

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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législative  
de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

N° 49A

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6 March 2023

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Lundi  
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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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House Publications and Language Services  
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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 March 2023

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 mars 2023

*The House met at 1015.*

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

*Prayers.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who have gathered here, and continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Meegwetch.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I ask everyone to join with me in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem.

*Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.*

*Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### HOUSING

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Like the rest of the province, Niagara is in a housing crisis and our government is taking bold action to fix this. We're considering every possible option to get more homes built faster so that young families and newcomers in Niagara can find a home that meets their needs and their budget.

**1020**

Last year, the people of Ontario re-elected a PC government under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford with a mandate to get 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years. As hundreds of thousands of newcomers a year arrive in our province, we need to take action to ensure that there are homes being built for them and for all Ontarians.

Bill 23 addresses Ontario's housing supply crisis. Those who say no to Bill 23 and building the new homes needed in our province must recognize the harmful cost of their opposition. The social harm of abandoning the future generations and millions of new Canadians to a housing crisis which has already impacted the social determinants of health, like poverty, stability and mental health, is something that we cannot accept.

Bill 23 takes transformational action to solve the housing crisis. It gives young families and new Canadians the hope to achieve the dream of home ownership. It helps local charities and community organizations build affordable and not-for-profit housing by reducing development charges for these crucial builds.

Our government is going to continue standing up for every young family in Ontario and in Niagara hoping to get into the housing market. We're building more homes, creating more housing opportunities and ensuring every newcomer and young family in Ontario and Niagara can realize the dream of home ownership.

#### NATURAL GAS RATES

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Carol Brisseau is a retired London West senior who lives with her adult son on ODSP. They are one of many London West families struggling to afford skyrocketing natural gas bills. Carol doesn't know how she will afford to heat her home and worries she may have to leave retirement and find a job to avoid her utilities being cut off.

Families like Carol's are facing an affordability crisis like never before, but this Premier seems more intent on allowing mega-mansions to be built on the greenbelt than in helping people afford basic necessities like food, housing and utilities. This Premier's rubber-stamping of gas rate increases has meant a doubling of Enbridge gas prices in the last two years and left families at the mercy of price-gouging energy companies and volatile energy markets.

The NDP stands with Ontarians in calling for immediate relief from the rising cost of natural gas. The government should be providing financial assistance to help people struggling to heat their homes. They should be bringing back and expanding rent control. They should be doubling social assistance rates. They should be taking on greedy corporations that are using the guise of inflation to gouge. And they should be funding aggressive energy conservation programs that will help people stay warm and comfortable while cutting back on use.

Will we see these measures in this year's provincial budget? Speaker, Londoners like Carol will be watching.

#### WELLINGTON HEIGHTS SECONDARY SCHOOL

#### SENIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TEAM

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's my pleasure to rise in this place to recognize the Wellington Heights senior girls volleyball team. For the first time in their history, the senior girls volleyball team captured the district 4 championship. After losing the first set of the semifinal match against Norwell, the Wolverines battled back, taking the next three straight sets to win. They would go on to beat Westside Secondary in the final to take the district 4 senior

girls volleyball championship and earn a spot at the CWOSSA tournament. At CWOSSA, they made it all the way to the semifinals before losing a hard-fought battle with Delhi District Secondary School, ultimately placing third in the tournament.

I want to personally congratulate the entire team on winning the district 4 senior girls volleyball championship and making history. You should all be very proud of each other and your accomplishments and your showing at CWOSSA. Thank you to coach Kosempel and coach Barnard for your supporting this amazing team on their journey. Thank you to the entire community for cheering on your Wolverines. Go, Wolverines!

#### ANCASTER COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVE

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** After two years of virtual campaigns, the Ancaster Community Food Drive is back and better than ever. The food drive celebrated its 30-plus-one-year anniversary this past Saturday, and the snowstorm did not slow anyone down. A community of more than 400 volunteers went door to door to collect donations and returned to the Ancaster Fairgrounds, where a mountain of food was weighed, sorted and packed. The food was then loaded onto trucks to deliver to those fantastic agencies that provide emergency food services to the families and the most vulnerable in our community: Ancaster Community Services, the Good Shepherd Centre, Hamilton Food Share, Mission Services of Hamilton, Neighbour to Neighbour, St. Matthew's House, the Salvation Army and Wesley Urban Ministries. We thank you for your service.

It was a pleasure to be there with many, many volunteers, local businesses, service clubs and schools, including players from the Ancaster Avalanche minor hockey team. Kudos once again to Jim LoPresti, Tom Ippolito, Jan Lukas, Betty Kobayashi and all the members of the community food drive committee.

We know that the most wonderful magic happens when volunteers come together. It is the power of many hands uniting in a single purpose. Despite the significant snowfall, a collective effort brought the total food collected over the 31 years to 1,970,000 pounds. We can count on it that at the same time next year, the Ancaster Community Food Drive will hit their next milestone, which will be two million pounds of food donated. Thank you very much for your work.

#### CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** This morning I want to share with you a story about my riding, the city of Cambridge, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The city of Cambridge was established on January 1, 1973, when the former communities of Galt, Preston, Hespeler and Blair were amalgamated. Together, we have grown to become one big, caring city and community, along with some lifelong residents like myself clinging to our municipal roots. Yes, I am from Cambridge, but if you ask me, I will tell you I'm from Galt. It's the same with people from Hespeler and Blair and Preston. It's a constant and often

comical theme of conversations that are still held to this day. Yes, 50 years later we still take pride in the geographical part of our city that we grew up in, but we have come together to become a prosperous city, with rich architectural heritage, walking trails that are the envy of visitors, and countless arts and cultural celebrations.

Cambridge is one of the fastest-growing and strongest-growing economies in Canada. I am proud to say it is a popular destination for film productions such as *Bitten*, *Murdoch Mysteries* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. It's not uncommon to see film crews and well-known actors milling around one of the three downtown cores while fans line the streets for a glimpse of excitement.

The 50th birthday celebration for Cambridge kicked off a winter levee at the city hall last month that will continue throughout the year, with art exhibitions, public events, photography contests and restaurant promotions. If you haven't been to Cambridge, it's time you did. You will be glad you did. Happy birthday, Cambridge.

#### WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I rise today to commemorate International Women's Day. While there will be time to reflect on the accomplishments of women, I want to make sure that we are all laser-focused on women's safety and women's health, especially as the provincial budget will be coming forward in a few weeks.

I call on the members of this chamber to press for real action to ensure women are prioritized in this budget. We are seven months removed from the Renfrew county inquest, which made 86 recommendations to the province to ensure we protect women and children against violence and femicide. Over half of those recommendations are without a provincial response. Ontario can do better. We all know rising inflation and interest rates mean more gendered implications for quality of life, well-being and access to basic needs.

Almost a year ago, my colleague responded to this by proposing that Ontario should offer universal contraception for women, something British Columbia announced they will be doing in this year's budget. Ontario can do better. We can make a difference for women through this budget, ensuring the organizations that work to keep them safe are funded and women get the support they need.

I would like to see us celebrate women this week not by looking backward, but by looking forward, by working together to ensure we create a budget in Ontario that makes women's health an economic priority.

1030

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** On Saturday, February 25, I was pleased to host a farmer appreciation breakfast at the Richmond Memorial Community Centre in my riding of Carleton to recognize the hard work that farmers do in my riding to contribute to Ontario's success. Farmers feed families, farmers feed Ontario, and Carleton is home to some of our province's best.



I was also pleased to host the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the riding and discuss what our government is doing to get it done for farmers in Carleton and across Ontario. With the release of the Grow Ontario Strategy, our government is strengthening the agri-food sector and ensuring an efficient, reliable and responsible food supply network through new innovation. Our plan will also increase both the consumption and production of food grown and prepared in Ontario by 30%, increase Ontario's food and beverage manufacturing GDP by 10%, and boost Ontario's agri-food exports 8% annually by 2032.

Moreover, just last week, our government negotiated a sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership for Ontario that will see upwards of \$1.77 billion in support for the agri-food sector over the life of the agreement. Over \$569 million will be invested in strategic initiatives, which is a 25% increase over the previous funding agreement.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers play an invaluable role in this province. They are the reliable providers of so many different safe, high-quality and delicious foods we all enjoy. Let's give our thanks to the hard-working farmers of Carleton and across this province.

#### QUESTIONS RELATIVES AUX FEMMES

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** C'est le Mois de la Francophonie et cette semaine nous soulignons aussi la Journée internationale des femmes.

La semaine dernière, j'ai eu l'opportunité de travailler dans un cadre qui combinait ces deux thèmes, soit la francophonie et les femmes. Ainsi, j'ai participé à la réunion du réseau des femmes de l'assemblée des parlementaires francophones. Ce fut une expérience des plus enrichissantes de représenter l'Ontario à cette conférence qui rassemblait des représentants de plusieurs pays, dont la Côte d'Ivoire, le Niger, la Roumanie, la France, la Belgique, la Nouvelle-Calédonie, le Cambodge, le Cameroun et le Maroc, qui était l'hôte de ce rassemblement.

Les discussions approfondies que nous avons eues ont certes révélé que le Canada et l'Ontario ont fait des progrès sur les questions importantes telles que le harcèlement, la discrimination basée sur le sexe et la place des femmes au Parlement. En tant que chef de file, l'Ontario doit continuer d'avancer dans les domaines importants comme la traite de personnes, qui est malheureusement une réalité partout dans le monde.

Il y a deux semaines, cette Assemblée a voté en faveur du projet de loi 41, qui, si adopté, pourrait mieux soutenir les survivantes de la traite de personnes ici en Ontario. J'espère que tous les membres de cette Assemblée feront le nécessaire pour assurer que ce projet de loi important reçoive rapidement la sanction royale.

À toutes les femmes et tous les Franco-Ontariens, je souhaite une semaine et un mois de réflexion sur comment nous pouvons ensemble trouver des solutions à nos défis.

#### HAZEL MCCALLION

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** On January 29, Mississauga residents and Ontarians throughout the province were

devastated to learn of the passing of our beloved former mayor Hazel McCallion. She was a selfless and humble public servant, a fearless leader, a wise mentor and a good friend to me. When Hazel McCallion was elected mayor in 1978, the vast majority of my riding of Erin Mills was farmland. Over the subsequent 36 years, the great Hurricane Hazel oversaw a mass transformation of the city of Mississauga. She built homes and hospitals. She supported businesses and local communities, and as a member of the Coptic and Egyptian community, I would like to thank her for her tremendous support to all communities in Mississauga.

She never gave up on her vision for a bigger and better city. Even during her last weeks, Hazel McCallion was a fierce advocate for Ontarians, publicly supporting this government's housing plan. On Thursday, I attended an announcement at Credit Valley Hospital in my riding, the same hospital that Hazel opened in 1985. We were there to celebrate a \$75-million donation. Thank you to Blair Wolk and the Orlando Corp. for supporting our vision of an accessible health care system.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to Mayor McCallion's legacy to continue following in her footsteps: investing in transit infrastructure, such as the Hazel McCallion Line; supporting the construction of more homes; attracting investment and businesses; and taking meaningful action to make life easier and more affordable for all Ontarians.

On behalf of my constituents in Mississauga—Erin Mills, I would like to thank the late Hazel McCallion for her enduring service to our community and her family for sharing her with us.

#### RARE DISEASES

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** On February 28, we celebrated Rare Disease Day in Ontario and internationally, and I want to recognize two hard-working constituents from my riding of Simcoe—Grey: Beth and Madi Vanstone from Beeton, Ontario. For over 10 years, the Vanstones have been coming to Queen's Park advocating for people living with cystic fibrosis.

Through their dedication, perseverance and advocacy, our government was the first province in Canada to expand coverage for Trikafta to include all Ontarians aged six and over through our publicly funded medical drug program. This transformational medication has built on the effectiveness of predecessor medications Orkambi and Kalydeco to improve the quality, health, and length of the lives of people afflicted with cystic fibrosis right here in Ontario.

