimes I hear people: "Parks are not that important." If you are living in a 600-square-foot condo in Spadina–Fort York, in a 40-storey building, parks matter. If you have small children that you are raising in a condo because you can't afford a home with a backyard, parks matter. They matter. Libraries: Libraries matter. Housing services and shelter: Housing services is affordable housing.

Of all the things the government has done over the last five years, this is the one that really just—that I hate, which is that, with Bill 23, the government made it so that developers no longer had to pay for any kind of development. They no longer have to pay the thousands of dollars they used to have to pay to the municipality for shelter and affordable housing. So municipalities all across Ontario have lost \$500 million in funding from developers that was earmarked for affordable housing and

shelters. So when you all do those press conferences, saying, "Oh, we're going to increase money to the homelessness prevention fund," even though you don't, I always think about how you also gutted the \$500 million that developers pay to pay for shelters. It really makes me sick.

Police: It pays for police. Fire: It pays for fire. Ambulance services—development charges contribute to ambulance services; long-term care; child care; waste; roads; water; and sanitary sewer and stormwater management. That's what our development charges pay for. They don't pay for all of it, they just pay for a percentage of it—the extra infrastructure that's needed when people move in.

So if we're going to be giving an exemption or a discount, it means that we have all decided that we are all going to pay extra for these services, because what the developer is doing is necessary. It's important that we're very clear about that. These are not frills: long-term care—not a frill; libraries—not a frill; no, not a frill; police, fire—not a frill. It's not a frill. That's what happens.

Okay, so I'm going to go back. So we moved the 80%—come on; average sale price at 80%. You didn't like that one.

Then we moved another amendment saying, "Okay, if you're looking at selling an affordable home, we also want the municipality to have some oversight over that process too," which I think makes a lot of sense. Because you do not want a situation where a developer is building a big building, and maybe they've got 30 homes that are affordable. They got a big development fee exemption because of it, and then they sell their homes to their friends' kids because no one is looking. I don't think we want that. So we asked for the municipality to not only have oversight over who gets to move into the somewhat affordable rentals, but we also said that municipalities need to have some oversight and some enforcement over who gets to buy these more affordable homes. I think that's very, very reasonable. It's very reasonable. We do not want people selling these homes at a 10% discount to friends and friends and friends—maybe people who go to weddings; I don't know. We just don't want that. So just have a little bit of oversight.

That was rejected, but my hope is that—the minister is here. The associate minister is here—hello. You've heard these before. My hope is that you're going to take some of these and do something with them, because I believe it makes a lot of sense.

1930

The good member from Beaches–East York also introduced similar amendments. I'm very grateful for that.

Then we introduced—oh, this one is a good one—an amendment saying, if we're looking at these affordable homes, we need to factor in unit size. Remember I was talking about Ontario for All having that concern? If we're looking at making a home affordable for the 60th percentile household income for bachelors, then we need to look at how much people who live in bachelors earn and not lump them in with people who live in three-bedroom rentals.

We have a table, this special bulletin that's going to come out, that lists what's an affordable rate for a bachelor, what's an affordable rate for a one-bedroom based on who typically lives in them, what's an affordable rental rate for a two-bedroom and so on, so that we're catering affordability to the people who we expect to live in them—just factor in affordability based on unit size. It makes a lot of sense.

The government rejected this amendment. I think that's a shame. My hope is that, when the bulletin comes out, I'm going to be pleasantly surprised and they're going to include that in there. That is my hope. Here's hoping.

Same thing: The member for Beaches–East York did a good job here—a similar motion.

Oh, this was a good one. So then we also introduced an amendment where we looked at the length of time that a home has to be affordable for a developer to receive this development fee exemption. Currently, the definition that the government is using is 25 years, and we introduced a motion saying that we should extend that period to 50 years. I'd like permanent myself, but 50 years—we're being fair.

The reason is because we heard testimony from stakeholders. We had a quote from Louise Carroll, who is the former commissioner of housing from New York City. In New York City, they're further ahead than we are and they recognized that they had affordability challenges before we did. They brought in a development fee reduction in order for a developer to build an affordable housing unit, and they had a fairly short time period as well. They found that that time went by really quickly, and then the city spent \$1 billion to buy these affordable homes back—\$1 billion—because they realized how important and valuable they were.

I don't think we should make the same mistake here. If we're going to make a home affordable, let's bring in a more reasonable, lengthier definition of affordability so that we know these homes are going to be affordable for a good period of time. My guess is we are still going to have housing affordability problems 25 years from now. I hope not, but my guess is we will. We are still going to need these homes to be affordable in 25 years. So we're just passing the problem further on down for future governments to solve when there are very reasonable people who have done these calculations who are saying, "Actually, we can do this right now." So we introduced that amendment and, unfortunately, the government turned it down, which I think is a real shame.

Oh yes, this one—this is another reasonable one that I like too, and this is around the government having pretty much complete control and discretion over what the definition of affordability is going to be. They can refer to StatsCan. They can refer to CMHC data, which is what I reference here. But, essentially, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has complete authority to do what they want and set their own targets. This amendment was saying, actually, you need to base it on evidence—actual income levels, actual rent levels, actual sale prices—and we need assurances there. So we introduced an amendment to bring in those assurances and the government—I

think you can guess what they did. They voted it down. I'm always hopeful—every amendment.

Also, my favourite part of the week is when the government's amendments come in and you're like, "Please, maybe there will be something here." With Bill 23, we got a few little goodies—not many, but a few little goodies.

So, now, I just want to spend the last bit of my time talking a little bit about solutions—good solutions—and there are so many. A few things I want to talk about is—the value of inclusionary zoning. There are two ways to go about building affordable housing—there are many ways to go about building affordable housing in this province. One is to incentivize developers to do it, and there are some incentives that we support. And then there's also coming up with a compromise and also requiring developers to do it, and that is what inclusionary zoning is all about.

I think it was over eight years ago now that the province said, "Okay, if cities want to move forward with inclusionary zoning, you now can," and the city of Toronto said, "Yes, this is something that we think is necessary for us to do." They extensively studied the issue. You wouldn't believe how many studies were done on inclusionary zoning in the city of Toronto, where they debated at length where inclusionary zoning should be—mainly new transit stations—and they debated at length how affordable these homes would be and what kind of density bonus they would give developers in return for building these affordable homes. So it's kind of like a two-way street: "We're going to give you a density bonus so you can build more units and sell them. We're going to give you the right to build near a transit station so then you can sell and rent the homes for more"—okay, that is something that is given to the developers—"and then in return, we are going to require you to build a percentage of affordable homes." And then they did the studies and they calculated how much profit margin developers would typically need to make and they came up with a plan. It was a pretty good plan.

Two years ago, they came up with a plan, and I'm going to summarize it right now. They came up with a plan. It was very good. It was like, they would phase it in; maybe 6% of units, and this would only apply to buildings that are 100 units or more, so we're not talking about a little building that's six storeys, we're talking buildings that are 100 units or more, near transit stations. So they passed this policy, and they said, "This is an effective way for us to build more homes and also build more affordable homes that are permanently affordable." The city has now been waiting for two years for this government to give the green light to the city of Toronto's inclusionary zoning policy, and while we've been waiting these two years, experts say that we've lost the opportunity to build about 6,000 affordable housing units, because it's widely known that developers have quickly gotten in their application before the inclusionary zoning laws were approved so that they wouldn't be required to build affordable homes—they would be exempt because they already got their application in.

I think that's a real shame, and it's on this government. It's this government's failure to not take advantage of that opportunity and say, "Everyone needs to do their part to solve this housing affordability crisis—developers, residents, governments, everyone." But instead, you didn't, and I think that's a real shame. My hope is that this government chooses to permit the city and other municipalities who want to move ahead with it, like Mississauga, to move forward with inclusionary zoning. Let's start getting these affordable housing units built. That's a shame that that was not moved forward on. My hope is that you'll see the light on that one, too.

We also see a huge amount of value in building affordable housing and non-market housing on public land. The city and the province have over 6,000 parcels of land available—many of them are already serviced—that could be used to build affordable homes, co-op homes and non-market homes on them. The city of Toronto in fact already has a plan. They've already identified the sites that they want to build on so we can get these affordable homes built. When you look at the math, it makes a lot of sense. You can get 30% of the building to be affordable and then you can have some more rental properties that are closer to market rent, but that are non-market, and you could really start addressing the housing affordability crisis and also the housing supply crisis at the same time. Instead, what this government has done is, they have taken the approach of, "Let's just give free rein to the development sector. We hope that all this supply will somehow trickle down like Reagan economics"—we know how that worked—"and it will all just work out." But it hasn't worked out. It's been five years and it's never been more expensive to rent or buy a home. It cannot just be solved through building housing supply alone.

1940

Then there's the building piece, and then there's the rent control piece. If you are a renter today, you're spending a huge amount of money on rent and you're often in a situation where you live in constant fear of eviction. This doesn't just apply if you live in a condo and then the mom-and-pop landlord or the big landlord wants to sell; it also applies now to people who live in purpose-built rentals because many developers are now looking at purpose-built rentals, especially the aging ones, and moving to demolish them and replace them with luxury condos. And then if you live in a single-family home, you're in constant fear that you're going to be evicted because the landlord maybe wants to move in, move their sister in or do some renovations and then there's no one actually tracking it.

If we want housing to be affordable in Ontario, we need to bring back real rent control and vacancy decontrol. It is the most effective way to make housing affordable for people who live and work in the city and across our province. It is the most effective way, and it ensures that they have stability of tenure, that they don't have to worry that they're going to have to move every 18 months or two years. Because a lot of renters are in that situation.

When I was at the tenants social night that we had, one of our speakers is an individual who lives at 145 St.

George. It's a 12-storey building right next to St. George subway station. She's in her thirties. She earns low six figures. And she said, "I have been evicted seven times, and the reason I live in this building is because I kept living in single-family homes and then they'd be sold and I'd have to move. So I thought, okay, I'm going to move into a purpose-built rental because it will provide me with that kind of stability."

Unfortunately, because of this government's decision to gut rental replacement bylaws, or give themselves the power to do so, their building is now slated for demolition. It's going to be replaced with a luxury condo, and they don't know if they're going to get their homes back. So it doesn't matter where you live, if you're a renter today, you are living in constant fear of eviction, and I think that needs to change. There are ways to do it. The government can simply beef up its enforcement units, get the Landlord and Tenant Board working as it should, 30-day hearings, and bring in real rent control—bring in real rent control. I think that makes a lot of sense.

The third thing that I think is absolutely critical is that we need to get serious about solving our homelessness crisis. We do, and that means building and buying properties so that we can quickly house people. It means providing those necessary wraparound supports so that people get the care and supports they need so that they can rebuild their lives. That might mean, member for Willowdale, making some tough choices—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Oh, yes—like building the 59 modular homes in Willowdale—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, absolutely. Yes, I've talked to the councillor.

We have modular homes in every riding. The city of Toronto identified modular homes that would go in every ward all across the city of Toronto so that we all do our fair share, but unfortunately, we have some individuals on the other side here who, when it actually comes to having supportive housing in their own riding, that's when they go NIMBY, and that's an example of that.

It means that we are welcoming to people who are in need of housing, and we build supportive housing and affordable housing so that we can house people in need. It seems I've struck a nerve there. Yes, it seems that I've struck a nerve there.