One in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, and there is still no cure. More than 4,300 Canadian children, youth and adults with cystic fibrosis attend specialized CF clinics today.

I was happy to meet the Vanstones last week for Rare Disease Day to discuss the need for a rare disease strategy in Ontario. I recognize there is more work to do, and I look forward to continuing working with Beth and Madi and other stakeholders and the members of this House to ensure that life-saving medications for rare diseases are available to all Ontarians.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. Once again, I will remind members that statements are to be 90 seconds in length.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a very special guest, the Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada. Please join me in warmly welcoming Speaker Rota to the Legislature.

I also wish to welcome one of my constituents, Melanie Frazer from Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, who is with us here today. Welcome, Melanie. It's great to have you here.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I'd like to welcome the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant, David Prang, to the people's House. It's good to see you today, my friend.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to welcome Laura-Jane Benoit and her colleagues from Ontario Autism Coalition to Queen's Park. As well, I would like to thank and welcome two students from Brock University, St. Catharines—my hometown—Sydney Sloane and Xavier Alexy. Welcome to your House and thank you. Go, Badgers, go!

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** I'd like to welcome the Ontario Autism Coalition today and specifically Alina Cameron, Bruce McIntosh, Jannet Da Rocha, Tony Stravato and all of the families who are here today. Welcome and thank you.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** In addition to welcoming my MP, Anthony Rota, to the House, I also want to welcome our friends from local chambers all across Ontario and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'm very happy to be able to welcome members of the Ontario Autism Coalition—families, even some young people here today, but especially Kate Dudley-Logue and Tony Stravato, who are both vice-presidents of the Ontario Autism Coalition, and Bruce McIntosh, who is also vice-president and founding president.

1040

I'm also happy to welcome so many members of chambers from across this province and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for their advocacy day today and especially CEO and president, Rocco Rossi.

Finally, last but not least, I'm very happy to welcome all of those representatives from the OPSEU corrections division who are here today, including OPSEU president, JP Hornick.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'd like to introduce Laura and Matt Langford, parents of today's page captain, Harry Langford. Right after question period, I'm going to have lunch with the page captain and his mother, who was a page here a number of years ago.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd also like to welcome Anthony Rota. Just to confuse people, he's also my MP.

I'd also like to welcome the OPSEU corrections division—it's their lobby day today—specifically, the MERC chair, Chad Oldfield; the vice-chair, Janet Laverty;

and their health and safety commission: Ryan Graham, Peter Figliola, Adam Cygler, Denise Sidsworth, Scott McIntyre, Joely Price, Mike Lundy and all the other people here to show us what it's like in Ontario today.

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I'd like to welcome Alma and Peter Scovil from the beautiful town of Waterford in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. Alma and Peter are here this morning to watch their granddaughter, Lindsay Matheson, who is a page in the House. Welcome, and all the best to Lindsay.

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Today, I would like to welcome my son Joey Cuzzetto and the students from the Queens University mining engineering department, who are here for the PDAC convention. These are the engineers of the future who will unleash the power of our mining industry here in Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome Graham Henderson, the CEO of the London Chamber of Commerce, who is here for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's Queen's Park advocacy day. They will be hosting a reception at 5:30 in room 228. I hope all MPPs can join them.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'd like to welcome everyone from the Ontario Autism Coalition who I had breakfast with this morning.

I'd also like to welcome everyone from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, with a special shout-out to Shakiba Shayani, the president and CEO of the Guelph chamber.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I would like to welcome, from the beautiful riding of Dufferin-Caledon, two friends who are here in the chamber today: Diana Morris, the executive director of the Dufferin Board of Trade, and good friend Doug Harkness, who I think is the current president.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I'm just joining the chorus of massive thanks to all the autism advocates who are in the gallery. I'm not going to name you all, but you're all beautiful. Thank you for the work you do for our children.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** I'd like to welcome Téah U-Ming from the Ontario Legislature Internship Program, who is starting with me today.

I'd also like to welcome, because I see them there, from my riding, Newmarket-Aurora, from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, president Sandra Ferri and board chair, Al Wilson. Welcome to the chamber.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I, too, would like to welcome a good friend of mine, all the way from my hometown of North Bay, Ontario, the Speaker of the House of Commons and the member of Parliament for Nipissing-Timiskaming, Anthony Rota. Welcome.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** It is always my pleasure to welcome the autism families who are here from across the province and who are watching at home. Thank you for the press conference this morning and for hosting breakfast. This is your House. Hopefully, they're listening.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** You can't have political statements in introductions.

Member for Cambridge.

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** I'd like to welcome, from the chamber of commerce in Cambridge, Greg Durocher and his friend who he's brought, Kristen Danson. Welcome.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to welcome Sara Kitlar-Pothier, who is from Nickel Belt. She is the vice-president of the northern region of the Ontario Autism Coalition. Welcome, Sara.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I'd like to recognize a great friend and supporter of Windsor–Essex, the CEO of the Windsor–Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Rakesh Naidu, who is with us today. Thank you, Rakesh, for being here.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to also welcome the folks from corrections, specifically those that I will be meeting with today: Leanne White, Jenny Diplacido, Richard Jeronimo and Stryder McCormack. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, as we've had Tony Stravato already welcomed, I won't do it again. Hi, Tony. And welcome to Peter Garrett from Durham College, who I see sitting in the gallery.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** If there are no objections, I would like to continue with the introduction of visitors.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** It's great to see the Queen's mining engineering students here today for PDAC. I would like to introduce Jonah Odlozinski from my riding of Simcoe North. Great to see you here, Jonah.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'd like to welcome Peter Harding and his colleagues from Sudbury from OPSEU youth corrections.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I also would like to acknowledge Peter Garrett from Durham College in Durham, Rocco Rossi from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and all the members from various chambers of commerce around the province and the boards of trades, and a little bit of shout-out to Nicole Gibson, the former head of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, and her colleagues, including Glen McFarland. Thank you to all the businesses across Ontario who make this province terrific.

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I would like to welcome Sara Kitlar-Pothier and Alina Cameron, both northern representatives from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Alina lives in Slate River Valley, which is just outside of Thunder Bay, and she's watching this online this morning. Welcome, both of you.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'd like to welcome today—I know it's been mentioned before—on behalf of the Solicitor General and myself, J.P. Hornick, the president of OPSEU; Chad Oldfield, chair of the OPSEU bargaining unit; and also Joel Bissonette, from Sarnia corrections from my hometown. Thank you, and welcome to all of you.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I also would like to welcome the members of the OPSEU corrections officers team here to the House, more specifically Bill Hayes, Mike Lundy and Janet Laverty, who I had the chance to meet with this morning. Thank you so much, and welcome to the House.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I was really hoping they would be in the gallery. I have students and staff here at Queen's Park from St. Demetrius. I just want to express my sincere gratitude to both the students and staff. St. Demetrius school alone has taken in 170 children from Ukraine and have welcomed them in Etobicoke Centre, so my sincere gratitude.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I'd like to welcome Laura McIntosh and Catherine Vanett, as well as Michau van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Thank you very much for those insightful conversations this morning and that very delicious breakfast.

I also want to extend my congratulations and thank you to JP Hornick, the president of OPSEU, as well as the correctional officers and the leaders from OPSEU that I met this morning: Rhonda Slaven, Ronald Lavigne and Johanna Sinclair. And a very warm, special welcome to Rocco Rossi, a friend and mentor from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I hope you're in the House. I can't see you, but welcome.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I would like to welcome Mortgage Professionals Canada, and Susan Thomas in particular, back to Queen's Park, and Paul Markle and Salim Bardai with the Barrie Chamber of Commerce.

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** I'm delighted to welcome representatives from Mortgage Professionals Canada. They are Lauren van den Berg, president and CEO, and board chair Veronica Love, along with other board members.

I'm also happy to introduce my nephew, Scot Sun, an international student at Rochester university in the United States. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Parm Gill:** I want to welcome all members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, also Milton's new chamber president and CEO, Bianca Caramento, along with our former chamber president and CEO, Scott McCammon.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I'd also like to extend my welcome to Kristen Danson and Greg Durocher from the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, as well as the representatives from the Christian Labour Association of Canada, whose beautiful and very functional head office is located in my riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler. Thank you so much for coming.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce CEO Brenda Whitehead. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to have you.

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**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** I would like to welcome the son of late former mayor Hazel McCallion, Peter McCallion, to Queen's Park. Welcome. Your mother was a champion. Thank you.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I'd like to introduce and welcome to Queen's Park members from OPSEU: Mike Cranley, Adam Manlow, Paula Van Dusen, Sean MacCormack. Thank you very much for your service and welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I would like to welcome Peter McCallion, the son of Hazel McCallion. He was here today. Thank you for joining us today for my member's statement about Hurricane Hazel.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** I wanted to welcome Norah Fountain and Viktoria Hamma from the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce to Queen's Park. Thank you.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I'd like to welcome the president and CEO of the Richmond Hill Board of Trade as well as Rocco Rossi, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for all your support for non-profit appreciation week.

## INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), the time for debate on opposition day motion number 2 be allocated as follows: 54 minutes to each of the recognized parties and 12 minutes to the independent members as a group.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Madame Collard is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), the time for debate on opposition day motion number 2 be allocated as follows: 54 minutes to each of the recognized parties and 12 minutes to the independent members as a group. Agreed? Agreed.

## QUESTION PERIOD

## AUTISM TREATMENT

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning, Speaker. This question is for the Premier. Today, the public galleries are full of people who have come here to advocate for core services for autistic kids. They have come here to remind the government that right now, there are over 60,000 autistic children on the growing wait-list. They have come to hold the government to its promise to clear the backlog.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Will this government finally provide the funding needed to get these kids off the wait-list and into the services they need?

*Interjections.*

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

To reply for the government, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Just the fact that we have doubled the funding, that we have five times more children receiving services than at any time under the previous Liberal government—and let's be clear, when we came to office, we understood that the old program under the Liberal government had little prospect for delivering services to 75% of the children who were waiting. That's why we have doubled the funding. That's why we have created a comprehensive program that is created by the autism community for the autism community. It's why we've expanded beyond the ABA services. It's why we have added in—and we heard people: They wanted speech-language pathology; they wanted occupational therapy; they wanted mental health services. We have done that. We have launched foundational family services, the Entry to School Program, caregiver-mediated early years programs, and core clinical services as well. That's why we built AccessOAP to support families through every step of the journey with care coordinators.

We're already seeing results: Over 40,000 children are receiving supports today, almost five times more—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

The supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Mr. Speaker, this government's words don't hold any weight with these families that are here with us today because it doesn't match their reality—not one bit. The wait-list has more than doubled since the Conservative government came into power. Children are waiting a minimum of four years for any kind of services or even assessment—four years that can make all the difference for that child's quality of life. And this government is sitting on almost \$6.5 billion, unspent.

Back to the Premier: You promised to fix the autism program. Will you make good on your promise and clear the wait-list?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** That's exactly why we expanded the diagnostic hubs. Unfortunately, the opposition sitting across from me has not supported those in its vote. It voted against it. Our government is the one that is providing the services, creating the program—a world-leading program. The previous Liberal government promised results and only delivered support to 25% of the children. As of January, every child in the program had been invited to enrol with AccessOAP. It's our government that is creating this world-leading program. We have created AccessOAP. We have been reaching out to families through emails, through phone calls, through letters to make sure that people are aware of the registration process for AccessOAP. This is a comprehensive program created by the autism community for the autism community, and we're implementing it.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's astonishing that this government never admits the problem, never even acknowledges it. More than 60,000 children are waiting for core services. That is nothing to be proud of. For context, that's 2,500 classrooms of children; think of it that way.

You want to know the real story? Here's the real story: By last August, this government had registered fewer than 900 kids for support. At this rate, it's going to take 66 years just to clear the existing backlog. None of us are going to be here in 66 years. The families here today have come to Queen's Park from across the province to tell their stories, to be heard, to demand change after this government's shocking failure to support autistic children. They deserve real accountability. But only one Conservative MPP has agreed to meet with them. Thank you, Speaker.

My question is to the Premier and to his government. Will you meet with these families?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I think I need to point out that I am no longer in caucus with the government side. I am impartial.

The response?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** We knew that the program for autism that we inherited from the previous government, supported by the NDP, was not a program that was serving families as it needed to do. That's why we built a new program. That's why we listened at town halls across the province to make sure that we understood. That's why

we created different streams: foundational family services, caregiver-mediated early years programs, Entry to School program, urgent response services.

We listened. People wanted mental health services. They wanted speech therapy. They wanted occupational therapy. We listened, and we put that into the program. We created AccessOAP so that it would be an independent intake organization that would help families navigate with care coordinators. This is a needs-based program based on domains of need. It allows families to have their own unique needs addressed. This is a program that is world-leading, that has never been done before that we understand or researched. It is based on research and clinical evidence, and we'll continue to implement this important program.

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I have another important question, but I just want to say it's disgraceful that this government will not meet with the families that are here today. You know what? Five years you've been in this office. It's your mess now.

Under this government's watch, the mental health crisis facing Ontario has also only gotten worse. We've proposed a solution that would make a real difference in people's lives: reduce the wait-list for children's mental health care, invest in improved crisis response, expand therapy access and boost community mental health care. We've put forward an opposition motion for debate this afternoon for an 8% emergency stabilization investment in community mental health care.

My question is to the Premier: Will he support our motion?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you for that question. Our government takes mental health in the province of Ontario very seriously. I'm the first minister appointed to look after mental health and addictions issues in the province. We came up with a Roadmap to Wellness, which is a basic plan, a foundational document that looks after lifespans. It looks after investments required for children and youth, for adults, for seniors, for people with addictions and concurrent disorders. We backed it with a \$525-million-a-year plan, \$3.8 billion over 10 years. Seeing the crisis, another \$90 million in February of last year was invested to create 400 treatment beds, which is the equivalent of 7,000 treatment spots throughout the province of Ontario—not just in southern Ontario, everywhere in the province of Ontario.

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Mr. Speaker, the investments continue. When we speak about the investments that have been made with respect to mobile crisis intervention teams, over \$40 million has been put in place to create low-barrier access for individuals needing supports. So yes, investment—

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

Supplementary question?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The minister talks about the Roadmap to Wellness. It's a road map to nowhere right now, I'll tell you. We are in a mental health crisis in every community in this province, but in Indigenous, northern and rural communities, the government is not even trying to pretend; they're just failing, miserably. We've got epidemic rates of suicide, homelessness, addiction.

The Canadian Mental Health Association shows skyrocketing demand for their services, but in Algoma they're only getting a 2% increase in base funding over the past 10 years—2%. In Kenora, they got just 2% over the last 22 years. They need an 8% emergency stabilization investment today.

My question, again to the Premier—you're sitting on \$6.4 billion, unspent—will he support our motion this afternoon to provide that 8% emergency funding?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Mr. Speaker, once again I reiterate: The province of Ontario, this government, is making substantial, unprecedented investments throughout the province of Ontario to assist anyone in need.

For instance, you mentioned Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are a focus of the work that we're doing, providing land-based healing opportunities to allow Indigenous communities to look after the needs of the people in their communities.

In rural and remote communities, we're investing in mobile health units to allow individuals access to care which they may not otherwise get, given the fact that there are large distances to travel. We continue to make investments and work with all service providers in the province of Ontario to ensure that people are getting the supports they need.

I look back at what we inherited as a government, and I've got to call out, once again, what the NDP did: They reduced 13% of the mental health beds. They took away 9,645 hospital beds across the province—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

The final supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, I don't even know what to do with that.

Mental health care is life-changing. It's also a cost savings. It frees up hospital beds. You have less 911 calls, and do you know what? It saves lives. That's why today we are going to go all out on this issue: because people in Ontario cannot wait any longer, and I'm sure there's not one of us in this entire room that hasn't seen the impact on our families and in our communities. So let's do it: 8% emergency stabilization investment into CMHA. That's \$24 million.

My question to the Premier today: Premier, please, will you take just half a per cent of that \$6.4 billion that has been squirrelled away unspent, to help people get the mental health care they so desperately need today?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Mr. Speaker, once again I reiterate: The government in the province is making investments across the board in education, by providing

prevention and opportunities to help young people with their mental health—unprecedented investments in mental health for children and youth. We made investments last year, increasing 5% to community-based children and youth supports. We've continued making investments, speaking with and understanding the issues that need to be addressed in the province of Ontario.

We have an opioid crisis. We're working to ensure that the supports are in place to assist individuals who want to recover from an addiction.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I can't help but think of what the implications were when the NDP were in power and they cut \$53 million of funding to the psychiatric hospitals—the implications that that had, with the fact that we have a shortage in HHR today directly related back to the fact that places were eliminated—

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

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** What a shameful answer from the minister. People in this province are dying because they cannot access the mental health supports they need, and that's the kind of answer you give?

My question is to the Premier. Ontario is facing a mental health crisis. More Ontarians are seeking mental health supports and demand for services has significantly increased under this Conservative government. Across Ontario, people are experiencing anxiety, depression and burnout at higher rates, yet base funding for the Canadian Mental Health Association has fallen significantly behind the rate of inflation. The Mental Health Strategy for Canada recommends raising mental health funding to approximately \$5.1 billion in Ontario alone.

Speaker, will the Premier commit to treating mental health care as health care and provide the desperately needed funding for mental health supports?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will make their comments through the Chair.

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thanks again for that question, because it highlights what we know: the fact that investments have to be made. And the government is making unprecedented investments, but the investments that it's making are ensuring that the continuum of care is being dealt with, the children and youth are being looked after, our adults are being looked after, our seniors are being looked after.

Focusing on addictions and the concurrent disorders that need to be addressed, the 400 treatment beds that have been opened, the 7,000 treatment spots that have been created—these are all increasing capacity to be able to assist individuals. We're focused on culturally appropriate and sensitive services, creating low-barrier access to individuals in need, ensuring that the supports are there when and where they need them, if they're ready for them, to

recover. But the harm production provisions that we put in place are also assisting individuals.

Mr. Speaker, we are building a system for the province of Ontario after the neglect of the previous government, supported by the NDP.

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

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** About 28,000 children and youth were on wait-lists for mental health treatment in January 2020—that was under this Conservative government—more than double than in 2017, according to Children's Mental Health Ontario. Again, under this government, the need for those supports has gotten even greater between 2020 and now. Estimates show that more than 200,000 children with serious mental health issues have no contact with the mental health care system—again, under this Conservative government. Windsor, my community, has one of the longest wait times in the province for intensive children's mental health care, an average wait of 588 days—a failure, minister.

Children can't wait. They need access to services immediately. Speaker, will the Premier commit today to capping wait times for mental health care for children and youth?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Clearly, children and youth need accessible and reliable services if they're going to grow into healthy adults. And since 2019, \$130 million has gone to children and youth mental health services via the Roadmap to Wellness. The Roadmap to Wellness slates another \$170 million over the next three years; education, \$90 million for school-based supports; and \$20 million for an across-the-board 5% funding increase to all government mental health agencies during COVID. That was done and it has improved. It has helped the organizations. We're proud of our youth wellness hubs, which have been created now and stand at 22 across the province of Ontario, including one in Sagamok, an Indigenous community.

The Roadmap to Wellness outlines the vision for children and youth: Early interventions keep kids from harmful behaviours and are a great return on investment. We will continue to build a future for our children, to ensure that they have the mental health supports where and when they need them.

#### PARAMEDIC WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

In every community, paramedics are on the front lines each and every day, saving lives. These everyday heroes work tirelessly to bring us medical care when we need it the most. Paramedics, along with ambulance communication officers, regularly encounter risk and traumatic events that can impact their health and safety. Under the previous Liberal government that was propped up by the NDP, there was no advocacy, no action on behalf of these essential emergency workers to address their industry-

specific risks. They had years to act; instead, they chose to ignore the needs of our front-line workers.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is protecting the health and safety of these workers?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park for this very important question. Ontario's paramedics and ambulance communication officers are truly heroes in our health care system. They are innovative and always willing to take on new roles to support our government in building a more comprehensive and connected health care system.

1110

Our government created a stand-alone committee under section 21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to develop resources that address unique health and safety risks that these front-line heroes face every single day serving our families and our communities. This new paramedic services committee will complement the existing first responder committees for fire and police services while providing a focused channel for recommendations from experts, employers and workers. Both labour leaders and chiefs and all paramedics have been calling for this committee now for more than 20 years and, under the leadership of our Premier, our government is getting it done for them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And the supplementary question.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you to the minister for the response. It is clear that workers in this sector are valued by our government and our priority is to advocate for the support, protection, and safety that they deserve. The risks that paramedics and ambulance communication officers face are separate and distinct from other health care worker professionals as they interact with patients in unpredictable and complex situations. Under the leadership of the Premier, Minister of Health and this minister, actions such as this announcement demonstrate our government's commitment to foster safe workplaces.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate about how the new paramedic services section 21 committee will improve safety for this sector?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Our government was pleased to address this long-outstanding request, as our government recognizes and supports the important work of this sector in our health care system. This announcement demonstrates that our government listened to unions, including Unifor, CUPE, SEIU and OPSEU, representing front-line paramedics and ambulance communication officers, as well as the strong advocacy from paramedic chiefs and the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs, which represents every paramedic service across our province.

This committee is a great opportunity for paramedics, ambulance communication officers and paramedic chiefs to make important recommendations and provide practical guidance for employers and workers. The creation of this committee is a vital investment in the physical, emotional

and psychological well-being of our paramedics and ambulance communication officers.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is working for workers and building a stronger Ontario that leaves no one behind.

## CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** In Ontario, there are over 28,000 children and youth waiting for community mental health care, with wait times as long as two and a half years. Cutting wait times to 30 days will ensure timely access to care. It will help prevent needs from worsening and the wait-list for more acute services from growing. Providing early intervention programs will also cost the province less and reduce the burden on our health care system.

I've tabled a bill to cap wait times for children and youth mental health to 30 days. Speaker, kids can't wait. My question to the Premier: Will you pass it?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Children and youth have the highest mental health care needs of any age demographic. We know this. This informs every investment we have made and will continue to make. In 2022, we invested another \$31 million in new annual funding to reduce wait-lists and support the mental health and well-being of children and youth. We're innovating on new ways to treat children and youth and new means for them to access care. This means: \$3.5 million in the Step-Up Step-Down live-in treatment program, helping move kids through levels of intensive treatment; \$2.1 million for virtual walk-in counselling, connecting youth to a clinician by phone, text or video chat; \$1 million for children and youth telehealth services; and \$4.5 million for One Stop Talk virtual walk-in counselling programs for children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, we're innovating. We're working with the sector. We're ensuring that the kids have the supports they need, where they need them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question, the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** My question is to the minister of health and addictions. In Niagara, we know what is at risk if we do not cap wait times for children that need mental health services. This is because we have nearly 900 children on a wait-list for mental health services with Pathstone, a core mental health service provider in Niagara.

Last week, we heard from teachers ringing the alarm bells about children's mental health.

However, this problem deserves a comprehensive response, because most of Pathstone's referrals come in the summer when the schools are closed.

Minister, will your office consult with the experts in the field today, create a cap for wait times, and ensure these core service organizations get the funding they need in the upcoming budget?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Mr. Speaker, once again, we know the needs of the children in terms of the supports that

are required to ensure they have mental health supports. The initiatives that we're working on are initiatives to increase access to supports, addressing increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, because that has also had implications on their mental health. We're working to decrease wait times. We're looking to improve the quality of care for children and youth.

And, yes, I have and will continue to meet with all stakeholders to ensure that we understand the needs not just of children and youth in general, but on a region-by-region basis. That has been the way we've done our work to date. We've attended meetings. We've had round tables throughout the province—in Thunder Bay, in Indigenous communities throughout the north, in southern Ontario, and of course with children and youth mental health.