Interjection: It's the truth.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is the truth. Two years those modular homes are sitting in a warehouse. The city is spending about \$50,000 a month paying for those modular homes that are already built. They're sitting in a warehouse and there should be people living in them.

So I think that's critical as well, and it's going to require a comprehensive approach: rent control, building more homes, spurring the construction of private market homes for people to live in and a homes-first housing and homelessness strategy.

Thank you for listening tonight. I'm looking forward to your questions—I can't wait to hear your questions. And

I'm looking forward to seeing what the government is going to be doing with their next housing supply bill.

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: At its core, this legislation is very simple: It will, if passed, bring Ontario's definition of "affordable housing" in line with most other comparable jurisdictions while also supporting the creation of 3,000 direct and up to 30,000 indirect jobs in St. Thomas. Will the member opposite put partnership over partisanship to join us by supporting these simple and common-sense changes?

Ms. Jessica Bell: You know, I don't want to give away the surprise, so you're just going to have to wait for the third reading vote and then it will all be revealed.

But you sat on committee—there are some things about this bill that we like. It makes sense to have the local municipality provide additional support to an e-battery plant. And the decision to come up with a definition of affordability that factors in income and doesn't just base it on market rent is a step in the right direction. But we have heard from stakeholders, including stakeholders who have crunched the numbers, who have said, "We are not sure if this definition of affordability is actually going to result in more affordable rent or sale prices than what we had in Bill 23."

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from University–Rosedale for an excellent presentation on Bill 134. It seems as though Bill 134 is continuing that long Conservative tradition of misleading titles. With Bill 134, it doesn't really undo the damage that the government inflicted upon municipalities through Bill 23, and it didn't undo—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I'll have the member withdraw your unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Oh, I withdraw.

It didn't undo the damage that Bill 23 wrought on municipal budgets, and it certainly didn't undo the massive hikes that municipalities had to pass down to taxpayers as a result of this government's actions.

Now, specifically to the member: The member mentioned that the Conservatives voted down all of the NDP amendments, but which NDP amendments does the member think were the most effective that would help provide affordable housing?

Ms. Jessica Bell: God, I thought you were going to let me go on about Bill 23.

Okay, so I liked all the amendments, and the thing that I liked about the amendments is that they don't cost the government any money. They don't cost you any money. We're just asking for a little bit more accountability to make sure the right people move into these homes, and we're asking for a definition of affordability that's a little bit more affordable. That's all we're asking for.

So, I like all of the amendments. I think they were very practical. My hope is that in future bills, you'll see the light—maybe it will even be through regulation; maybe we don't even have to wait—and you'll bring in some of them.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member, my question is really regarding the definition of "affordable housing" that we've used. We did engage with a broad range of stakeholders, including municipalities and home builders, and that was when we were looking to develop a development-related charge exemption for affordable residential units. After conducting these consultations and hosting technical tables with experts, we found that the current definition of an "affordable residential unit" in the Development Charges Act would generally not be affordable to moderate-income Ontarians. That's why these changes would, if passed, incorporate income factors in addition to market factors in this definition. Do you agree with that?

Ms. Jessica Bell: So, this bill happened, and Bill 23 happened, and we are continually hearing from municipalities, including Ontario's Big City Mayors who came to committee—they're not telling us they've been consulted on this, they're just not. So that's the first thing.

1950

And then the second thing is that we see it as a step in the right direction that this definition of affordability includes "income" and "market rent," whatever is lower. But what we are also seeing is that the definition of affordability, when you factor in these new changes, is going to lead to higher rents and higher sale prices than what was in Bill 23. One of the issues is that, when you look at the market rate, in Bill 23, it was 80% of average market rent, but in this new definition, you've moved it up to 100% of average market rent. So you've actually made the market rate definition of affordability much worse.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate that the member from University–Rosedale spent a very thoughtful and thorough hour on this—again, this bill, as others, has been moving quickly.

Housing is always an important conversation. I think all of us in this Legislature recognize that. I was grateful to hear you spell out what could have been with the amendments, because I also hold the same hope that you do, that maybe someone on the other side is listening, or in the backrooms are listening, and we'll see it in future government legislation.

We all just met with some post-secondary students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, and they raised concerns about the exploitative rental practices and discrimination that they're coming across as they're trying to find affordable rental housing in communities. A lot of people cannot find that affordable rental—in this case, especially students. Is there anything in this bill for them? And what could we see in future legislation if not?

Ms. Jessica Bell: There's nothing in this bill that deals with the student housing crisis we're seeing right now. If we're looking at fixing the student housing crisis, we need to fix the private rental market, because 90% of students live in private market rentals, and currently, they're being taken advantage of. They're far more likely to be exploited

than people who have been—you know, higher incomes, people who've been renting for a while.

In my riding, we're dealing with a building that was just bought by a US corporate landlord and they're using every trick in the book to get these tenants out. The boiler has been turned off. They've changed the locks on the front door of the building so tenants aren't able to get in at night. They're using every trick in the book, and then when a tenant moves out, they turn it into weekly rentals, where they rent out each bedroom by the week. And what's so messed up is that these people have called the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit, they've called the Landlord and Tenant Board, they've called RentSafe, they've called us, and there's basically nothing they can do—

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for her hour deputation on this bill.

Hon. Stan Cho: It felt like 10.

Mr. Matthew Rae: "It felt like 10," from the member from Willowdale this evening, Speaker.

Just a very brief—I know I have a very brief amount of time—history lesson for the members here this evening: In 1991-92, the Premier at the time, Bob Rae—not related to me, Speaker, just to clarify for the record—brought in rent policies which this Progressive Conservative government has copied. Will the members opposite support our government in the rent policies—exactly the same; literally, look it up. Exactly the same—the rent act, 1992, I believe, where they froze it, similar to us in 2018, to now going forward.

Will they support our government in our policies that were adopted by an NDP government in the 1990s?

Ms. Jessica Bell: It was the leader of the official opposition, Stephen Lewis, who brought in vacancy decontrol and rent control in the province of Ontario, and he was NDP. This was at a time when we had strong rent control and when we had the highest housing starts that we have ever seen in Ontario, including higher housing starts than we see today.

We should, and could, come up with measures where we can address our housing supply issues and increase the amount of private market housing supply we have without sacrificing the affordability of renters by getting rid of rent control. We can do both; it has been done before.

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to add my voice to this debate on Bill 134. Really, when you look at the bill, there are, as we all know in this Legislature, two pieces to it. The first is the Development Charges Act, and the second is the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Alignment Act.

The first part of it we all understand is designed to make it cheaper and easier to build affordable homes in Ontario and it's to make Ontario families find an affordable home easier based on their household income. This is also designed to achieve our goal of building 1.5 million homes over the next decade. Finally, it updates the definition of "affordable residential units," and that would entitle them to qualify for development charge discounts and exemptions.

I think we understand that. The second part is far more complicated, and that's what I'm going to spend my time talking about.

This is the part that is very exciting to many of us who've been supporting the electric vehicle revolution in Ontario. When we first looked at where we were when we got elected in 2018, we remember Sergio Marchionne, the former chair of Fiat Chrysler, saying to former Premier Wynne when she asked him if Chrysler was going to be expanding in Ontario—his answer was very clear that Premier Wynne had made Ontario one of the most expensive jurisdictions in all of North America. That's just plain and simple. You can read it in the Globe, you can read it in the Star, you can read it in any newspaper; that was his quote.

Then we began to dig a little deeper, and when the final then-Liberal economic report came out, there were two shocking paragraphs—or six sentences as a matter of fact—that talked about how the Liberal government had managed to move Ontario out of manufacturing and into the services sector. They took that as a pride point. I don't quite understand how they can be proud that we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario. They were proud of the fact that they got us out of manufacturing and into the services sector. So those 300,000 families paid the price.

Well, the Liberals also paid the price at the polls, and we got elected and immediately began to turn the country back around, turn Ontario back into this manufacturing powerhouse that we always were. We were the economic engine of Confederation. I know that's a phrase, a cliché that you hear, but it really is true. Without the economy of Ontario, the country really suffers, and the country was suffering because of the mismanagement of the previous government.

So we looked at the auto sector and the 100,000 men and women who were going to be continuing to lose their jobs throughout Ontario as we saw those policies that the Liberal government had put in. A lot of red tape, high taxes, high electricity rates: All of those things were just crippling to businesses as they were leaving and costing all of those jobs to be lost.

Premier Ford said, "Enough. We're going to do exactly what the auto companies asked. We're going to lower the cost of doing business." As a direct result of lowering the cost of doing business by \$8 billion a year, every year—including this year, \$8 billion. That's \$8 billion less into the Treasury, but it has turned out to be an immense plus to the Treasury because of all of the jobs that were created. Some 700,000 men and women have a job today who weren't working five years ago. They're paying taxes. Our revenue went up—we got that \$8 billion back manyfold. That has led us to look at the auto sector, to make deals with Ford, GM, Stellantis and others to make electric vehicles here in Ontario. That was the first step.

The next step is what leads us to this bill, which was the attraction of battery manufacturing companies. First, we saw the NextStar plant in Windsor, and now the \$7-billion plant that is being built in St. Thomas.

2000

You have to drive there and see this site and to see 1,500 acres that—very shortly, the steel will be coming out of the ground, the concrete will be being poured. Just to put it in perspective, when built, the building is going to be 1.6 kilometres long by one kilometre wide. At 16 million square feet, it will be the fourth-largest building on planet Earth. That is what's being achieved here in the province of Ontario. That is what's being achieved on this site in St. Thomas.

What we are doing here, quite frankly, is transferring some land and transferring the opportunity for Elgin county and St. Thomas to be able to assist the company with the land and with the development of it, to be able to help them, if they choose, to waive the building permit, to waive development charges, to put an incremental tax plan in—if that's what they choose. This will open up and allow them to facilitate this massive plant that's going to, first of all, immediately employ 3,000 people at the battery facility itself.

The rest of the 1,500 acres—the building is 340 acres of the site—will be for other companies to come and build other components of the battery. We are talking about other multi-billion dollar companies locating either on that site or within Ontario to supply this massive demand. They're going to make 300,000 batteries a day. That is what's going to be made there: 300,000 a day. This is unbelievable. It's a gigafactory, and by the very name, you should be able to understand, then, that this is absolutely massive, putting thousands of people to work. That's what the other half of this bill is for.

Now, the interesting part is that the first half of the bill ties in, as well, because there is certainly land around the St. Thomas area and there is land throughout Ontario that we want to be able to develop. We want to be able to build those 1.5 million homes in 10 years. This plant at St. Thomas, with the 3,000 direct employees and the tens of thousands of employees who will be hired—it doesn't end there. There's much more coming to Ontario, whether it's in the auto sector, whether it's in life sciences. You know, we didn't just attract \$27 billion in the auto sector. There's more coming; there's more to be announced. There's more to be announced in the next month or two, as a matter of fact, and more prospects coming. We need Ontario to be ready for all of the good things that are coming, whether it's from the auto sector, the \$3 billion that we attracted in the life sciences sector, the tens of billions of dollars that we've attracted in the tech sector—all of that needs the kinds of things that are in this bill.

We need places for people to live, and that's why this bill is so important. It's important because of the Development Charges Act and that aspect of it that will make it easier to get into an affordable home. It will update the definition of "affordable," but it will also make it easier. It sets rent based on income; it sets purchase price based on income. These are the kinds of things that are important. They're important to the people of Ontario.