Mr. Speaker, we're more prepared than any government in Ontario's history to build an accessible, equitable and accountable mental health system.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation. Many people in Whitby, Ajax, Bowmanville and Pickering want to be more connected to the greater Toronto area. Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, the people of Whitby and other parts of Durham region were promised year after year that new transit investments would be made, but nothing ever materialized. They're tired of waiting. They expect our government to take action and deliver on extending much-needed transit infrastructure for the people of the region of Durham.

Can the associate minister please update the House on the progress of the Bowmanville GO expansion project?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the member for the question and his outstanding work on behalf of the residents of Whitby.

Speaker, I'm really happy to let that member know that Metrolinx will be announcing the successful construction manager of the transformational Bowmanville GO extension later this spring. This successful manager will be chosen from the four candidates that were short-listed by Metrolinx following a very promising proposal window that was closed last October. This is a major step that our government is taking in delivering that game-changing commuting service for GO Transit, for the people of Durham, with two-way, all-day rail service to Bowmanville. In fact, our 20-kilometre extension of the Lakeshore East line will make it easier for people to connect to local transit, work, health care, education and other critical services across Durham region.

Speaker, while the opposition widened the transit gap for decades, this government is getting it done for the great people of Durham.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Speaker, thank you to the associate minister for the update on this very important project. This

is encouraging news for many individuals and hard-working families in my riding. Transit infrastructure expansion is vital for Durham region, as it will help connect the people not only of my riding but other ridings in the region of Durham to their families, work, and increase access to critical services.

With the population of the greater Toronto area expected to increase significantly over the coming years, investments in transit expansion are needed now to ensure frequent and convenient service for the years to come. We can't afford to delay or hold back transit investments. Now is the time to build. Now is the time to get Ontario moving.

Can the associate minister please elaborate on our government's actions to deliver transit for the hard-working people of the region of Durham?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is absolutely right; the time is now, because we have a growing population in this province, with hundreds of thousands of people moving here every single year, and that means we need to build transit, fill the gap that was left by the opposition. That's exactly what we're doing.

#### 1120

As next steps, Metrolinx will continue to work to advance infrastructure and service planning while engaging with Durham region to make sure that we can deliver this vital project. Speaker, this is going to be a game-changer for the people of Durham region.

The Bowmanville GO extension means that commuters will be able to take a train every 30 minutes and go back and forth to Union station, Bowmanville GO and everything in between. What's more, the riders will save 15 minutes in their commutes along the corridor, so they can more easily get to work, appointments, wherever it is that they need to go.

It's clear that the NDP, when they propped up the Liberals for decades, did nothing to build transit. This is the only government getting it done for the people of Durham and for commuters in Ontario.

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Anti-Black racism wreaks havoc on the souls of Black people—400 years and counting. Health care workers, among others, have long called for this government to recognize anti-Black racism as a public health emergency detrimental to our physical and mental health. RNAO's Black Nurses Task Force study surveyed 205 Black nurses and nursing students across Ontario and found 88% had reported experiencing anti-Black racism and discrimination at work.

My question is to the Premier: Will you join several cities across the province and take a solid step towards recognizing the impact of anti-Black racism on Black Ontarians by declaring today, the first Monday in March, annually as Black Mental Health Day?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Look, I can tell the member this: There are avenues and opportunities for members to bring



important pieces of legislation forward, through the private members' bill process. I know the member has had at least one bill passed in the previous Parliament. It sounds like an interesting initiative, one that we certainly would be very supportive of if she would consider—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm assuming that you want to hear the answer, so I'll continue on, if that's okay.

I would assume that the member would appreciate bringing forward a private member's bill that the entire House could consider.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this government has passed more private members' bills than almost any other government in its entirety, and we use House time to debate and pass those bills. The member opposite would know this, because that member also had a private member's bill pass, as did the member's seatmate and as did a number of members sitting on that side. So I'd be very happy as House leader to consider that in the process of private members' business.

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

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Speaker, we actually have tabled the bill, so the government could pass it today if they want. This is the same government that thought a thousand dollars was enough of a budget line to address racism across Ontario in the Anti-Racism Directorate—a thousand dollars. That's a shame.

For far too many Black children and adults, walking while Black, shopping while Black, driving while Black, learning while Black or having a mental health crisis while Black means experiencing racial profiling, harassment, discrimination, disproportionate use of force and sometimes, sadly, death by law enforcement. Both the target—if they survive—and their families and the larger communities are left fraught with confusion, fear, anxiety and depression. Anti-Black racism is a structural and social determinant of physical and mental health.

Premier, can you share with us what your government is doing, along with your 2023 budget allocation, to specifically address Black mental health in Ontario—specifically, Black mental health in Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for such an important question. I'd like to start off by saying that Ontario's strength is in our diversity. We are home to people from all around the world. The diversity of our people, skills, backgrounds, cultures and faiths enriches our society in so many ways, including our Black community.

On this side of the aisle, we are focused on building a stronger, safer, more inclusive Ontario where people from all walks of life can live, work and prosper. That is why our government is investing in programs to combat racism and hate in all its forms, promote diversity and inclusion, and ensure that all Ontarians have the tools, opportunities and supports they need to succeed and reach their potential. We will always be a champion and a strong voice for diverse communities and everything they do to make our province the great place it is.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** It's an honour to rise and present my question on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood, as I've done for the better part of a decade.

My question is to the Premier. We know that the pandemic has been challenging for all Ontarians, and we know that this is especially true when it comes to our children. For years, our teachers have been having to deal not only with the important job of educating our children, but also juggling COVID protocols and outbreaks, including many months of online learning.

What is also well known is that the pandemic disruption in our schools resulted in learning gaps for our children and reports of burnout among under-supported teachers and education workers. And now, the FAO is reporting that the government underspent our education budget by \$844 million—this, while school boards are having to consider a return to pre-pandemic staffing levels.

Speaker, why is this government taking money away from school boards at a time when our students' needs are at an all-time high?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to assure the member opposite that this government has increased funding, this school year alone, by \$650 million more, an investment in publicly funded schools—a sharp contrast to the closure of schools under the former Liberals: hundreds closed, and opportunities closed with it.

Mr. Speaker, we are building new schools. We're investing in a modern curriculum, aligned with the labour market needs, so our young people can get a good job. We're ensuring mental health is increased from when the former Liberals, at the peak of spending, at \$18 million in Ontario's schools—it is today 400% higher. It is at \$90 million. Each and every year, we've increased those expenditures, because we believe in these kids.

With respect to staffing, Speaker, there are 7,000 additional education workers in our schools and almost 900 additional teachers, because we know our kids need support, particularly because of the pandemic and the learning loss that has been realized in this province and around the country.

This Premier will continue to invest, to give our kids every opportunity to achieve their potential in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Back to the Premier: Year after year, quarter after quarter, this government is holding money back in reserves. We have all heard, and this minister said this morning, that there is the Roadmap to Wellness which has been in place for the last three years; in 2022-23, the annual Ontario school survey cites that 91% of schools are currently reporting need in student mental health and well-being.

Just last week, People for Education reported—they actually sounded the alarm. It shouldn't be a silent alarm. Every member of this House should hear it—95% of schools report needing some or more support for students' mental health and well-being; only 9% of schools are

having regularly scheduled access to mental health and addiction specialists or a nurse; and 46% of schools are reporting having no access at all.

Speaker, can the minister explain how they can say that they have a plan for mental health and well-being, giving only \$45 per student for mental health? Why is this government holding back at a time when our students—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Once again, I reiterate that there is the Roadmap to Wellness that specifically looks at the needs of children and youth during the education period, which includes prevention, education and building resiliency, which is extremely important. That is being funded, as the minister stated before: \$90 million for school-based supports, annualized.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at \$31 million in new annual funding to reduce wait-lists and supports in the community, which is where the supports are needed for treatment, and \$11 million annually so children and youth with eating disorders can heal closer to home, another very important issue that needs to be addressed if we are going to help children and youth.

In addition to that, we've invested in beds—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader will come to order. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will come to order.

The minister has a couple more seconds to finish his response.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Investments in children's mental health in the hospitals: seven new beds at CHEO, five at SickKids, two at McMaster Children's Hospital, \$130 million since 2009 through the Roadmap to Wellness. 1130

There is a plan. We're implementing the plan, and we are making a difference in the lives of children and youth throughout the province of Ontario.

## FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. I first want to thank all of my firefighter colleagues across our province for protecting our communities. These everyday heroes work tirelessly to protect our province, and in return, they deserve care and support.

The nature of a firefighter's work is dangerous and unpredictable. The challenges they encounter can cause lasting impacts on their health and well-being. Tragically, cancer is the leading cause of death among firefighters, accounting for more than 74% of line-of-duty deaths in 2022. On average, 50 to 60 firefighters die of cancer yearly in Canada, half of whom are in Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please explain our government's actions to increase protections for our firefighters?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for that question. But most importantly, to the member, thank you for your service to your

community as a volunteer firefighter. Thank you on behalf of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier is a tireless advocate for emergency responders who keep our communities safe, and his passion for supporting them is well known. Our firefighters are heroes who put their lives on the line every single day. When others run out of burning buildings, they're running into them.

On Friday, I was proud to join our Solicitor General and our friend Greg Horton, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, who proudly represent more than 12,000 firefighters in communities right across our province. Together, we announced that our government is expanding coverage for firefighters who get pancreatic and thyroid cancer. This change will make it faster and easier for these heroes and their families to access the compensation and supports they deserve.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the minister for his response. Speaker, firefighters provide a vital service to all of our communities. The health and safety of these first responders must remain a priority.

Recently, the World Health Organization reclassified firefighting to its highest level of health and safety occupational risk for cancer. Too many firefighters have suffered with, or lost their lives to, cancer.

Our government must demonstrate leadership to implement preventative measures, early detection and support for these first responders who serve the people of my riding and all Ontarians. Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is implementing changes to better protect and support our firefighters?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Thank you to the member. Speaker, we're making these changes so that firefighters who are sick can focus on getting better. We're streamlining a firefighter's workplace illness claim, making it easier for them and their families to get quicker access to benefits and services, while providing peace of mind to those who are suffering. This change will apply to all 30,000 firefighters who are full-time, part-time and volunteers, as well as those firefighters employed by a First Nations band council.

Furthermore, the coverage expansion we announced is retroactive to January 1, 1960, allowing those who have suffered from these cancers in the past, and their loved ones, to get the supports that they deserve.

Speaker, our government will always stand up for those firefighters who put their lives on the line every day for all of us.

## CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is for the Premier. On average, four children a week end up in a Hamilton emergency room for self-harm. There has been a significant uptake of children engaging in self-harming behaviours, yet the wait-list for treatment continues to

grow. The health and well-being of our children is critical, but they are not getting the help they need.

I wrote to the minister back in January about this issue and I have yet to receive a response, so I'm asking once again: Will this government support our children and commit to investing in Hamilton's youth mental health programming and to build human resource capacity?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you very much for that question. Again, children and youth are extremely important, and providing supports and services to them is a priority for our government. We have made it a priority. Whether it be the investments in the education system, whether it be the investments in community-based treatment, or whether it's specifically aimed at things like eating disorders and self-harm, investments are being made and we are working to reduce the wait-lists. There has been, as I mentioned before, \$11 million invested specifically to deal with eating disorders, so that kids can have the supports they need closest to home. We invested \$8.1 million to create seven beds at CHEO, five at SickKids and two at McMaster. So yes, we are listening. We know that there are needs, and McMaster got two beds as well. In addition to that, \$130 million since 2019 has been invested as well.

And our youth wellness hubs are providing an incredible resource to kids between the ages of 12 and 24—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

Supplementary question, the member for Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Parents with anti-LGBTQ views recently disrupted a York Catholic school board meeting, making hateful comments such as, "Catholic schools should not allow transgender or LGBT students to attend." With rising hate crimes, Ontario needs to ensure that all students are safe. The Premier must use his political voice to condemn discrimination and hate against the queer and trans communities who are being bullied and targeted for violence.

My question, Speaker, is, will the Premier fund 2SLGBT mental health supports and commit today to developing a policy to guarantee the mental health and safety of all students in every single publicly-funded Ontario school, including the Catholic schools?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** We believe that every single child in this province has a right to be in school, to learn in school, free from intimidation, from bullying and from violence. Every single child, irrespective of their faith or heritage or orientation, colour of skin, place of birth—every child. They need to hear that their government stands with them, recognizing that they face disproportionately high rates of mental health and suicide ideation. We know this is real, and it's why the government continues to make the case that our school system must be inclusive and must be respectful and welcoming for all of these kids, that they know that they are loved in our school

system unconditionally by the staff and the communities that work with them.

We have increased funding in mental health. We've actually worked with Egale Canada and leverage them every single year through the priorities fund of the Ministry of Education to support those children most at risk within our schools.

#### UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. In my riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, St. Clair College is a vital education leader, with a long history of exceptional athletics and academics. In fact, this past weekend, they captured the OCAA Men's Basketball Championship.

Like all post-secondary institutions in Ontario, St. Clair College serves a critical function to prepare our students for today's jobs and the economy of the future. Unfortunately, worldwide economic challenges and rising inflation costs are now impacting the financial stability of post-secondary institutions. My constituents want to ensure that fine institutions like St. Clair can continue providing high-quality education for future generations. Our government must take bold action now to ensure stability in this sector.

Speaker, can the Minister of Colleges and Universities please explain what actions our government is taking to help maintain the financial stability of Ontario's post-secondary education sector?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Our post-secondary institutions and research institutions are important sources of job creation, skills training, research, innovation, commercialization and obviously great athletes as well, making them leading contributors to our overall economic growth.

I am thrilled to stand up today to talk about what our government is doing to support the sector and our students, including launching our new blue-ribbon panel. Announced last week, the blue-ribbon panel will provide advice and recommendations for keeping the post-secondary education sector financially stable and focused on providing the best student experience possible. Led by Dr. Alan Harrison and an incredible group of panel members, this team will support my ministry in keeping Ontario's post-secondary institutions on stable footing, now and into the future. As we all know, Ontario's institutions—like St. Clair College in the member's region—support the province's economy in a number of ways, including by preparing people for the labour market, engaging in research and supporting the prosperity of local communities.

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

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you to the minister for her response. Our post-secondary education and research institutions are important sources of job creation, skills training, commercialization and innovation. The strength of our province's economy is built on the knowledge, skills and expertise that are gained from our post-secondary education system.

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Students who attend institutions like St. Clair in my riding are curious about what they can expect from this panel. My constituents want to know further details about how this new panel will work to make a real difference in the post-secondary education sector.

Speaker, could the minister please elaborate on the structure and function of our government's blue-ribbon panel?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for being a great advocate for St. Clair College. Over the coming months, the blue-ribbon panel will conduct research and consultations with key stakeholders about the actions Ontario can take to improve the financial sustainability of the post-secondary sector to support colleges and universities in developing a skilled workforce and to promote economic growth and innovation. Specifically, the panel members will work to provide advice on how we can enhance the student experience and increase access to education, reward excellence within the sector, improve labour market alignment and find ways to keep education affordable for students and their families. This will help support the quality, accessibility and sustainability of the post-secondary education sector now and into the future so learners can continue to get the skills and education needed to get good jobs and meet labour market needs.

Again, I'd like to congratulate the men's basketball team from St. Clair College on their recent gold medal win.

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Speaker, through you to the Premier: Last week, the Niagara regional government declared a state of emergency for mental health, homelessness and addiction. Niagara continues to be hard hit, with hundreds of people on wait-lists that continue to grow. There are over 800 children on the wait-list at Pathstone Mental Health. Regional police have seen an increase of 238% in calls involving persons in crisis in the last five years.

The Niagara region and local agencies continue to do great work in a system with inadequate funding from this government.

Will the Premier acknowledge our state of emergency and commit to deliver more funding and support for mental health services in Niagara right now, yes or no?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** When we deal with issues of mental health and addictions, we do look specifically at different regions. To assist in the Niagara region, one of the things we did was open two mobile health units so that the units would be able to provide supports, especially in the rural areas, where it's difficult for people, because of transportation, to be able to access the services.

Children and youth mental health supports are being placed throughout the province of Ontario, including through our youth wellness hubs. The youth wellness hubs are providing low-barrier supports to individuals. They allow children between the ages of 12 and 24 to be able to attend a place where they can get wraparound supports for

everything from primary care to mental health care supports.

We've worked with and will continue working with the stakeholders in the Niagara region to provide the supports necessary to assist the children in that region, the way we're working with all other regions to provide supports.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question: the member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Premier. In the face of an unprecedented health and homelessness crisis, Londoners have rallied behind a transformational whole-of-community response to help those struggling with homelessness, mental health and addictions. With leadership from local agencies, hospitals, emergency services, police, businesses, developers and city council, our community is united in making system-level change, and a generous donor family has galvanized \$35 million in direct community funding. But London can't do it alone.

Will the Premier commit today to funding the hubs and supportive housing units that are core to this first-of-its-kind local strategy?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Once again, we have been working with the stakeholders in London to understand the needs of the community. We've worked with CHMA; there is a crisis hub which diverts individuals away from the hospitals and provides them with the kind of supports and services they need to effectively give them the treatment and the supports that they need. We understand, in the continuum of care, that there are different aspects, and we are making investments, whether it's withdrawal management, treatment beds, housing to support the individuals as they transition out. These are all aspects of the Roadmap to Wellness. They're all part of the continuum of care, and they all are part of the social determinants of health that go to the very underlying issue of addictions, so we are making those investments and building that continuum of care.

Again, after neglect over 15 years by the previous government, it's very difficult to put all of these in place and ensure that they're all working together. But we are filling gaps. We are working with communities, stakeholders—

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

#### CRIME PREVENTION

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** My question is for the Solicitor General.

The people of my riding are greatly concerned about the ongoing problem of car thefts. Many Ontarians rely on their family car to commute to work and take their kids to school. Unfortunately, reports of criminal activity targeting cars are becoming a regular occurrence.

In Brampton, recently released data indicates that since 2019 car thefts have risen 97% in Peel region. I want to echo the words of Brampton mayor Patrick Brown, who stated, "We can't accept auto theft as a way of life in Canada's big cities." The city of Brampton is home to a culturally diverse population, good neighbours and friendly people. It's not a home for criminal activity.

Can the Solicitor General please explain what actions our government is taking to address this ongoing issue?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West for the question and for his leadership in his community.

Let me say this absolutely straight: Car theft is absolutely unacceptable. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes, communities, and in their own vehicles.

We're proud of our record investments and are working hand in hand with law enforcement to tackle automobile thefts across Ontario.

Our government is investing over \$61 million in new technology for the police that will allow them to identify stolen vehicles much faster, such as the automated licence plate reader. We're also investing \$267 million through the Community Safety and Policing Grant program.

We are always listening to police on methods, tools and support that they can use to keep their communities safe.

Mr. Speaker, everyone deserves to live safely in their community, and our government will not stop until absolutely everyone is safe.

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

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you to the Solicitor General for his response.

Auto theft is not minor criminal activity; this is organized crime. National and international criminal networks don't just resell stolen cars to generate money. The money they collect is used for further crimes, such as drug trafficking, arms dealing and human smuggling.

Criminal activity and fraud are among the factors that impact overall claims costs for Ontario's auto insurance consumers. Car theft claims have increased by 31% in Ontario since 2020. Unfortunately, every auto insurance customer is now bearing the cost of these criminal activities.

Can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how our government's investments will support our local police partners in addressing this ongoing issue?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** Once again, I'm very grateful to my friend and my colleague from Brampton West.

Just a few weeks ago, Halton police seized 35 vehicles that were stolen from across the Toronto area on their way to Dubai. The estimated value of these cars was over \$2 million. I'd like to thank Halton police, their regional auto theft task force, and especially Chief Steve Tanner for carrying out this operation—it is due to the tireless efforts of people like Chief Tanner and his police officers that keep Ontario safe.

I want to say one more thing: We are imploring the federal government to increase border protections. And as I have said in every conversation with Minister Mendicino, meet me at the border and see for yourself.

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier.

We have corrections officers visiting us today who've been put on the front lines of Ontario's mental health crisis. That's because when people can't get the health

care and the services they need in the community, they end up in Ontario's overcrowded and understaffed jails. Ontario's chief coroner has found that this broken system is killing people—almost twice as many deaths in custody in 2021 than just two years earlier.

Speaker, will the Premier listen to corrections officers here today and ensure they have the staff, the resources and the training they need to deliver on people's basic human rights while in custody?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. We're delighted, as was said earlier, that we have members of OPSEU right here with us today, and we are appreciative of their commitments to keep our province safe.

I want to say that our government is acting in spending and investing over \$500 million to modernize our correctional facilities. Our government is acting in hiring over 1,400 new correctional officers, some of which just graduated last week. And our government is acting again, Mr. Speaker, understanding that employee wellness is important, and we are providing resiliency training for front-line staff and improving managerial awareness of mental health issues through mandatory training.

We will always appreciate and acknowledge the hard work done every day by everyone that keeps Ontario safe.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I always appreciate the response, but if you cared about correctional officers and paramedics, you would do something about Bill 124.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Community Addiction Services of Niagara, or CASON, is a vital social services agency in Niagara for those dealing with mental health and addiction issues. Unfortunately, those important services for my community are getting harder and harder to deliver. CASON has not seen an increase to their base funding since 2020 and expect only a 2% increase this year. They have a wait-list and, in many cases, can't meet the support and resource levels necessary to help their clients.

Will the Premier commit to working with CASON and providing the necessary funding they need to address the mental health and addiction crisis we have in Niagara so they don't have to lay off employees?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you for that question. I would very much like to meet with CASON and understand what their needs are. We have had round tables in Niagara to try to understand what the needs of the community are, and as I mentioned earlier, we're making investments so we do have the funding in place to implement the Roadmap to Wellness and ensure that supports and services are there across the board for children and youth and for adults.

I will certainly take you up on that offer and have an opportunity to meet with them and discuss what other needs are there and how we can continue supporting all the regions in the province of Ontario including Niagara.

## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Speaker, I just noticed that Ian DeWaard is up in the members' gallery. I just wanted to welcome him from CLAC here today.

## DEFERRED VOTES

REDUCING INEFFICIENCIES ACT  
(INFRASTRUCTURE STATUTE LAW  
AMENDMENTS), 2023

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

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

Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les infrastructures.

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

*The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.*

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

On March 1, 2023, Ms. Surma moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Gill, Parm	Pierre, Natalie
Bailey, Robert	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Shamji, Adil
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Collard, Lucille	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	MacLeod, Lisa	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Mulrone, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Michael D.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Stiles, Marit
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 78; the nays are 27.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard some noes.

Minister of Infrastructure?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Can I please refer it to the committee on heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** It is referred to the committee on heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy.

## CANCER SCREENING

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 22.

Call in the members. This is another five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1203 to 1204.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Gates has moved private member's notice of motion number 22.

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

## Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Blais, Stephen	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike	

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

## Nays

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Pierre, Natalie
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian

Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	MacLeod, Lisa	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Martin, Robin	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Mulrone, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Michael D.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	Yakabuski, John

## MISSING PERSONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

### LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERSONNES DISPARUES

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Missing Persons Act, 2018 / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2018 sur les personnes disparues.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Miss Monique Taylor:** The bill amends the Missing Persons Act, 2018, with respect to vulnerable persons alerts. A vulnerable persons alert can be issued to facilitate a search for a missing person who, because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependency on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them. The Ontario Provincial Police has the authority to issue a vulnerable persons alert in accordance with a request made by an officer if it also has the authority to issue an alert known as an Amber Alert.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The eyes are 32; the nays are 72.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion lost.