The other side is one that we will remember forever. Certainly, anybody who is in business can imagine what

it's like to sign a \$7-billion deal. You don't get to do that very often in the course of a government. This one deal is larger than most of the Liberal deals put together over their entire time in office, so that gives you a sense of the magnitude of this bill.

I thank this Legislature for the opportunity to once again talk about one of the most historic deals done. The part that you will play tonight in helping facilitate that is also very, very important. So I thank you very much for the 10 minutes that I've had to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I heard some features about the fourth-largest structure in the world in St. Thomas. Putting that in perspective, how many of those other structures are located in Canada, if any?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: This gives me another opportunity to talk about the great facility. To put it in scale, one of the other largest buildings in Ontario is going to be the one that will come before Volkswagen, the NextStar facility in Windsor. It is about 4.5-million square feet, and at \$5 billion. We were (a) very proud of that deal and (b) very surprised to understand that Volkswagen is a 16-million-square-foot building, almost four times the size of it. So if you've been to Windsor and seen this massive building going up—the steel is out of the ground today—you would see just how important it is not only to the community, but the size of it, the scale of it. You really are seeing a large facility. So imagine that now at four times that size.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the member opposite: The opposition has been calling for the government to tackle the housing crisis from every angle, to make it easier to buy or to rent a place that the residents of Ontario want to call home. We have people in Niagara—that the food banks are tripled in numbers.

We've also asked that you include real rent control, clamping down on speculations and getting the province back into the business of building homes—not luxury homes—that the people of Ontario can actually afford. I don't see this in this bill—real rent control.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: If you look carefully at this bill, you will see, in schedule 1, it really does talk about four issues: It talks about the rent; it talks about price; it also talks about rent based on income; and purchase price based on income. This is what the purpose of this part of the bill is, and I will congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes. He's a great guy.

Hon. Stan Cho: He's got a nice sweater vest.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: He does have a sweater vest on today, and it is rather fetching, I will tell him that.

So this part of the bill is an integral part. It really does update the definition of "affordable residential units." Everything that this bill is intended to achieve, that it set out to achieve, is achieved in this bill. It defines affordable residential units.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, I'm from Essex county, and in Essex county, we know how important the automotive industry is. During the disastrous 15 years of Liberal economic mismanagement, we lost 20,000 jobs in the region. If you'd have told me 10 years ago that those jobs were coming back, I'd have shaken my head sadly and said no. But I was wrong, and I'm so happy I am wrong, because the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has proven me wrong. He's brought hope back to the province of Ontario, and I would like the minister to please explain to this House in more detail: How did you do it? How did you turn around 15 years of disastrous Liberal economic policy and bring hope back to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Well, I'll see if I can do it in one minute. It really does follow business fundamentals. You don't follow an ideology, you follow the facts, and the facts are that lower taxes equal higher revenue, that lower taxes equal more jobs. We have shown this. This is really economics 101.

2010

We reduced the cost of workers' compensation, WSIB, by 50%—\$2.5 billion. We lowered the cost of electricity by 15% for industrial and commercial. We put in an accelerated capital cost, which means businesses can write off that new equipment in-year. That's a billion-dollar savings. We did not go ahead with the Liberal tax increases scheduled on January 1, 2019—\$465 million.

All of that money that the companies saved, they used investing in Ontario, hiring 700,000 men and women. Our tax revenue actually rose without increasing the tax rate. That's exactly what the companies wanted to hear. They came back for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the minister for the comments today.

One of the things that you're talking about is developing an electric vehicle industry in Ontario. But one of the challenges is that, when your Conservative government got in in 2018, you cancelled the electric vehicle rebates. If you compare Ontario on electric vehicles—one of the ways to attract industry is obviously to have a local market for the products. And one of the issues that we have—these are a couple of years old, but in British Columbia, where they do have an electric vehicle rebate, 13% of all vehicles are electric vehicles. But in Ontario, it's 3%.

Will your government reintroduce the rebate for electric vehicles in order to create a local market for the cars that are going to be produced here?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I can tell you that what we did was done by choice. We chose to invest taxpayers' money in the companies that are going to employ the people. We chose to save 100,000 existing auto workers. That's where we put our money. We chose to invest in companies that were going to build electric vehicles, which allowed them

to stay in Ontario and offer their head offices in Toronto and around the world a reason to stay in Ontario. That's why we'll have now more—far more; we'll have tens upon tens of thousands more workers today. That's where we invested our money.

We invested our money in mega-sites. We invested our money in anything that would create additional thousands of jobs, and so we've made it possible that when you do decide in Ontario to buy an electric vehicle, it's made here.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I actually want to pick up on that question. You touched on it right at the end of your answer. When the Liberals put the rebate in for electric vehicles, I don't believe a single electric vehicle was made in Ontario that qualified for it, so all of that money was going out of jurisdiction.

We got rid of that rebate, but we have, as you said, invested in manufacturing here in Ontario now. The cost of those electric vehicles has come down because they are domestically made. We have the entire supply chain here in Ontario.

Is that a better approach, that money from Ontario stays in Ontario rather than going to other foreign jurisdictions?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The way we see it now, we will go from critical minerals all the way through to recycling. It will be an end-to-end, made-in-Ontario solution.

I'll tell you, as somebody from northern Ontario, I'm incredibly proud that, for the first time in 120 years, northern Ontario will now be part of the auto sector. Auto companies are actually attending mining shows because they need the minerals from northern Ontario. But that won't be enough for us either, quite frankly, speaking as a northerner. We don't just want the minerals to come out of the ground and be shipped. We want them to be processed in northern Ontario. We want something called lithium hydroxide to be made in northern Ontario.

So this will be an end-to-end, from the critical minerals through the processing into the batteries, into the cars, into the sales offices and into the recycling facilities—end to end, Speaker.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: We hear an awful lot about the north, and it interests me because I've heard that there have been more than 40 ministerial visits to the north, and yet the north so often gets the short end of the stick—or no stick at all.

Yesterday's speeches from the government on this bill wandered far and wide on the topic of housing and jobs, despite the narrow scope of the bill. So I was surprised to have my legitimate question about two housing projects in Thunder Bay, Suomi Koti and Giiwa on Court, deflected by the Minister of Housing, as if getting affordable housing built in Thunder Bay is not relevant or important. The minister also suggested that neither of these projects had applied for provincial support.

Now, I know that this minister replaced the former Minister of Housing, who was forced to resign over the

corrupt process resulting in windfall profits, potentially, of \$8.2 million to their insider friends—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I caution the member around parliamentary language.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: All right, thank you.

Perhaps the new minister is not aware of the applications, letters and meetings that took place about these projects. So let me be clear: I wrote follow-up letters to the ministry, after applications had gone in, on November 17, 2022, about Suomi Koti, the affordable housing for seniors project, and on November 28, 2022, about the Giiwa on Court project. The ministry is well aware of these projects, and it is unbelievable to me that this government has done nothing to support either of them.

I want to quote a letter sent by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario on November 30, 2022, about Bill 23: “The central intention of Bill 23 is to build more homes that are attainable for our growing population by discounting and exempting municipal fees and taxes for affordable, non-profit and purpose-built rental housing.” Well, both of these projects are non-profit, affordable, purpose-built rental housing. They are fully serviced; there is no need to have new infrastructure. Both have rent-geared-to-income units, and the Suomi Koti home would be charging rent at 20% below market rates. Doesn't that sound like it fits just right into this bill—and even Bill 23?

Giiwa on Court was to be built in the old post office, currently abandoned. They were doing everything right, reusing a heritage piece of architecture and providing affordable housing. It was a collaboration between Fort William First Nation, which is in Thunder Bay, and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation, which is just east of Marathon.

Now, why did they want this project? Because Indigenous people also live in urban settings and need housing. This project was not meant to address homelessness, but to provide affordable housing for Indigenous people attending school or working at entry-level jobs as they improve their circumstances. It was a fantastic project that would also have added immensely to the revitalization of downtown Port Arthur.

You may have noticed that I am using the past tense to refer to this project. I received the following letter this morning:

“Unfortunately, despite the initial letter to Minister Clark 10 months ago, conversations with various Ontario bureaucrats and personal conversations with the MPP for” Thunder Bay—Atikokan, “Minister Rickford and the Premier, the same answer is being given, which is a no.

“The members of Giiwa are not willing to expend further time and money and will be seeking insolvency advice shortly.” What a crime.

This was a project that was shovel-ready and would have been an enormous benefit to the city of Thunder Bay, but no, there was no provincial help for this project. So all their talk of supporting all types of housing? This Indigenous-led project was turned down and I can find no conceivable reason for it.

And then there is the Suomi Koti project also hanging by a thread. What this project does is it serves seniors—it's affordable housing for seniors. It would be a second building added to what has been a 30-year successful project there. They built the first building 30 years ago. Knowing that they wanted to add a second building, they managed to do all of that: they've got the plans; it's been ready. Even the head of housing for DSSAB said that this project should be a no-brainer. And yet there is no funding from the province available.

2020

Now, in this current bill, Bill 134, there are changes to definitions of affordability. Well, actually, both projects already met these criteria. And there has been a lot of talk about providing funding supports for smaller municipalities, so there are some new options, perhaps—unless it is all talk.

Regardless, the question of the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan that I asked yesterday was about whether or not he will use his position to help this shovel-ready, much-needed project get built. People need to realize that, in Thunder Bay, it's a five-to-seven-year wait-list to get into affordable housing for seniors. Do you know where you can get housing right away? In the very expensive Chartwells and Reveras and—what's the other one—Southbridges.

So, in fact, by refusing to support these projects, what they have done is create more opportunity for profit in these private, for-profit homes, because there's nothing affordable that's there, in spite of the fact that this community-driven project has been working very hard over a very long period of time to bring this project to fruition. I really do not understand how it's acceptable not to have provided any support.

Jobs: It's interesting to me that the Minister of Economic Development talks a lot about taking money away from injured workers. So we talk about all these billions of dollars for big business, but billions of dollars have come off the back of injured workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): A reminder to the members.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: We all know it. We know that there are thousands of workers—what's the word—poisoned at work. It's clusters of disease from being exposed to toxins at work. There are clusters all over the province, they're well known, and yet, those people, two years, four years, 10 years, 15 years on, do not get the support that they are entitled to from WSIB. How come? Why not? Where has the money gone? Why can those workers not be acknowledged for the contributions they made and are not receiving the supports that they're entitled to? Well—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member.

I just want to remind the House that we still have somebody speaking.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: So we know where a lot of that money has come from, these extra bonuses, the \$2.1

billion—or was it \$1.2 billion; it doesn't really matter—that was taken and given away to business at the end of the year, taken from the injured workers. In the meantime, injured workers are desperate to get support.

And then I asked myself—in the north, we see this thing going on where district health units are being pressured to merge. Now, why would we be giving up good jobs in health care with expertise, people who know the local areas, and move it so that there are fewer people working and that they're covering a geographical area of 400,000 square kilometres? To me, this is the opposite of helping the north. It's certainly the opposite of creating and maintaining good jobs that are already there. So there's a threat of losing those jobs.

I learned today, actually, that First Nations haven't been able to get Ozempic because the Ministry of Health didn't put enough aside. So when they counted how many they would need, they didn't include the northern First Nations, so now they are in trouble because they can't get access. And, apparently, that was very much the same during the pandemic, that vaccines were not available in those communities until much later.