*Motion negated.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1207 to 1300.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S COMMUNITY, RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL NEWSPAPERS ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX JOURNAUX COMMUNAUTAIRES, RURAUX ET AGRICOLES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Sarrazin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to the publication of notices in newspapers / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la publication d'avis dans les journaux.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll invite the member to briefly explain his bill if he wishes to do so.

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** The bill amends the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Development Charges Act, 1997, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Municipal Act, 2001, the Ontario Heritage Act and the Planning Act where the act or the regulations made under it require that notices be published in a newspaper having general circulation in a municipality. The amendments allow the publication to be done in a newspaper that is published at regular intervals of a month or less, rather than published at regular intervals of a week or less, as is currently the case.

## MOTIONS

### CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice for the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to put forward a motion without notice for the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the orders for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 4 through 26, inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader has moved that, notwithstanding any standing order, the orders for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 4 through 26 inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate.

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

*Motion agreed to.*

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the parliamentary calendar.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to put forward a motion without notice regarding the parliamentary calendar. Agreed? Agreed.

The government House leader again.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 7(a)(i), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 27, 2023, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 8, 2023; and

That the House shall continue to meet in the spring meeting period until Thursday, June 8, 2023.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra has moved that notwithstanding standing order 7(a)(i), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 27, 2023, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 8, 2023; and

That the House shall continue to meet in the spring meeting period until Thursday, June 8, 2023.

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

*Motion agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

## PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

**Mr. John Vanthof:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the probation recidivism rate for high-risk offenders is 40% and very high-risk offenders is 57%; and

“Whereas Ontario probation and parole services has the highest number of offenders under community supervision in Canada, and Ontario probation and parole officers have the highest case counts in the country; and

“Whereas Ontario probation and parole officers’ case-loads and workload demands are so high that it is extremely challenging to ensure offender compliance with probation and parole conditions; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Solicitor General requires probation and parole officers to take on additional initiatives without providing additional resources, adding to chronic and systemic understaffing and under-resourcing; and

“Whereas Ontario’s probation and parole officers issue more than 4,500 warrants each year on offenders who have breached their supervision conditions, and our criminal justice system does not actively seek their whereabouts, posing a significant threat to public safety;

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

“That the Ontario government hire an additional 200 front-line case-carrying probation and parole officers, hire an additional 50 probation support staff and implement a plan to actively seek and enforce the more than 4,500 outstanding breach warrants issued each year by probation and parole services for absconding offenders in order to

reduce Ontario’s high rate of probation and parole recidivism, provide more effective client services, ensure the health and well-being of correctional staff and better protect public safety.”

I’ll join the 2,000 other people who have signed this. I’ll add my signature and give it to page Kiera.

1310

## ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

**M<sup>me</sup> Chandra Pasma:** J’ai l’honneur de me lever pour présenter une pétition qui s’intitule « Soutenez le système d’éducation francophone en Ontario.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

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

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

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

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

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

J’appuie totalement cette pétition. Je vais y ajouter ma signature et l’envoyer à la table des greffiers avec Yonglin.

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** This petition is titled “To Raise Social Assistance Rates.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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



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

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

I full-heartedly support this petition. I’ll be signing it and sending it down with Charlotte.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Chris Glover:** “Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will pass it to page Bianca to take to the table.

### OPPOSITION DAY

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

#### SERVICES DE SANTÉ MENTALE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I move the following motion:

Whereas there is a mental health crisis in Ontario; and

Whereas demand for services provided by the Canadian Mental Health Association has significantly increased, including demand for Assertive Community Treatment teams, court diversion services, and behavioural support services for seniors; and

Whereas base funding for the Canadian Mental Health Association has fallen significantly behind the rate of inflation since 2014; and

Whereas the Canadian Mental Health Association is experiencing high staff turnover and staff vacancy rates

due to uncompetitive salaries, staff burnout, and wage suppression under Bill 124, Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to increase the base funding for each branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association by 8% as an immediate emergency stabilization investment.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Leader of the Opposition has moved opposition day number 2.

I’ll recognize the Leader of the Opposition to lead off the debate.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I am really pleased today to speak to this motion. I want to start by noting that earlier today, in question period, I asked the Premier and the government whether they would support the motion. We didn’t get a clear answer, but I truly hope they will support our call. I think it’s a very reasonable, ask and I also believe this is not a partisan issue. This is about the health and well-being of Ontarians, and that should never be about politics.

It’s long overdue that we recognize mental health care as part of health care, that we make it part of medicare. Right now, anyone seeking mental health supports is met with few affordable options, long wait times, underfunded community health organizations, and underpaid, burnt-out staff. The reality is even more stark in northern Ontario, in Indigenous and rural communities. Stagnant operational funding over the last decade prevented community mental health and addictions organizations from keeping up with demand for those services.

We’ve all seen in our families and in our communities the impact of the pandemic on mental health, on kids and youth particularly, but we also know that BIPOC folks were deeply and differently impacted.

CAMH, in a 2022 survey, found that more than half of young Ontarians reported feeling depressed about the future. Some 39% said the pandemic had made their mental health worse. And 18% reported they were seriously contemplating suicide in the past year. That’s one in five young people saying that. Let that sink in for a moment. That’s difficult to hear.

As a result of all of this, more and more Ontarians are seeking out those mental health supports—in fact, one in four Ontarians today. Requests for mental health support have increased over 50% for adults and over 100% for children since the pandemic began.

Years of underfunding have decimated the mental health sector. They are struggling to meet the growing demand for services and supports, and they are losing staff to exhaustion and burnout. Everything that we hear about this government’s wage-suppression legislation for pay and about working conditions pushing health care staff away is also true about the mental health sector. In fact, over the last two years, those Bill 124 salary-based issues resulted in 66% of resignations at CMHA Ontario, resulting in nearly 250 community mental health and addictions jobs left unfilled.

Staffing issues have devastated the community mental health care sector. I heard first-hand about this just a couple of days ago, when I was in London–Fanshawe,

from nurses working on the front line in community mental health. And I've heard it in Sault St. Marie and in Timmins and in Hamilton and in Toronto and in Welland and in Ottawa—in every part of this province.

We know that addressing the staffing crisis is absolutely key to providing adequate patient care and community support, and that people seeking support for mental health don't want to be shuffled between staff members, which means often reliving trauma or repeating their personal stories to new people multiple times. We know that permanent, full-time staff can offer continuity and improve overall quality of care.

We know that mental health care is life-changing, but it's also costly. So I want to mention this to this government, because it's a concern of theirs: I want them to remember that mental health care in our community—community supports free up hospital beds. They mean less 911 calls. And, ultimately, it saves lives.

**1320**

People in Ontario can't wait any longer. The impact of this crisis on our families and our communities is devastating.

This government needs to wake up and open their eyes to the suffering that's happening around them. They're sitting on, again, \$6.4 billion in unspent funding—unspent dollars that were supposed to go to education, health care, mental health, and all kinds of things that public money was supposed to be spent on. Instead, they're squirrelling it away. Our motion calls for something very, very small and simple, to be honest, and that is an investment that would come to only \$24 million for the Canadian Mental Health Association. That's just 0.375% of that unspent funding—just to give you a sense of that. It would dramatically improve Ontarians' access to mental health care now.

Again, I want to call on the Premier and the government to support this motion, to increase funding for community mental health and addictions organizations, to make up for the decades and decades of underfunding for mental health, to provide better pay and working conditions for staff, and to give people the services they so desperately need.

Honestly, Speaker, how can we expect Ontario to thrive and progress if this government continues to abandon a growing group of people who are suffering from poor mental health?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate? Further debate? The member for Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you, Speaker. I wasn't expecting to be up speaking so soon. I thought maybe the Conservatives would want to have something to say on this motion.

I want to applaud my leader, the leader of the NDP official opposition, for bringing this very pertinent and timely motion forward.

We are seeing a drastic and very dramatic increase in the need for mental health supports for people in this province. I don't think there is one member in this House who could honestly say that they haven't had constituents

reach out to them, telling them that their family is desperate to get their child or another loved one in their family the supports and services they need. They're terrified, and rightfully so, because we are losing children to suicide in this province at alarming rates. We are losing people in this province to overdoses at alarming rates. And what we are seeing—based on data—is that this Conservative government is not investing the funds and resources into the front-line agencies and workers that actually provide supports and services.

CMHA is asking for an 8% increase to their budget, because their budget has largely been frozen for many years now. What that means is that they can't get a base funding increase. That means they're going to lose staff. That means fewer supports in every community around this province. That means more crisis. That means more hospital visits. It means more people being turned back out on the streets because the hospitals cannot support them the way that they want to or should be able to, and that means that more people will die due to inaction by this government.

Speaker, I want to share a story with you—and this is someone I've become good friends with. It's a story that I think many people in this chamber are going to nod their heads at and say, "We've heard something similar in our communities." Frankly, I wish that there were never these stories, ever again. This was from a mom:

"After a few admissions to hospitals for her mental health, our oldest daughter died by suicide at the age of 19. She left behind two younger sisters and a large, close-knit family.

"The health system was not adequately funded or equipped and ultimately failed our daughter. Since then, we have watched another family member struggle and fight to receive mental health services for a loved one.

"Several times, upon arrival at the ER in a suicidal state, this individual has been turned away, or discharged within hours of being admitted to the psychiatric floor because there are no beds available.

"When discharged, the resources provided as an option for follow-up are booked for months in advance. When in a time of crisis, there are no resources available to people experiencing ... mental illness or a mental health crisis. Until our government puts aside bipartisan differences and places the same emphasis and funding for a publicly funded mental health as there currently is on our physical health system, suicide will continue to be an epidemic that plagues our society. After years of talk, isn't it time for this government to step up and provide adequate funding for mental health services for everyone" in this province?

I want to point out that this family lost their daughter. They waited eight months—eight months. Their small children, their two other daughters, and themselves waited eight months just for intake into the mental health system.

This is not something I talk about personally, usually—my time is running out—but I'm going to do it today. It's hard to talk about. I lost a brother to an overdose.

Nobody in this province grows up and says, "I want to struggle with mental health." Nobody in this province says, "I want to struggle with addiction."

What I can tell you, Speaker, is, if this government doesn't step up and put more funding into mental health and addictions, more families like mine will lose people they care very, very deeply about.

Do what's right. Invest in the system.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I've got to say something here. Mental health doesn't just pick out parties—people with mental health isn't just the NDP, it isn't the Liberals, it isn't the Greens; it's also the Conservatives. And I believe, from the bottom of my heart, that every one of you over there who have chosen not to speak yet have been affected by mental health and what it does to families, what it does to individuals. So I'm saying to you, support this motion. We have to do more. We have to do more for our kids, for our grandkids. Quite frankly, you have to do more for your own colleagues. I want you to understand that.

I'm just going to give you some examples, and I think it's fair and reasonable to do this. Niagara continues to see a crisis in addictions. In 2022, there were 657 suspected opioid overdoses responded to by an understaffed EMS. Nearly 70%—70%—of those calls were people between 25 and 44, which in a lot of cases would be our kids and our grandkids. Just from January to February of this year, 2023, Niagara had 88 suspected overdoses responded to by the EMS. And, heartbreaking as this is, approximately 11 of them per month are dying.

Most mental health and addiction groups have had their budgets frozen for years, and they're struggling to keep up.

Wait-lists are growing, food banks are increasing, house and care costs are going through the roof, rent costs are going through the—and this is causing even more increase in mental health.

So I'm going to say one more time, as my time is up, to the Conservatives: Every one of you guys have been touched with mental health. We need more funding. They need more help in every community right across the province of Ontario. And your colleagues need support—just like my colleagues need support, the Liberals need support, the Greens, and the independents. We can do better. We have to do better.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to give a shout-out to the compassionate, skilled and exhausted mental health workers from CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, who have been working tirelessly on the front lines of the pandemic in the face of an unprecedented mental health crisis that shows no signs of improving.