We also know that the government is limiting funding increases to 1% a year for the district health units and downloading another 5% of costs onto municipalities, as if municipalities have the means to come up with more money.

Mr. Chris Glover: They're going to raise our municipal taxes.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Right. That's the only way they can; that's the only tool that they have. Raising taxes is what municipalities will be forced to do; in fact, they have been forced already. But it's unbelievable to me that there's another 5% of health care expenses being downloaded to municipalities at this time, at this moment. Municipalities are already desperately trying to sort out where they're going to house people. They are trying to figure out where they're going to put people who are living in tents and keep them safe and alive over the winter—and I know those questions have not been answered.

Mr. Chris Glover: The Ford government is not concerned with keeping people alive.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: No, and certainly not injured workers.

And then there's the question of the highways. We keep hearing from the Minister of Transportation that we have the safest highways in Canada. Well, "safest" does not mean "safe." They are not safe. So my recommendation is, why don't we have another ministerial visit up to north-western Ontario? Take a ride on the highways. Join one of the truck drivers, in fact—

Mr. Mike Harris: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order?

Mr. Mike Harris: I just wanted to point out that the standing orders dictate that the member should be talking about the bill that's before us here today, and I'm not sure that she's doing that.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Speaker, I'm getting there, thank you.

You know what interests me about jobs, too? We've all heard on the news that there are, what, 1,500 workers from outside the country who are being brought in to actually do some of the building. Highly subsidized by several levels of government, and yet the work is not going to local workers—a very curious thing.

Again, the Minister of Economic Development referred to all the great things happening in the north. I think that opens the door for me to talk about what's actually happening, and the fact that goods are supposed to come across the country—a very important thing—and they're not getting through because the highway is closed almost every day. As the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay recommended earlier, people should look at this Facebook page called Hwy 11/17 Kills People. You will see, every day, horrendous photographs of what's actually happening on the highways. It is extremely important that the government actually acknowledge that there's a problem, take responsibility and do something about it. Specific recommendations have been made over several years.

The other title—it's always interesting to me what the titles are on these bills. We're talking about housing: good homes and good jobs. I wanted to look at these good jobs a little bit, because the Hunger Report 2023 from Feed Ontario cites "poor-quality jobs" and "a rise in gig work" as contributing to the use of food banks and the inability of working people to meet their basic living expenses. I'd like to talk about a couple of major employers throughout Ontario, and that's universities and colleges and the poor-quality jobs and gig work that actually makes up about 60% of people teaching at colleges and universities. The pay is dreadful. These are people with expertise in their fields, often with PhDs or other critical life experiences that they bring to their teaching, who work for extremely low wages. They have to reapply for their jobs every year. They aren't able to access benefits until about five years of working.

I'll say, because I was one of those workers, that during COVID, we all did our bit and transferred all of our classes online. So something that I was doing at the time, which was teaching music, meant a complete 100% redesign. There was no other way to do it. Actually, it was extremely difficult. So was there any payout? Were there any bonuses? Absolutely nothing for all that extra work—although I did get a thank-you letter.

I've heard the Minister of Colleges and Universities say that—we know that Ontario colleges and universities have the lowest amount of government support of any across the country, and yet the Minister of Colleges and Universities said that before the government considers increasing those base amounts, they have to look for—what's the word—more efficiencies. How can you have more efficiencies when you're already completely dependent on international students, soaking international students, leaving them extremely vulnerable to exploitation in rental markets? They don't have enough to eat. In fact, they're being turned away from public food banks. How is that

even possible? They don't have enough money to live on, and their family fortunes have been used to send them to our schools. It's criminal, and yet.

2030

So we've got 60% of the staff working for, effectively, minimum wage, when you actually work out the number of hours that go into preparing a course, teaching it, doing the marking. Oh yes, and I forgot to mention: After COVID, class sizes doubled—same low money; double the number of students—and that's still going on. So they're actually pretty lousy jobs for people who have a very high amount of education, and now universities are supposed to find other ways to save money? It's a nasty joke. I don't know if I need to say much more than that.

Certainly, in terms of affordable housing, we have already lost one fantastic opportunity for affordable housing in Thunder Bay. We're about to lose the other one, if something doesn't change in a hurry. We're losing good-quality jobs, or the threat is that we're losing good-quality jobs, from our district health units—apart from losing the work that they do, and they do extremely important work; apart from vaccines; monitoring what's going on in the communities; Lyme disease. They're checking ticks. They're doing all kinds of things behind the scenes to make sure that communities stay healthy or, if there's an outbreak, that they are there and ready to support us. But no, we're looking at merging across enormous geographical distances and losing the expertise of people as they merge into one unit.

There's always lots to talk about, "We love the north. We're doing all this for the north," but I can tell you, looking at my community, I'm not seeing that, and certainly, we're seeing housing that should be supported and built that is not happening.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite for her remarks. I'm actually very curious—I love the region of Thunder Bay. I'm looking forward to visiting your riding, hopefully, this summer. But I have to say, it's a stark difference from what's been described in the member's remarks versus the hope and inspiration that I have in my community of Windsor–Tecumseh, as well as the greater Essex county, as the member from Essex has mentioned, because our communities are full of hope. We have reversed the manufacturing decline, thanks to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and the Premier.

We've seen past governments fail to address the prospect of growth, both on housing and on employment, and I wanted to just ask the member opposite, on the economic side, whether you see the government's proposals as having merit, leading to the facilities such as St. Thomas and NextStar in Windsor, or if those are the wrong track.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I will say first that in order to have more workers, we'll need more housing, and we've lost an opportunity to do that. The three considerations always for industrial projects are safety of the environment, safety of workers and consultation with First Nations.

When all those three things are met, then we support them fully. We know that there's a group of First Nations that this government has refused to meet with, so that's still an outstanding issue.

So as I say, those three things are critical. When the government meets those or projects meet those, I'll be standing up and cheering along with everybody else.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question to my colleague. She talked about post-secondary in the north, and I had the opportunity, as many of us did, to meet with post-secondary students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. I had a meeting with a few students, two of whom were from up north, and they said that access to quality, affordable housing is essential to a positive post-secondary education experience. Students entering new municipalities to pursue post-secondary education should be free from the worry of discriminatory and exploitative rental practices; however, on average they pay more than non-student renters. Their housing options are often very poorly maintained, and because they have to live close to where they want to study, they're even further limited.

We don't see anything in this bill, unfortunately, about student housing and tackling that problem. Do you have any thoughts on what might work, either a northern solution or more broadly, to support students and their living needs?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I do think that we need government investment in student housing because what is happening is that students, particularly international students, are winding up in very crowded situations, and they're also being taken advantage of. The rent is extremely high. I have, in my teaching there, met many of these students who are really suffering.

There are solutions, and the students themselves have proposed many of them. I would hope that the government actually listens, gets rid of this idea of looking for more efficiencies and actually looks for solutions to help students get the education they deserve.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Bear with me, Speaker. I hope you give me the same liberty you gave the member from Thunder Bay this evening.

My question this evening, Speaker—I find it ironic that the member opposite talks about gig workers when they don't support our government's initiatives to give gig workers portable benefits, which we continue to consult on. I also find it ironic that the member talks about, just now, student housing, and they voted against the fall economic statement which includes \$3 billion to establish an infrastructure bank with the expressed goal—it was in the Minister of Finance's remarks around that—to help with student housing, Speaker.

Will the member finally realize that our government continues to take action on student housing, affordable housing, which we are debating this evening, and support this bill? Yes or no? I know that is difficult for the other side—yes or no?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm not giving anything away on our position, but I will say that so many of those workers, so-called gig workers, are misclassified, as frankly are the workers at universities and colleges who are forced onto these short-term contracts when they actually have exactly the same qualifications as the fewer and fewer who are actually tenure-track and full-time.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you as well to my colleague for her excellent debate. She talks about the affordability in housing but also talked about student and university life and as a professor. With the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, one of the things they left with me was that students across the province experience difficulty securing housing during their post-secondary education. Many students struggle to find affordable housing in their institution's municipalities in competitive real estate markets.

Now, we share the Northern Ontario School of Medicine campuses: one in Sudbury, one in Thunder Bay. In your estimation, when you're talking to students or profs who are on those short-term contracts, are they telling you that what the government has done in the last five years to improve housing has caused more affordable housing for students and for workers?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Over the last five years, there is nothing available. And now what I see is, again, very large numbers of students crammed into houses or apartments and paying quite a lot of money, usually just for a single bedroom at best. Sometimes they wind up in a shared bedroom with somebody they don't know. It's not conducive to learning. It's certainly not conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

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

2040

Mr. Mike Harris: One of the things that I haven't heard the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North talk about is the definition of affordable housing. I think that's one of the key pieces of this bill. It's certainly something that's very important—for the province to be able to put out that narrative and to be able to put some parameters around what that looks like, so that it's easier for municipalities, not-for-profits and other organizations to better understand, I think, where we're trying to move in that direction.

So I was wondering if maybe she wanted to make some comments around that. I think it's a very important piece of this bill, and I haven't heard that talked about much so far.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think our member from University–Rosedale did speak about that at length, to say that there are some things in the bill that are going in a good direction. So I will give you that. But as I say, the projects that I'm so frustrated about actually met that definition two years ago, three years ago, and just didn't get the support they needed.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North for her presentation.

Does it make any sense, to the member, that this government with the title is talking about affordability in Bill 134, and yet makes no mention of non-market homes and makes no mention of co-op homes, and does nothing to re-establish rent control, as well as plug the hole of vacancy decontrol? Does it make any sense when they talk about affordability and refuse to address the problems that they have created?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much for the question. No, it's disappointing. Rent control is crucial, and we've seen what's happened to rents, really, since the Conservative government decided that they were not going to put controls on buildings from 2018 and onwards. Co-op housing—well, we know; we've already heard from one of the members over there that it strikes terror into their bones, the whole notion of co-op housing. But we have two fantastic co-op housing living spaces in Thunder Bay. One has been there for I think it's 40 years—extremely successful; another one is about 10 or 12 years old. Boy, I would love to see this government actually invest in co-op housing and do something about rent control.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: I rise today to speak to Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. It's great to see so many members here this evening.

A lot can happen in five years. Children born five years ago will have started elementary school. Five years ago, we had no idea that we would be experiencing a pandemic. Five years is not a lifetime, but it is a solid chunk of one.

So in five years, what is this government's record on housing? Every day, I hear the members opposite talking about it. They talk with such conviction that you might even get the impression that they have done something about the issue. The issue just keeps getting worse. But when I talk to my constituency in Scarborough–Guildwood, and their constituencies across the province, I hear the exact same thing: The issue has never been worse. That is the record of the Progressive Conservative Party: the worst housing affordability in the history of Ontario.

This bill seeks to change some of the definitions of affordable housing. It spells out how bleak the situation is that we are experiencing with affordable housing. Because of this bill's definition, affordable housing has now moved even further away for low-income earners—a sad reality. This is how impoverished our society has gotten under this government. This is unacceptable, but this government refuses to take accountability for their own failure. As usual, they point fingers at anyone and everyone, because apparently it's impossible for them to conceive, as a government, they have the power to actually address the housing crisis.

They've got the power to address the housing crisis. They also have the power to finance construction of affordable housing. It all should be starting with the recommendations of the Housing Affordability Task Force that

this government set up. The task force report came up with 55 recommendations, and how many has the government followed through with? Three of 55—that's 5%, a whopping 5%. Why set up a task force if you're going to completely ignore them?

Then again, there's no surprise here. Fun fact: The task force explicitly said to not develop the greenbelt because we're not facing a shortage of urban land to develop. Of course, we all know the government pretended that that was not the case so they could carve up the greenbelt like a Christmas ham. They spent a year on this, swearing up and down that this was the only way to address the housing crisis. Of course, reports by the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner showed the whole province that this was only done so that close friends of this government could make an \$8.3-billion profit.

Now, the government would announce that they are cancelling the—patent-pending—greenbelt giveaway, but I highly doubt that it's because they realized that the people of Ontario were against it, which they've always been, and has more to do with the fact that the proud men and women of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police anti-corruption unit were investigating them.

The Conservatives are acting like all is well and that they are not in deep, deep trouble. After wasting four years doing nothing on housing and an extra year pretending to care about housing in order to gift their buddies \$8.3 billion, now they swear they're taking it seriously. In their serious era, the government has said they'll start looking at the affordability task force recommendations. Well, late is better than never, even when the stakes are this high.

This bill is a step in the right direction, but it does not go nearly far enough considering that every bill goes through a long process before it becomes law. We should hope that legislation brought forth would be more substantial than just changing the definition of affordable housing and allowing for municipal incentives for the St. Thomas battery plant. This bill could have included some of the recommendations of the Housing Affordability Task Force.

Here's one, number 37: "Align property taxes for purpose-built rental with those of condos and low-rise homes." In many municipalities, Toronto included, rental housing complexes pay more property tax than single-family homes. This makes very little sense, especially as multi-unit buildings more effectively share municipal resources per capita than single-family homes. For new builds, Toronto has already moved forward with this, which is good, but there should be parity province-wide. Renters should, under no circumstances, be paying more property tax in this major affordability crisis we're facing. This is such a no-brainer move. This government should make homes more affordable for hard-working Ontarians. It's their basic right to stability, safety and security.

2050

Here's another one, number 3: "Limit exclusionary zoning in municipalities through binding provincial action" to "allow as-of-right residential housing up to four units and up to four storeys on a single residential lot." We are already seeing this in some municipalities, first pioneered

in Toronto, and it's now expanding in other municipalities as it is a condition of receiving federal housing funds. The Conservatives could enact this province-wide, as the report recommends. In BC, the government has already done this. Again, this is so easy to do, but for a party whose slogan is "Get It Done," they seem downright allergic to getting anything done when it comes to affordable housing.

This government wants to build 1.5 million new homes, but they are far behind, and at this rate, let's hope it's going to meet the target. Meanwhile, the cost of rent is just going higher—I'm speaking to many people in Scarborough and my constituents—with no rent relief in sight, and a government more hostile to bringing back real rent control than ever before. So let's get moving, and let's see this government introduce legislation that actually gets it done.

I want to conclude by saying, we raised our children here in Ontario. Call me old-fashioned, but we sent them to school, they got their education, they have graduated, and do you know what we encourage them to do to become financially responsible? Go out and rent, and then they buy their first home. They might get married, they might have kids, and then they buy their second home, then they buy their second car, then they buy a family car. The future of our young people in Ontario right now is at risk.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: A number of members this evening have talked about the fact that many of us met with students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, as well as the College Student Alliance, to talk about the challenges with student housing in this province. And, of course, students are very much looking for affordable housing.

Now, this is a bill before us today that is supposed to be about affordable housing, but we know that under the Liberal government, post-secondary institutions were not building campus housing. We have seen, under this government, post-secondary institutions are still—very few are building campus housing, and rent control has been removed off new builds in the private rental market.

So what does this member think that this bill should include to deal with the housing challenges that students face in this province?

MPP Andrea Hazell: So as I mentioned in my comments, we've got a lot of students and a lot of young people that are actually suffering through this government. This government has had five years, so let's look at those five years and see what has been built to ease the pressure of our low-income earners, our students and our young people. There has been nothing that has been done under this government for five years to ease that burden of housing affordability and rent that is so much out of control.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member opposite, this legislation proposes to define affordability, in part, based on income, so that affordable homes that meet the definition are exempt from development-related charges. So the definition in this legislation takes income factors in addition to market factors.

Now, after 15 years of the Liberals doing nothing related to affordability and homes—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Or housing.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Or housing, thank you—my question to the member opposite is, do you agree with this definition that income factors should be in addition to the market factors?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I'm going back five years, and I have not seen anything that is built or no improvements to help our low-income earners, and our low-income earners—both household incomes could be \$50,000. So where are they going to rent under your new Bill 134? They cannot afford to rent.

I'm not disagreeing with the total of the analysis of your bill, but we need to go back to the drawing board. We need to come up with a different computation that will include low-income earners. Not every household makes over \$80,000.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for her presentation.

I'd like to refer to the recommendations from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in their response to Bill 134. They recommend (1) a fair and sustainable funding framework; (2) a comprehensive sequenced implementation plan; (3) an accountability framework; and (4) a core focus on non-market housing and a public policy review by the Ontario public service.

To the member: Why is it that this government seems to ignore non-market housing, co-op housing and all those affordable options that would mean such a big difference in the lives of Ontarians?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I will repeat this again: Bill 134 does not represent low-income earners. They are forgotten out of Bill 134. Students are forgotten out of Bill 134. And I will say it again: In five years, we have not seen anything done to support low-income earners, and with the affordable rent crisis that we're facing now—we need help now, not next year, not two years and three years from now. Our low-income earners are—

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Speaker, I'm honoured to stand this evening to speak in support of Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Associate Minister of Housing and the parliamentary assistant for the hard work they did to create this bill—a bill that will make it less expensive and easier to build affordable homes across Ontario, a bill that will create and generate wealth.

Speaker, people everywhere are struggling to find a home. We're facing a housing supply crisis which is pricing young people and families out of the market. It's also leaving all Ontarians with a lack of affordable housing options. From the onset, our government has stressed the importance of reducing red tape, making life more affordable and putting money back in the pockets of hard-working Ontario families. This bill builds precisely on these pillars and plays an integral role in our government's commitment to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, by sup-

porting measures made through the housing supply action plans.

Ontario is growing. Our government is creating the conditions for economic prosperity and public safety. This attracts investment. It attracts people and individuals and families from all over the world who are choosing to make Ontario their home. In my hometown of Leamington, the population grew approximately 7% between 2016 and 2021, 2% higher than the provincial average. Further, Leamington welcomes around 5,000 international agricultural workers each year to work on our farms, orchards, greenhouses and agri-food businesses. This growth and prosperity, however, presents a unique factor that further drives housing demand.

My riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington is proud to feed Ontario while exporting food and technology around the world. To put this into perspective, innovations in sustainable agriculture and record investments in controlled-environment agriculture have positioned the area to have the highest concentration of greenhouses in North America. To support fresh growing, the area also hosts a number of technology companies and agri-businesses, further demanding and directly and indirectly employing thousands of people in rewarding, well-paying jobs. But this workforce needs a place to live, and this workforce places real demands on our housing market. These increased demands continue to grow the housing supply at the pace of our growing economy, all across Ontario.

2100

I believe this bill is the first part of the solution to solve our housing supply shortage. The first part of the legislation directly deals with development charges and the Development Charges Act, which would exempt affordable housing units from development-related charges, stimulating growth and building. The changes to the Development Charges Act would, if passed, take local incomes and market factors into consideration to define affordable housing units. This definition would then be used to determine which units would be exempt or discounted from a development-related charge.

Speaker, the development fees in some municipalities, on top of the cost of the lot and the home itself, can be up to \$100,000 for a single-family home—that's just the development fees. The aim of this bill is to eliminate or decrease these fees when building an affordable housing unit, to ensure the people of Ontario have access to these types of homes. The proposed change would result in lower prices compared to the current definition outlined in the Development Charges Act. Incorporating these income-based factors into the definition of an affordable unit would better mirror that household's ability to carry the costs associated with the housing. Ultimately, this will enable more people from across Ontario to find an affordable home, based on their household income.

As well, the proposed changes in this bill are meant to bolster municipalities as they work to attract and create good-paying jobs, just like my hometown of Leamington has done. For example, in the city of St. Thomas, our government is taking decisive action to support Volks-

wagen Group and PowerCo SE's historic investment to build an EV battery cell manufacturing facility. This facility will create up to 3,000 jobs almost immediately and help support job stability and economic growth throughout the region. The facility, as my colleague has previously mentioned, will be the largest of its kind in Canada. It also demonstrates the strength of Ontario's competitive business market. This is the largest auto investment in our province's history. It's a win for all of Ontario. It will continue to significantly support local and provincial economies, as well as providing thousands of new jobs.

Currently, municipalities are forbidden from providing financial assistance to any industrial or commercial enterprise within St. Thomas city. However, the changes we're proposing through this act will provide PowerCo SE with municipal-based incentives that were negotiated in partnership with the municipality. The new authority over the agreement would be restricted to St. Thomas only. These changes demonstrate our government's firm commitment to reducing red tape and making it easier for business to thrive in Ontario.

Building on reducing the burden of red tape, another part of these changes that went through extensive consultation refers to our government's plan to streamline hearings and speed up decisions at the Ontario Land Tribunal. These are questions and calls that I get in my offices, as I'm sure my colleagues and members across the aisle do. So if we can speed up decisions at the OLT—an independent tribunal which adjudicates matters related to land use planning, environmental and heritage protection, land valuation and compensation, as well as municipal finance matters—we'll all benefit.

The tribunal plays an essential role in resolving land disputes, which is one of the major burdens delaying housing infrastructure. Improving and streamlining processes and procedures at the OLT will resolve disputes faster, expedite decisions and minimize delays, resulting in projects being built faster everywhere.

Speaker, our government is committed to building more homes and the proposed changes debated tonight will accomplish this goal. Our government is dedicated to being a strong partner to our municipalities and ensuring they have the tools they need to build more homes and work with provincial partners to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, bringing prosperity throughout Ontario.

My colleagues in the department of municipal affairs and housing have worked efficiently, diligently and collaboratively to find regulatory and legislative ways to increase housing stock and make life more affordable for all of us. This bill exemplifies that commitment, and I am confident it will pass through the house unanimously.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member opposite for your comments today. I want to go back to the electric vehicle charging rebates. Will your government reintroduce electric vehicle rebates?

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's an important question. This government is committed to doing one thing: Look, if you

had one shot or one opportunity to seize everything you ever wanted in one moment, would you capture it or just let it slip? This government is going to capture it. We're going to create the conditions for success in the broader sector and let the private sector do what they do best and let government do what they should be doing: create conditions for success.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I wonder if the member might comment on the 1957 Ford Mustang, the capacity of the trunk.

Mr. Trevor Jones: That's an outstanding question from our government House leader, although I am a GM man, so I wouldn't know anything about fix or repair daily type vehicles.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Fix or repair daily—that's a good one. I think that spells out FORD, doesn't it?

In Niagara, organizations like Community Care, Salvation Army and local churches run our food banks. Right now, they're an incredible source of good for our less-privileged residents. I think that we've almost tripled in the lineups and the number of people attending our food banks, yet Niagara faces immense strain due to systemic issues, like affordable housing and rent control. I have an area in St. Catharines that the rent actually went up 48%, I think, and they can't afford to live there anymore. So they've moved and now they're probably living in their car.