Here's the reality in my community, Speaker: since 2020, a 137% increase in children's mental health crisis calls and a 72% increase in mental health support calls; since 2021, a 171% increase in crisis response team interactions. Many of the 75,000 people who have used the crisis lines or participated in programs are first-time users of mental health services. Many are also former or current clients whose crises are worsening. Almost all are presenting with more complexity than ever before—serious

mental illness, addiction, poverty, trauma, and homelessness.

**1330**

You can imagine the moral distress and vicarious trauma experienced by staff as they watch their clients suffer and even die, despite their best efforts, as they're forced year after year to do more with less and provide care in a chronically underfunded system. Who can blame them if they decide to move to a hospital or school, where salaries are as much as 33% higher, or leave the sector altogether?

The Thames Valley CMHA is looking at a \$3-million shortfall if all vacant positions were filled. Without an increase to their base budget, as we call for in this motion, they face some tough choices: Do they leave 35 positions vacant and put even more pressure on current staff? Do they ignore staff burnout and put their own staff's mental health at risk? Do they deny or delay service for those in desperate need of mental health support, forcing them to go to the ER to access services?

Speaker, our community needs the vital programs delivered by CMHA.

I call on this government to support our motion today and invest in the 8% base funding increase. Lives are at stake.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's an honour to rise today and speak on behalf of the motion brought forward by the Ontario NDP to increase mental health funding in this province by 8%, as asked for by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

I'm going to take a slightly different tack than my colleagues have taken. I want to talk about how this investment could save lives because of gun violence—gun violence is closely linked with mental health.

I want to thank One By One Movement, Communities for Zero Violence, Zero Gun Violence Movement, Keep6ix, Danforth families, and the many, many other organizations in this city and across this province who have been working to reduce gun violence. But today I want to focus on one other organization: Operation Prefrontal Cortex.

Research shows that poverty is the primary cause of gun violence. An OECD study shows that the greater the gap between rich and poor, the higher the level of gun violence.

If you look at a map of the city of Toronto, at the areas where there's poverty, and you overlay a map of gun violence, they almost exactly intersect.

Operation Prefrontal Cortex was started by Director X a number of years ago after he was shot at a party that he was hosting. He asked himself, "Why did this person bring out a gun at this party where everyone was having a good time?" He did research, and what he found was that violent people have a smaller prefrontal cortex and an overactive amygdala. There's a solution, though. He found that if you do mindfulness meditation, you can actually increase the size of your prefrontal cortex and reduce the action of your

amygdala. This will allow a person to have better emotional regulation and better decision-making and to be less likely to be violent. They've done these programs in schools and correctional centres—he wants to move them into the police and into the community. It's this kind of program that could increase the mental health in communities and that could reduce gun violence.

So I encourage the Conservatives on the other side of the House to support this call to increase mental health funding by 8%.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** In St. Catharines, when I look out my window, when I walk through my streets, when I talk to my neighbours, I hear and see the pain and the weight of the mental health crisis. Homelessness, addictions, anxiety, and all the other forms of mental health strife are fixtures not only in my community but across the Ontario community—it's shared with all of us.

Speaker, it would be easy for me to point out the funding gaps and missed opportunities that Ontario has seen with mental health. It would be easy to highlight what the cost has meant for my community and all the mental health agencies, patients and their families. This is because the problem of mental health, right now, looms so large.

You may have heard that the Niagara region has declared a mental health and homelessness and addictions crisis—a state of emergency.

Speaker, there is no way around it: The solution to fixing mental health in Ontario is all about funding. It means no more freezing of the base budget increases for mental health.

This is why the NDP has put forward an opposition motion being debated this afternoon for an 8% emergency stabilization investment in community mental health care.

Over the last few months, I've made an effort to reach out to as many service providers as I can in Niagara. Let's make sure we give the service providers the resources they need. We cannot issue funding at the same level as the last decade, given what inflation is at now. That amounts to virtually a cut. This is because all of my non-profits and service providers—who are the real heroes of the mental health battle right now—cannot leave their staff at frozen wages.

It is clear at this point that if we want to make a dent in mental health, it requires an increase in funding, not another freeze.

I hope this government does what is right for Ontarians by supporting our motion for greater investments in mental health supports.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** In all of our ridings, we are experiencing a dramatic increase in demand for mental health services.

In Hamilton, despite this state of emergency, we have seen the planned closure of at least two mental health service providers. We're losing Catholic Family Services of Hamilton, who operated for more than 70 years, and

Hamilton Mental Health Outreach, who supported people in Hamilton with severe and persistent mental illness for over 30 years. Both organizations have cited an inability to meet the increase in demand because of underfunding and struggles to recruit staff with frozen wages because of Bill 124.

Hamilton Mental Health Outreach offered important services that will be noticeably missed. One of their services was a street outreach program for people living rough or unhoused on our streets, connecting people in crisis to help.

These services were critical in preventing people from falling through the cracks. We now have fewer places for people to call when they need help or for family members to call for their loved ones. I hear from many people in distress, from desperate parents who don't know where to turn when they need help. Imagine your loved one or your child during a mental health crisis and you are helpless because you simply do not know where to take them. Emergency rooms are not the answer. Preventing people from falling through the cracks is critical.

In Hamilton, we have just experienced the heart-breaking death of a local icon, Teenage Head guitarist Gord Lewis, and the not-criminally-responsible verdict for his son Jonathan. By all accounts, this was a tragedy that could have been avoided with a system of adequately funded mental health care for individuals and families in crisis. Gord's family shared with me that Jonathan sought help at 10 emergency wards in the 36 hours before Gord was killed.

This bill is a small step in the right direction. We need an immediate emergency stabilization investment of 8% to begin to address this crisis and prevent any more tragic outcomes, death or suicides.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the many families, like the Lewises, who work as advocates for their relatives and for others in our community.

To the dedicated mental health workers and organizations on the front line: We recognize your tireless work in a system that is letting you down—not just you, but the people and the families you work so hard to protect and to serve.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** As my colleague from St. Catharines mentioned, last week the Niagara regional government declared a state of emergency for homelessness, mental health and opioid addiction, in an effort to send a clear message to this provincial government that without significant action, these crises will continue to worsen. I want to thank my constituent Steven Soos, as well as Haley Bateman and Pat Chiocchio, two regional councillors from my riding, for their advocacy, as well as the other regional councillors and mayors who supported the motion to declare an emergency.

**1340**

Many people in Ontario are struggling and are frequently unable to access treatment when they need it.

Niagara continues to be particularly hard hit, with hundreds of people on wait-lists that continue to grow. The wait-list for Niagara Regional Housing is up to 20 years. Statistics provided to local media from Niagara region indicate there are now as many as 277 beds in shelters across Niagara and the need is growing. The 2021 annual point-in-time count identified 660 people in our community facing homelessness—an increase from 2018, and the number has again increased since then. That same year, Niagara EMS reported over 1,000 suspected opioid overdoses.

Pathstone Mental Health, where my wife works, indicates there are over 800 children on the wait-list for treatment, and that list did not exist prior to the pandemic.

Chief Bryan MacCulloch indicates that Niagara Regional Police Service has seen an increase of 238% in calls involving persons in crisis in the last five years.

The Niagara region and local agencies continue to do great work in a system with inadequate funding from this government, but it's clear that the current situation is untenable.

I'm calling on the province to step up and make a commitment to deliver funding and support for agencies and people dealing with these fundamental issues affecting our community.

Local leaders are sending this government a message: This is an emergency, and Niagara needs more funding now.

I asked the minister this morning whether he would deliver more funding—yes or no—and he droned on about mobile health units that already exist. That's not an answer. We need more money to front lines now, not deflection and excuses.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I rise today in order to speak in favour of the opposition day motion calling on the government to increase the base funding for the Canadian Mental Health Association and community-based mental health providers by 8% as an immediate—and, I would argue, emergency—stabilization fund. This is the least—and I want to emphasize, the least—we can do to address the mental health crisis we're currently facing. Dramatically increased demand of mental health service providers combined with decades now of flatlined budgets have brought the Canadian Mental Health Association and other community-based mental health providers to the breaking point.

Across Ontario right now, there are 250 CMHA community mental health and addictions jobs that are left unfilled. These are jobs that could be providing the mental health services and support people in our communities need. More than 65% of the resignations over the last two years have been salary-based, as mental health workers feel and are overworked, underpaid and burnt-out.

I've talked to Canadian Mental Health Association leaders who have talked about how hard it is to hang on to staff—when there's a 33% pay gap between what CMHA nurses are paid and others in the health care system. Many

CMHA branches have received the exact same funding envelope they're currently receiving right now over the last 20 years. Think about the inflationary pressures they've experienced over that time. No wonder there are so many positions unfilled.

A recent survey of CMHA branches indicates that without an immediate base funding increase, the Canadian Mental Health Association will not have the staff or resources to continue serving the same number of clients.

We simply cannot experience mental health service cuts in the middle of a mental health crisis. And let's be clear, these service cuts have real-world implications—28,000 young people on a wait-list to access mental health services, with waits that can last as long as two and a half years.

I ran into a young person in downtown Guelph and asked him how he was doing. He said to me, "I'm doing okay today. But it would have been better if six months ago, when I was on suicide watch, somebody had reached out to me. I feel lucky to be alive today. Somebody finally got back to me yesterday, and I have a little bit of hope."

These are the real-world consequences of underfunding our mental health services: Some 2,800 Ontarians have died from opioid-related causes since 2021, half of Ontarians are saying they're having trouble accessing mental health supports—and so many young people on such long wait times.

Homelessness, mental health and addictions—the intersectionality of it—is putting tremendous pressure on our health care system, on people's lives, on our downtown businesses.

I can't tell you how many business owners in downtown Guelph are stepping up and saying, "We need help to improve the vitality of our downtown." One tiny business just donated \$28,000 to help deal with the mental health crisis that so many people out on the street in front of their store are facing.

We need government to step up.

This is about improving people's lives, but it's also about saving money. Every dollar invested in mental health services returns \$10 to our provincial economy. A US study found that every dollar invested in mental health services saved \$2.47. We also have seen other studies that calculate that if we could reduce depression in our society, it would increase our GDP across Canada by \$32 billion. And every \$10 invested in permanent supportive housing, with wraparound mental health and addiction supports, saves us \$21.72. So we're talking about—I don't know—about \$150 million here, in what's in this motion, to have the kinds of economic returns, but more importantly, the returns to improving people's lives. That's what we're talking about today.

In the spirit of non-partisanship, I just want to say that I've appreciated every time the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has come to Guelph and talked about what we need to do to address the mental health crisis. But the bottom line is, those words have to be backed up by funding investments. We're simply not

going to be able to solve the crisis if we don't put the investments into it.

That's what this motion is about. That's why I'll be voting for it. And that's why I'm hoping that everyone in this Legislature votes for this motion today.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Of course, it's always a pleasure to stand in this House, especially when we're proposing solutions to the government.

This motion actually has a lot of merit. It does value the experience that we've all had in our communities.

Certainly, my seatmate in here and I spent January and February listening to front-line health care workers—particularly in mental health, particularly in community care—and they told us about the humiliation they feel with Bill 124. They talked about the emotional labour that they experience because of this wage-suppression legislation and how demoralizing it is for them. So I want to thank them for showing up day after day. But the fact of the matter is, that's not sustainable.

The motion that our leader has put forward on behalf of the caucus is a short-term-gap solution which will prevent the further bleeding out of workers from this sector.

I also want to talk about the economic reasons to support this motion. In Canada, 500,000 Canadians each week do not go to work because of mental health issues. The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated to be approximately \$51 billion—\$6.4 billion resulting from lost productivity alone.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Kaitlyn Roth from my community, who called out for help, had the courage to ask for help. That help was never there for her, and we lost her. You can't quantify the loss of that life. We will never know her potential, because the services were not there. At the end, though, we know that because she was in such distress, she had come into contact with 27 police officers. Four of those police officers were there when she died by suicide, and they are off work.