This says it's about affordable housing and you said that you're getting rid of the red tape. I say you're putting up caution tape, yellow tape, for people that cannot afford to live in Niagara anymore.

Can you let me know: Will your government bring back rent control so people can really afford to rent and then get into a house that they need to get into?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you for the question from my good friend from across the aisle. We collaborate and we get along in many regards. We see the world through a different lens. I see the world economically through a lens that we have to pay for the services we all need by creating jobs, creating opportunities, generating wealth and not consuming it, so that everyone has an opportunity to live, to prosper, to own a home, to rent a home if they choose to, and to live a safe life. Thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his remarks. I know, back home for him, we've had the Heinz plant. We've had Navistar in Chatham. Prior to this government taking office, there wasn't a lot of hope that was happening in southwestern Ontario—years of neglect, hundreds and thousands of jobs lost by the previous government, but now Ontario has finally become the number one jurisdiction in North America when it comes to attracting businesses, jobs and newcomers.

2110

So, I'm hoping the member can elaborate on how this legislation, if passed, will help build on the success that we've experienced down our way and ensure that Ontario remains the best place to live, start a business and raise a family?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Outstanding question from my colleague and neighbour and friend. Southwestern Ontario should be a hub. It should be a two-pronged approach. It should feature our history of agriculture, agri-business production, technology and the auto sector. These two pieces of a very important pie move the country forward. This little sliver along the peninsula of southwestern Ontario has this history, has this know-how, has this potential.

I was in the Pikangikum First Nation. I got a phone call that Heinz was closing—the employer of my grandfather, my father, my father-in-law and multiple generations. This government created the conditions that the Highbury Canco company could come in, take over that plant, supply those farmers with a place to process their tomatoes and thrive—

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

MPP Jamie West: Today, we're going to be continuing debate on Bill 134. Before we start, I had the opportunity—I had to grab something out of my office, and I was looking at the Christmas decorations and, in 30 seconds or less, just want to share this story locally, back home, from the Sudbury Star.

“North’s Tallest Lit Christmas Tree Highlights Work of Sudbury Group....”

“Standing at about 45 feet, Huntington University’s Christmas tree is the tallest lit Christmas tree in northern Ontario....”

“Beyond the festivities, the university leverages the event as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on a local group, raising awareness of the organization and its work in the community.”

Kevin McCormick, the president and vice-chancellor of Huntington University, said, “This year we are kicking off the holiday season by providing a community gift to support the important work of the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth,” which is known locally as SACY, Speaker.

“This vital non-profit agency organization is focused on supporting youth, between the ages of 12 and 25 who are facing multiple barriers within our community. With limited funding and generous community donations, SACY works diligently to address specific local challenges in our community including homelessness, shelter, mental health and addictions.”

The reason I wanted to share that is that we're getting into the Christmas season; I notice one of my colleagues already has a Christmas tie on. I think, sometimes, when we're in debate, we forget about the work that we're doing for the people in our community, and the important work that Huntington University does and SACY does in my community, but every community has good people like

that. So it's good to share those stories to remind us about the good things that are happening.

This bill; it's called the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act. Schedule 2 has to do with the Volkswagen EV plant—not many people have mentioned it very much. I'm not going to go too far into it because that part of the schedule absolutely makes sense. It's a great part of it.

In fact, when I first saw these two schedules that don't really seem particularly related, frankly, I was suspecting that the housing side of it was going to be this poisoned pill, so that the government could stand up and say, “Oh my God, they didn't support the EV plant,” without talking about the part that was unsupportable. For the most part, I think, probably, this bill is pretty supportable the way it is. It probably doesn't go far enough.

Just moments ago in debate, my colleague from St. Catharines was talking about the need for real rent control. Our housing critic said—and it really stood out with me—we have twin problems; one is supply and one is affordability. There's a lot of movement towards supply, a lot of movement towards building, and we see it. There are tower cranes going up all over the place. There are lots of smaller units that are being torn down and replaced with these large units—multi-storey skyscrapers, basically, compared to where I live. But the problem with that is, when there's no rent control for anything that's built after 2018, Speaker, what happens is that all of those units become market rent.

And our housing critic, on a regular basis, reports back to us what market rent is. I think the most recent update for a one-bedroom is \$2,500 in Toronto. That is not affordable, and so it doesn't matter if you're building 10 or 10,000 units that are way beyond the ability for people to pay their rent, because you're not adding to the infrastructure.

The idea that, eventually, there will be a tipping point, and these developers who are renting their units for two grand or more are suddenly going to crash down to what's affordable—I don't know what kind of fantasy world you're living in, but that's not going to happen. That's not what any of us would do, right? So we have to do the two sides of it, and for the most part, this bill doesn't focus so much on affordability as much as supply. It's based on the philosophy of trickle-down economics.

Now, some of the numbers that our housing critic spoke about for a house: When you're talking about a million dollars, I can't imagine anyone investing a million dollars into a house, then saying, “Well, there's a lot of houses now, so I'm going to take a bath on this and put it up for a quarter of a million.” That's one of the issues we have.

Ultimately, there are trust issues right now. I'm trying to be kind to my colleagues across the aisle, but there are. There was the greenbelt grab scandal, and so, in the midst of housing, in the midst of an incredible affordability crisis and people wondering where they're going to live and how they'll pay rent and if they can ever afford a house at any point, the focus of the first year of this election season basically was releasing land in the greenbelt and creating \$8.3 billion worth of wealth for speculators. And that

caused a loss of trust from the people of Ontario. It absolutely did.

The Conservative government very rightly criticizes the Liberal government for the mess that we're in. They were in the seat of power for 15 years. They had the ability to do things for 15 years, and we didn't see much movement on this—absolutely did not see much movement on this in terms of affordable housing or affordable renting. But at the same time, there's that old expression: "When you point at someone, there's three fingers pointing back at you." You have to recognize the Conservative government has been in power for five years and in the last five years we have not seen good things happening in housing.

Encampments have exploded across this province. This summer, I remember seeing an article from the Premier saying something about not seeing any tents on the way to Queen's Park. I would invite him to my office; my office faces the north side, and there's already a tent there. But through the winter, there will be more and more tents. There will be a bunch of tents there until the police remove the tents from the northern side of Queen's Park, and then the tents will slowly return back. And they know they're going to slowly return back because all through the northern side of Queen's Park are porta-potties for people who are living in encampments that people without houses are living in.

In my city of Sudbury, during the Conservative government's first term, we had an explosion of a tent city. I know there's a lot of cities that have been dealing with this for a long time, but in Sudbury, this has never happened before. I'm not naive; I'm not saying we didn't have issues with people who are living rough. I'm not saying we didn't have people who are homeless. But we had never had such visible abject poverty in my city than we did a couple years ago. The only thing that has changed over the next couple of years is those people now have been pushed off into the bush where they cannot be seen. You'll find them during the day sort of milling around because there's very few services because of the cuts to funding and supports. But more and more people are becoming homeless because of this.

Feed Ontario had a report the other day talking about more people than ever—again, since 2018—more full-time working people, more working people using food banks on a regular basis. When you're using food banks on a regular basis, it means that you don't have enough money in your pocket to pay your bills at the end of the day. Rent comes first. Anyone who took psychology knows Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? It's food and shelter first. But if you can find food in any way—so, in the summer, if you could pick blueberries or if you can hunt or if you can go to a food bank, you're going to collect as much as you can. But the reality is, the people of Ontario are starving under this government, starving—not going hungry, starving, going without meals. That's a painful thing to face, but it's something we need to talk about very seriously.

We have encampments. We have very little services. We have very little transitional housing. We have very

little affordable housing. We have a government that was just recently boasting about all the work they're doing for gig workers—quite frankly, misclassified employees who, because the government is entrenching them as gig workers, don't have access to the Employment Standards Act and so their work is even more precarious. They're more likely to lose the housing that they already have—so many people on the edge of losing housing and coming in those encampments.

You have people who are renting who are terrified that they're going to be evicted from their homes because they've now been incentivized to go to market rent if you can get the tenant out. Now, there are great landlords—absolutely amazing landlords. I've met with many of them. But there are some landlords who are incredibly unscrupulous, and there is no shortage of stories across this province of landlords are renovicting their tenants.

2120

During the last election, when I was knocking on doors, I saw a lot of smaller units—eightplex, sixplex. When I would go to knock on doors and nobody was there, I'd look inside, and the renoviction that they're doing, the renovation that allowed them to evict the tenant? It was new windows and paint. They removed the tenant, they kicked them out for an extended amount of time, but the difference to that property from before, when the tenant was there and it was affordable, to when it bounces up to the high market rent and it's unaffordable now for those tenants is new windows and paint.

We're also seeing now a trend—I haven't seen it recently in Sudbury, but I am definitely seeing here in Sudbury demovictions, where, if you want to bring your place to market rent, and let's say it's only a couple of storeys, so you can get a developer to build very large skyscrapers, a lot more—well, you just kick everyone out and demolish it. And there is an incentive to do that because, once you demolish it, it's a new building after 2018 and you can charge whatever you want. There's no rent control. You can raise your rates as much as you want to every year. I mean, it is a gold mine.

So when the Conservative government talks all the time about the record number of rental starts—absolutely. If I was a wealthy billionaire, I would be building houses like there's no tomorrow because people have no other choice than to pay as high a rent as I can get them to pay—and it is high—or be homeless. We are right back to the old days of fiefdoms and royalty and peasants. We're right back in there, and we've got to move forward. We've really got to move forward on this.

Now, moving forward—away from encampments, away from the renovictions and stuff—we have a situation right now where people aren't able to afford to buy a house. Sometimes when I'm walking my dog in my neighbourhood, I wonder who can afford a house in my neighbourhood. I swear I might be the poorest person in my neighbourhood. My wife and I bought not quite 20 years ago. We have a four-bedroom place, and it's a nice neighbourhood, and we had two unionized working-class jobs. We were able to buy this house using the money that we

made from selling our starter home, which is the way that people used to do it. But now when I walk around my neighbourhood, there are cars on my street that I have to look up on my phone because I've never seen them before. I've never heard of that brand of car before.

So, what has occurred to me is that, from the time when I bought my house, when it was not your starter home but your second home that you would move into when your family expanded, the cost has really climbed a lot. So for the people coming into the neighbourhood now, they cannot be just an average middle-class family making ends meet. They just can't be, and that's the thing that has to be addressed and changed, and I don't think specifically this bill does that. I think this will build more houses, but it's not tackling the affordability side. And I don't mean just affordable for people at lower incomes; I'm talking about middle-class lifestyles, that people in middle-class lifestyles can't afford to make ends meet.

Knocking on doors in the last election, I met this lady. Fascinating—I told her she should write a story. She was homeless at one point and is now an engineer. She came through children's aid—this amazing story. She became an engineer, working in her field, making a very good wage as an engineer. She can't afford even a rental place; all she can find are short-term rentals, making an engineer's salary. She doesn't have a student loan to pay off. All of that is gravy, right? Everything she's making isn't going anywhere else except for maybe her car payment—because you need a car in Sudbury to get around. But she can't find a place that will rent to her because the market is so saturated and so many people need housing. And because it's all short-term rentals, it's very high, and she can't afford to save for a house. In this economy now—because now it's a year later—I don't think she could even afford a house, because the price of housing has climbed so much.

My son—I've talked about my son a couple of times here, but my son is graduating this year from teacher's college. He's very excited to get out there. He seems to really love his placement, so it's great, because this will be a new career for him. I was telling my son, "When you graduate, don't feel the need to move out right away. You should stay with us," and he looked at me like I stopped speaking the same language as him. He thought I was completely out to lunch that I would even suggest that he would move out and go somewhere else, because he can't afford to. So he's going to stay and live with my wife and I for a while, and we're used to having him around, so it's no difference to us. But he's staying with us not to save for a house, he's staying to save up for rent, with a full-time, good job. That's the reality for our young people. That's the part that's broken. And we have to stop pretending that this will be fixed by increasing the supply.

Like I said earlier, if you have 100,000 units that are \$2,000 a month and the majority of people make less than \$1,000 a month, they'll never move into those. You may as well build them in another country. You may as well build them underwater somewhere, where people use them

for scuba diving, because no one will be able to live there. And that's the thing we have in here.

The final one I want to talk about—I'm going to run out of time just talking about the situation we have right now with housing, but I think it's important to talk about this—is that people are going to start losing their houses. There's a variety of ways that people are going to lose their houses. Everything is getting more expensive, but one of the things that's happening here with the previous bill—Bill 63 I think—is that they have downloaded developer fees onto municipalities. So \$500 million has been downloaded. Developers won't pay developer fees to incentivize developers to build. That sounds good on the surface; the problem, though, is that that \$500 million comes from somewhere.

What happened with these development fees, they were provided to the municipalities, the cities that you live in. It would go towards paying for housing shelters. It would go towards paying for long-term care, paying for child care, paying for waste, paying for police, paying for fire services—all essential things to our community. When you eliminate that much money out of the municipalities—the thing with a municipality is that they cannot run a deficit. The only way that a municipality, your local city, can make ends meet—and I'll talk about Sudbury because that's the part that will make sense to the people in my riding—the only way that they can make ends meet is that they cut services or they raise your property taxes. There might be some other creative things, but those are the two things they really can do.

This winter—and I know the snow has already started to fly in Sudbury, but this winter, when people are complaining about how often the snowplow comes or how infrequently it will come by or how the side streets don't get done right away; or how you cannot walk down the sidewalks unless you take giant steps through the snow, but if you have any kind of mobility issues, you're not leaving your house; or how you can't get on to the bus because the snowbanks are too high—all of that has to do with because this government—previous governments as well—have downloaded more and more fees to the cities to pay for them. They have rewarded themselves and celebrated balancing the books and doing a great job provincially by shifting that burden onto the municipalities who have no way to pay for it.

When you have a situation like that—and let's say you're retired and you managed to pay off your house and you struggled and you made all those repairs. I don't know who ever said that owing a house is cheaper than renting, because they probably never had to replace a roof or do major repairs. It is a big struggle. It's a great thing. I'm proud to own a house. I grew up in subsidized housing, so it's a real achievement and something I'm very proud of. But as time goes on, and I watch as my property taxes outpace the cost of my mortgage, I start thinking about how I'll make this work when I retire.

When my property taxes are now paying for developers, who are going to make a lot of money developing these properties—I've never met a developer who has

patches on their jeans and holes in their shoes. They're doing all right, the developers. I heard that one of the developers could pay cash to go to Vegas and stay in Vegas for a couple of days. I didn't even know you could do that. I was trying to take money out to pay for my son's tuition. It took me several days to take it out because there's limits at my bank. I don't know how you would get \$700 a day for a hotel room plus the cash to fly there and back, but developers just have it hanging around, maybe like a cartoon wealthy person, where they just have those stacks of money that they throw in the fire. But they're doing all right. They're doing okay.

And you know what we're doing—not we're doing; they're doing, the Conservative government—they're saying that for these really wealthy people, while the people of Ontario are having a hard time making ends meet, the people of Ontario can't pay their rent or afford a place to live, why don't you kick in some money so they don't have to pay fees so they can do even better? That's a broken system in this.

This is a government that was elected on saying "For the people," and I have to tell you, the people—I almost said something unparliamentary; again, I was thinking about a different F-word—do not feel like this is a government that is working for them, more and more. They just don't.

2130

This plan, like I said before, is absolutely supportable, but it doesn't go far enough when it comes to the affordability side. That's why I'm trying to paint that picture, Speaker, in terms of what people are living through right now. People right now are homeless in larger numbers than we've ever seen. People right now, trying to go to school, trying to pay these really high tuition rates, can't find a place to live. International students are coming over and they're getting gouged because of the amount they're charged in terms of tuition. They can't even predictably know what they're going to pay next year or the following year, but they have to find places to live, and they're living seven, eight or 12 in a room. This is the reality people are having.

So we need to tackle the affordability side not just for low income, but for middle income as well who are feeling that pinch, and people who feel like these good trades jobs that the Premier is always talking about and the Minister of Labour is always talking about—these good-paying trades jobs people can't even afford to buy the houses they're building. We need to address that, because those are good-paying jobs and they should be able to live a middle-class lifestyle where they can plan to buy a house.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for his comments.

I was listening to what you were talking about. Specifically, industry experts here in Ontario really have a clear consensus that rising home prices are driven by a lack of supply. Despite overwhelming evidence, the members

opposite seem too often to be unwilling to acknowledge this fact. The member for Toronto–St. Paul's stated that more housing is not necessarily the answer, and more recently the member for Hamilton Centre said she believes in abolishing market housing.

Now, the member opposite has said we have to stop pretending that this will be solved by increasing supply. Speaker, how can the opposition's ideas about fixing the housing crisis be taken seriously when the member opposite will not acknowledge what experts across the province are saying is the real cause, which is a lack of supply? When there's more supply, then they will cost less.

MPP Jamie West: The philosophy, basically, is trickle-down economics: that if you flood the market with housing, the prices will come down. However, what she's leaving out of the conversation is that we need to build housing at all affordability levels, right? If we build housing that is going to cost over \$2,000, and the average worker doesn't make \$2,000 a month, they cannot move into those houses.

So if we are not building transitional housing, if we're not building those wartime first-time homebuyer houses, if we're not building those slightly upgraded junior executive, the executive—if we're not building at all those levels, if all we're building is the CEO houses—and without rent control, that's what we're doing. If all we're building is the most expensive ones, we are never going to get that supply to work properly.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Sudbury for your comments today. I guess the question I have is, at what point will people stop believing the Conservative propaganda? For five years, this government has been saying, "We're going to increase the supply of housing, and the prices are going to come down." And yet, as a supplementary question, if you could tell us: How much has the price of housing gone up in Sudbury during this term, the Conservative term? Because the supply is just one part of the problem. The other part of the problem is the financialization. The other part of the problem is that major corporations, real estate investment trusts, are buying billions of dollars of housing, so that when you go to buy a house or your son goes to buy a house, they're not competing with somebody else who's wanting to buy a house, they're actually competing with a real estate corporation.

So when will people stop believing the Conservative propaganda?

MPP Jamie West: I don't know. Do you know what? Actually, Speaker, I applaud the people of Ontario for being optimistic in these terrible conditions that we have. We're in the middle of this affordability crisis. All we hear in question period is "carbon tax." We do not hear about the gouging. People go shopping in the grocery store and they recognize they're being gouged and ripped off. They get it, right? When they get gas—and gas in my city is 10 cents

more than it is a half-hour drive away—they know they're being gouged. They know it. But we don't talk about gouging; there are all these little side projects and little things.

When it comes to housing, though, as more and more people recognize that their kids aren't able to move out of their basement, or their friends become homeless, or they're couch surfing, that's when they'll say, "Look the rubber is not hitting the road." This is a government that is all sizzle, no steak. What they want to be able to do is actually pay their bills have a government that cares for them like the NDP does.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I understand that the member from Sudbury doesn't want to talk about supply, but the population of Ontario increased by more than 500,000 people last year. Is that not an indication that supply is a problem, because if we have a population increase by more than 500,000 people in a single year—and we already have a housing crisis, because we don't have enough houses for the people who are here. When the population goes up by 500,000, shouldn't that tell you that we need more houses?

MPP Jamie West: Yes, several times, I talked about what we need is supply and affordability. Our critic, the NDP housing critic said, "They're twin problems: supply and affordability." All the way through, I said, "This bill is supportable, but doesn't do anything about the affordability side."

So they're not hearing the second half of the question. They're not listening to the second half of the problem—so supply, absolutely, yes. If you're not making it affordable and if you're building automobiles and all you're building are Ferraris—if you think a student is going to get to work because you've built enough Ferraris, and you're not building that entry-level Hyundai, Chevy or whatever else it is, you are missing the point when it comes to supply. You're just missing the point.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: You know, the most fundamental rule—the basic rule of economics is supply and demand and the relationship between those things, but the member from Spadina–Fort York says that that's Conservative propaganda. I know he's an English teacher, by background, and not an economics teacher, but there are some fundamental principles here: If you cannot rent that apartment—a one-bedroom apartment that you cited as at \$2,500; not a mansion, not a McMansion. If you can't rent it at \$2,500, as a landlord, you're going to rent it for less. So when there is more supply, the prices come down.

Will the member conceive that more supply is the solution? We're going to work on all of that to make sure we have the supply so people can afford housing here in Ontario.

MPP Jamie West: Right, and so when you talk about supply and demand, you're pretending that it's in a vacuum. The reality, though, right now, is we have people

who are living homeless right now. We have people who cannot move out right now. That's what I'm saying. If at some point, magically, you build enough of these \$2,500 apartments and people are able to move in, that is a long way from today.

What I'm saying is you have to tackle the affordability side, because there will always be people who do not have the money. Even if the price comes down, that price is not going to drop from \$2,500 to, say, a \$1,000 or \$800 where someone could get into that apartment. It's just not. It's not.

When you go to the store—all through Toronto, there are phone stores. You can get the brand new iPhone, you can get an off-brand phone, or you can get a flip phone. That is because people can afford different levels of phones. That's just the reality. Some people can afford the brand new iPhone, and some people can't.

You need to recognize there are some people who can't and cannot wait for this magical idea of all of these houses being built, so that you can move into one of them some day, 30 years from now.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague for his very insightful comments.

I wonder if he had an opportunity to read the report that was just released by the United Way, Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, Ontario for All, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, the Ontario Alliance to End Homelessness, it's called Bringing Affordable Housing Home. In that report, they say very clearly that supply is not the only solution to our current housing crisis. They say, "For governments to support all Ontarians and help lift people out of core housing need and homelessness, a full spectrum of housing options that meet the actual housing affordability needs of Ontarians is required."

I wonder what the member thinks of that conclusion in this report and if it is something that he would agree with.

MPP Jamie West: This is one of those issues that really is at all levels of the conversation. Anyone who is an expert in housing—none of us are in this room, but if you listen to people who are experts in housing, they will tell us that we need housing at all levels—at all levels.

Interjections.

MPP Jamie West: They're bragging that they are, Speaker. If you are, then start listening and start doing what's right. You need to do it at all levels—at all levels.

2140

So this is what needs to happen: You need some affordable housing, you need some transitional housing, and you need some socially assisted housing. It's not just that we build houses and it comes. You have to build at all levels so that students can get into housing, people who are homeless can get into housing, middle-class families can get into housing, single parents can get into housing. It's at all these different levels of social and economic ability. That's where it has to be happening. It's been decaying for so long—that's where it has to happen.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good evening, Speaker. I rise this evening to continue the conversation around housing affordability and good jobs.

Vibrant communities are growing right across our province. Ontario's population is increasing at a rapid pace, and this growth will continue as we see more and more people immigrating to and moving into Ontario. Our economy is booming, and we are attracting people from all over the world with our world-class education system, research and development, innovation and our once-again thriving manufacturing industry.

Thanks to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, alongside our Premier, we are bringing back good-paying manufacturing jobs to Ontario. Over the last three years, Magna has invested to manufacture EV batteries in Brampton. Stellantis is investing to modernize Windsor and Brampton plants and investing to manufacture EVs and EV battery plants in Windsor and in St. Thomas.

With all of the investments in manufacturing happening in Ontario, we are attracting tradespeople, skilled workers and international students who want to come to Ontario and contribute to the economy. So many people are attracted to our province, and, in order to keep our population, we need housing. We need homes for the people who are here—for young people who were born, raised and educated here—and we need homes for those who are coming to make a better life for themselves and their family here in Ontario, because we live in the best province in Canada.

In the midst of a housing supply crisis, we know how imperative it is that housing is both accessible and affordable. By ensuring the definition of “affordable housing” reflects both local income and market levels, we can be assured that those living in Ontario and anyone coming to Ontario will be able to find housing. I say “find” because, as I mentioned, we're in the midst of a housing supply crisis, and accessibility to housing is just as important as affordability.

In 2021, our province saw the highest housing starts in over 30 years. However, that's still not enough, Speaker. For too many years, red tape, zoning laws and NIMBYism have stalled new housing developments. Many projects have been abandoned because of the long wait times to get permits, and time is money. The longer a developer or a builder has to wait, the cost of a project increases, due to increased costs in building materials, the increased cost of labour and, of course, the increased cost in interest rates and borrowing costs. These are just some of the most significant costs associated with building new homes, not to mention government taxes which, according to information that I have, make up almost a third of the cost of a new home or a new build.

That's why these proposed changes are so important. If passed, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act will incorporate income factors and market conditions in the definition of “affordable housing.” If eligible, these savings could come in the form of discounts and exemptions on

development fees. Development charges are used by municipalities for infrastructure like water, sewer or roads, and government fees can be about 30% of the purchase price of a home, as per the reports by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis—and they're finding that these fees have significantly increased. Everything has increased. The cost of living has increased which, again, includes the cost to build.

I've mentioned in previous remarks that the average cost of a single-family home in my community of Burlington is around \$1.3 million, and the majority of homes in my community are single-family dwellings. A constituent in my riding, a young couple, has saved \$150,000 for a down payment, but that's still not enough, Speaker, not in this current housing climate. Young people, newcomers and the elderly are disproportionately priced out of the housing market.

I'd like to share another story. A constituent was in the market for a property around February of last year. She had a down payment of over \$150,000 that she had saved, and was looking to purchase a home to be closer to her parents, her job and to have accessible child care. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to purchase a house, as house prices had grown at a staggering rate, so she decided to look at condos instead. She was being priced out of that market too, being overbid by tens of thousands of dollars by other buyers who were also scrambling to purchase a home because the supply just wasn't there.

Now, over a year later, there are other factors to consider—things like higher interest rates, higher food costs, and the cost to heat your home is higher because of the federal carbon tax. So even if she were to try and purchase now, she wouldn't be able to, because she'd have to either choose to heat her home, buy groceries or pay her mortgage, because the relationship between housing prices or home prices and disposable income is far apart, and it's becoming even more challenging for many Ontarians to afford a home.

With Ontarians taking on more debt than in previous years due to inflation and increased costs of living, the debt-to-income ratio of many Ontarians has increased, making it even harder for families to qualify for a mortgage to own a home. That's why it's so important to continue to build more homes and rental units.

Improving housing affordability requires a multi-faceted strategy, which includes housing options and government policies like this bill and the others before it that support increased supply and housing solutions. This legislation allows for private and non-profit partners to build, sell and rent homes that Ontarians can afford, because savings from development fees can be passed on to Ontarians.

The Building Faster Fund also provides an incentive to municipalities to reach their housing targets, and affordable housing can help municipalities reach their goals and so, together, we can build 1.5 million homes by 2031. Ridings like mine that have suffered from NIMBY attitudes can benefit from the Building Faster Fund. For too long, many communities and municipalities have strug-

gled with NIMBYism and too much red tape, making building homes, multi-family homes, laneway homes and duplexes nearly impossible.

The Housing Affordability Task Force has made recommendations for zoning to allow four housing units on a lot, allowing people who live and work in surrounding areas to stay close to home and their family. It's also great news for local industry and business that are in need of workers. I hear frequently from local businesses in my riding about the challenges they have recruiting workers because there are just no housing options for employees to live near where they work.

Speaker, Burlington is close in proximity to Oakville, the home of the Ford assembly plant. Ford has recently invested \$1.8 billion to start manufacturing EV model vehicles. That investment alone will bring jobs and people—people who want to put down roots in the surrounding areas like Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga and Hamilton.

No one wants to spend hours each day travelling to work, which is why it's so important that housing and developments are in proximity to good-paying jobs, like those jobs that have been created in St. Thomas by Volkswagen and PowerCo. The economic opportunity and development in St. Thomas will draw skilled workers, immigrants and new Canadians to its doors.

The opportunity created by Volkswagen in St. Thomas will have a lasting ripple effect on the economy, including good jobs in my community in the automobile supply chain. New, good-paying jobs; population growth; and supply chain opportunities for manufacturers across the province will drive and continue to drive economic growth in our province. St. Thomas will need new homes, affordable homes and rentals, for the expected increase in population.

Our government continues to tackle the housing crisis in Ontario, with our housing minister, Minister Calandra, and our associate housing minister and parliamentary assistant bringing forward real solutions. If passed, this important piece of legislation would complement the other housing initiatives and supply action plans put forward, and support municipalities as they work towards reaching their housing goals, all while attracting and creating jobs.

2150

Our government is committed to supporting Ontario's growing population and workforce, and will continue to create the right conditions for economic growth, job creation and an Ontario that has housing for all.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from Burlington. I listened to your words quite attentively, but I've just got a question to ask. St. Catharines is struggling, may I say, with homelessness and with encampments going all over our city, and our property taxes actually just went up 10.6%, which is one of the largest property tax increases, I think, across Ontario. I read and hear that some of the developmental fees are going to be downloaded on municipalities, and with a 10.6% increase for taxes on a house—and for an average three-bedroom bungalow, which is an affordable home.

We have wartime houses all over St. Catharines. We have affordable homes, but they can't afford to live in them anymore with that kind of tax increase. So can I ask—

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from St. Catharines. A recent report from the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis found that the burden of government fees on new housing has significantly increased now and accounts, as I mentioned in my remarks, for about 31% of the purchase price of a new home in Ontario. By reducing development fees on affordable homes, our government will not only incentivize the construction of affordable homes, but will also ensure that savings are passed down directly to home buyers and renters.

To support our municipal partners, we have also introduced the Building Faster Fund, which is a \$1.2-billion, three-year program to support municipalities in achieving their housing targets. Each year, up to \$400 million will aid eligible municipalities based on their performance towards helping Ontario build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm going to ask the member how this bill is going to help develop the province of Ontario and bring investment and jobs to the province of Ontario. The reason I'm going to ask that question is because she alluded to it in her speech. She said she's from Burlington and how even the investments around Burlington are bringing further investment to Burlington and growth in that area, just like in my area of Essex county, where investments that are not necessarily taking place directly in my riding, but around my riding, are bringing great growth and job development in and around my riding.

So I put the question to that member: How is this bill going to help build up Ontario and create jobs and investment in Ontario?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member for Essex for the question. Good-paying jobs are essential to help rebuild our economy and help more Ontarians afford homes, especially with the rising cost of living. That's why our government is proposing changes that would, if passed, help support Volkswagen Group and PowerCo's historic investment to build electric vehicle battery cell manufacturing facilities in St. Thomas. This facility will help to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, including indirect jobs in my community of Burlington, where we do have smaller automotive supply chain manufacturing businesses. These proposed measures speak to our government's strong commitment to work closely with municipalities and communities across the province to achieve the best outcomes for all Ontarians.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: We have seen that this government was not interested in the 104 new units that would have been available by now in Thunder Bay if the govern-

ment had been interested in supporting the building of affordable housing.

But my question is about student housing. Students are drowning in expenses, but this is nothing new, so I'm wondering whether you're able to say when the government will start to build student housing that's affordable.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you for the question. Our government has committed to building 1.5 million homes by 2031. We're working with profit and not-for-profit and private sectors. Newcomers and those immigrating to our province, including international students, play a vital role in growing and enriching the social and cultural lives of our communities, as well as building up our local economies. They play a key role in making Ontario the best place to live, to start a business and raise a family. That's why the changes our government is proposing are so vital to ensure our province is prepared for future growth as well as for the many future newcomers who will choose our province to study or to settle down in and lay roots that will last a lifetime.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the great member from Burlington for her remarks this evening. I was hoping that perhaps the member could talk a bit about the progress that the province has made in increasing the housing supply in Ontario. I know we've talked a lot about the record number of rentals that have gone up. I'm hoping that you can talk a bit more about what the housing supply has been like for us.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora. The province is seeing meaningful progress in our plan to build homes. Both 2021 and 2022 saw the most housing starts in over 30 years, with close to 100,000 homes built in each year. In 2022, Ontario recorded close to 15,000 purpose-built rental housing starts, the highest number on record. Ontario is working closely with the federal government to increase the supply of purpose-built rentals by removing both the provincial and federal portions of the HST, a measure that will make it easier and cheaper to build this important type of housing.

Ontario is continuing to take steps to tackle the housing supply crisis and meet its pledge of building at least 1.5 million homes by implementing recommendations of the Housing Affordability Task Force through the introduction of its most recent housing supply action plan, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants. Ontario's recent additional funding investments, including \$14.7 million over three years starting in April 2022 and \$11.8 million over three years starting April 2023, are helping the Landlord and Tenant Board to streamline processes—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the wonderful member from Burlington.

Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In her remarks, the member referred to the Building Faster Fund, which is the incentive funding for municipalities that meet their housing targets. As the member will know, only two of Ontario's 20 largest municipalities are on pace to meet or exceed their annual target. London, my municipality, was one of many that was not able to meet the target because they have no control over what developers do with the permits after they are issued. So the big city mayors are pushing for criteria that's based on municipal approvals rather than housing starts, and I wondered if the member could share with this House if the government is going to listen to the big city mayors and make that change.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We will continue to work hard to get shovels in the ground. Over the last four years, our government has introduced dozens of new policies under our housing supply action plans that have helped to substantially increase housing starts in recent years. Ontario is becoming the number one jurisdiction for businesses, for jobs, for newcomers. As you know, this year alone, our province grew by more than 500,000 new residents, and it will only continue growing, with recent projections showing as many as four million people calling Ontario home by 2031. Our government is responsible for ensuring our province has the housing supply needed to accommodate growth and support Ontario's population, and that's why we're taking the decisive action to bring home ownership back into reach for everyday Ontarians.

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

Mr. Calandra has moved third reading of Bill 134, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act, 2023.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2201.

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 civiles 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	