So there's a trickle-out effect in our community by not taking action, by not showing leadership.

Speaker, \$24 million is literally a drop in the bucket.

I implore this government: Please, do the right thing. Let's stabilize, let's support, and let's work together on this issue.

1350

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Further debate?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I rise with great pride to speak on behalf of the people of Toronto Centre.

Last summer, the Big City Mayors' Caucus asked the Premier for an emergency meeting. They wanted to meet with him to develop an emergency plan to address homelessness, mental health and addictions. The Premier has denied the mayors of the largest cities in Canada that meeting.

To this very day, the Auditor General of Ontario has specified that there is no credible plan and no coordinated

strategy in the government's plan to address homelessness. Why I talk about homelessness is because the Conservative government has also chronically underfunded mental health and addictions services, which are intricately tied to homelessness.

Many of my colleagues have already spoken so eloquently and passionately about the need to increase funding for mental health. They have spoken about it from a human lens, about the human impact. What I'd like to do is to actually share with you the impact from a financial lens.

Speaker, what I wanted to raise with you is that the economic development concerns from my community, which is the largest cultural corridor in the city and the province, as well as the largest financial district in the province—are saying that they need to see this government invest in mental health and addictions services. They have been very clear that if the funding is not there, they will continue to see a decline of the urban core—not just in Toronto Centre, but right across cities across Ontario.

Take, for example, the Downtown Yonge BIA. They have been meeting with government leaders, and at every single meeting they have said that their number one issue is around safety. They want to make sure that their community and visitors to the area—that their perception is that it's safe, it is clean, it is viable.

We're already seeing a worsening mental health crisis in Ontario, and largely because of the lack of mental health and addictions support, as well as funding for supportive housing to end chronic homelessness.

Cadillac Fairview, which is one of the largest real estate companies in Canada, recently announced that Nordstrom is leaving. They are closing 13 locations—including 2,500 people who will be laid off. This is going to have a detrimental impact to our neighbourhood. This is going to impact the vitality of our main streets.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the Downtown Yonge BIA has said that, according to their safe-streets strategy, mental health and drug use are both health concerns, and that they require clinical and social interventions. Police enforcement will only result in a revolving-door approach; it is not going to be enough. It is failing, and people need to have their backs—they need to know that this government is willing to invest in them and the mental health supports that they are desperately needing.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I want to say thank you to the opposition for bringing this issue forward today in the Ontario Legislature, and obviously take a moment to thank and congratulate the member for Davenport for stepping up and becoming the leader of her party and becoming a mentor to so many women—particularly during this incredibly important week, as we recognize women's heritage and leadership in this province. So congratulations to Marit Stiles.

Speaker, I have had very few opportunities, as you are well aware, as well as every member here is, to address the people of Nepean. So before I begin my formal remarks—which are not that formal, because I was just told I would be speaking to this—I do want to say thank you to the

people of Nepean for electing me six times to this assembly; most recently, in the month of June. I didn't have an opportunity during that campaign to say thank you to them for their support, their loyalty and their dedication—particularly as I am a member who has been very open and vocal about my mental health challenges.

So to the people of Nepean: For the next three years and a bit, I will continue to work extremely hard for you, to make you proud, and I want to say thank you for the opportunity to sit here in this assembly to be your voice at Queen's Park.

I would also like to say thank you to our Speaker, who I've already started conversations with, along with Camille Quenneville from the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, to see how we can best support members who may be in crisis.

I've had the opportunity to speak with many of you from all different parts of the province—but, as importantly, from all different political parties—to hear about some of your own struggles and those of your own family. I know that there are members here who have lost people to suicide; in fact, I know two, and my heart breaks for them. I know that there are members here who are suffering through grief because they have lost a parent. I know some of you may be dealing with anxiety or depression, or, like me, you may actually have something like bipolar disorder, which is a special kind of hell.

I want to say thanks to my mother and my husband and my daughter, because my diagnosis has been difficult on them, particularly over the past eight years. But now that we know what we're dealing with—and that's important for a lot of people, to get the appropriate medication and the right type of therapy, which is why I think it's important today to have this discussion, why I think it's important that this is before the floor of the Legislature.

Before we start piling on one another—I've had the opportunity to see the best in every single one of you over the past eight or nine months. That has not always been the case—I've been here for 17 years. I have seen your genuine compassion, your empathy, your support for another. And I would encourage you, when we talk about this issue, not to make my health or anyone else's health in this province a political football. We all know there's a provincial budget coming up that's going to be very important. Mental health has been a clarion call for all of us, regardless of what side of the Legislature we are on; it's one where we all agree that more resources need to be deployed.

Two weeks ago, my husband lost his best friend to suicide. Just last week, I had another friend who went into a manic episode and was hospitalized. This is very real to me, and just like all of you, I have lived experience. These are not talking points I have; they're scribbles on my page. This is something I deal with every single week. I couldn't go to my leader's dinner last Thursday, because every Friday I have to give blood and make sure my lithium levels are in check when I talk to my psychiatrist at the Ottawa Hospital.

In May, on May 24, which would have been my father's, I believe, 72nd birthday, I ended up in the Queensway Carleton Hospital in a bed. I didn't want to

live anymore. I didn't want to win the election. I didn't want to breathe. And it was through the care of the doctors and nurses at the Queensway Carleton Hospital that I felt safe. They saved my life, and I'm very happy that I was able to be on hand before Christmas to see them expand their mental health facility. And I'll give credit where it's due: While that job was finished under this government, it was started by the previous Liberal government.

I've had the opportunity to work with other groups, community-based, that are trying to raise awareness, trying to actually allow people that—I don't know if it's a word—"navigability," to navigate the social resources that are in our own communities. I'll be speaking on Thursday to a group of women about these challenges.

There are so many groups that are cropping up across Ontario that also deserve our support. They are community-based, they're organic, they're grassroots, and they're led by people with lived experience. And sometimes I find that to be the place where I heal most—learning from other people that I'm not alone, that the things I experienced for the eight months that I couldn't really get out of bed are the same things other people do.

You don't have to be a cabinet minister, you don't have to be a teacher, you don't have to be a young person to experience this; you just have to be human. Oftentimes, we'll hear that one out of five people have mental health issues—I often say, because I'm bipolar, that's six out of five. I guess I'm one of the only ones who can make that joke around here. But I have to say, I know that people experience it.

This past summer, when I was laying in my chaise lounge—can somebody bring me a tissue, because I'm going to need one—I took a picture of my friend. I was going through such a period of self—I can't believe I'm being this open. My family is probably at home calling me right now, saying, "Shut up. You're over-sharing." I was laying at home. It was in the summer, and I was having a rough time getting up and being ready to do things. My friend came over, who has since passed away. He was laying there and was asking me about my care. I had no idea he had been in a hospital just before I was, in May. He was a truly brilliant political mind. He was so happy to hear that I was doing better. I was philosophizing—because that's what we do as politicians, eh? He was sitting there, and my cat jumped on him, and he had the most beautiful glow on his face. He died a couple of weeks ago because he didn't think he was worth it.

**1400**

I've had this conversation with my friend opposite. When there's a suicide, sometimes people call for help, but other times they're suffocating. It's like a fishbowl on your head, but your head just keeps getting bigger and bigger, and you can't breathe. That's really tough, and I know there are people across the province who are dealing with that now.

I don't want to be political on this, because it's too important. I think it's important that we have the conversation, but I don't think that today, regardless of how the vote goes, we should be yelling at each other. This is an

issue where we can come together. This is an issue where we can show great leadership.

I happen to be a very lucky person that I had a boss—like people in Nepean and the Premier of Ontario—who gave me time to heal. I'm happy to report I'm doing quite well. I maybe shouldn't have come back when I did in October, but I'm really well now.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you. Don't you guys go ruining it on me, okay?

I'm sorry to have been so emotional; I was really only just here to say a few words. But we're in an unprecedented crisis. Never before in the history of the province, the country and probably the world have we been dealing with such high levels of mental illness, and I think the pandemic made it much more difficult. I think that the polarization of society, not just on the floor or in the House of Commons or in the United States—we see it. For some reason, we've forgotten to be a bit more kind and compassionate to one another.

I think we look at buckets of money and think it's going to fix things, when it won't. I think that when someone has lost their resilience—too many times I've had to count in the last little while, I've watched people break them down even further instead of saying, "Okay, maybe it's time to give them a breather."

I just want to thank all of you and find a graceful way to conclude this speech. It has been a journey—and whether you guys like it or not, you're part of mine. I'm grateful that you're part of it with me, and I'm grateful that you're all having this conversation. Hopefully, for the remainder of this debate, just take a second and break from your notes—whatever your staff wrote you, or the leader's office—and just sit there and just think that the people that we're talking about are real. It's not uncommon, and it's absolutely okay to be open about your health and not apologize for it.

With that, I'm going to wrap it up before I start crying again, and I'm going to get my daily Toronto update from Minister Ford.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today. I really didn't expect it to be in this fashion, but after following the member opposite, I have to congratulate her on her openness. Mental health isn't easy to talk about. Many of our families face it and many people in our communities face it each and every single day. It takes bravery, but it's that bravery that will allow us to continue the conversations that will break down the stigma people face that we see furthers their suffering, quite frankly.

Mental health has definitely hit my family. As you know, my son-in-law died by suicide in October. I have had two family deaths since that time, one being just last night. We never know from one day to the next what's happening and who is feeling what.

Making sure that there is a safe space to talk about mental health, regardless of where you are in this province, should be a thing that we all strive to do better.

In saying that, we know that our organizations are struggling. They are underfunded. This isn't something that is made up on the back of a napkin. This isn't a political ploy—this is people just like the member opposite, just like my family, just like many of our families who are begging for help. The people are on the streets. They're on the corners. They're homeless. There is drug addiction. There are children in our emergency rooms with self-harm—overdose, suicide. This is a true human crisis that we're seeing in our communities.

A measly 8%—\$24 million—to change the lives of families in our province is something that we all should be able to benefit from. It's something that we all need to be able to have access to.

I'm grateful to my leader for bringing forward this motion today. I know there are lots of comments still coming from this side of the House. Many comments are based on actual facts, they're based on real-life families—and they're based on the institutions in our communities that provide them.

I appreciate the opportunity. I'm out of time.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Before I start my speech, I would like to thank the member from Windsor West; I'd like to thank the member from Nepean for her sharing—very emotional. It is an emotional topic we're talking about today. Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain, as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to this motion this afternoon. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I'm proud to highlight the work we've been doing to improve mental health and addiction services across the province.

Ontario is making record investments to improve health care delivery and to connect you faster and more easily and closer to home.

This motion speaks to the Canadian Mental Health Association's pre-budget submission.

I look forward to our government's release of Ontario budget 2023, a plan to build a strong future for Ontario, on March 23.

In my riding, the Canadian Mental Health Association York and South Simcoe is an award-winning team that provides excellent services to local residents. These services are funded through Ontario Health; the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, as well as the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I'd like to thank the entire team for their selfless commitment to the people in our community.

Over the past two months, our government crossed the province to hear from Ontarians through pre-budget consultations. We went to many communities, including Kenora, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Kingston, and the GTA—Mississauga, Brampton, Durham—London, to seek pre-budget advice on what matters most for the people of Ontario and what Ontarians think are the best ways to move forward.



**1410**

I was happy to attend the pre-budget session at Old Town Hall in Newmarket, hosted by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Across the province, we heard about the need for more access to health care, and you cannot talk about health care without talking about mental health care.

Every year, more than one million people in Ontario experience a mental health or addictions challenge, which can have serious impact on their quality of life, including the ability to go to school or make a living. The system to support individuals with these challenges has been broken and fragmented for many years. People who badly needed support were waiting far too long to connect to care or having difficulty figuring out how to even begin navigating a complicated, disjointed system to get the help they need. Too often, they were left to struggle on their own.

We are determined to fix long-standing issues in the mental health and addictions care sector once and for all, but we know that doing so will take time. That's why, three years ago, we launched our comprehensive strategy, Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System, to improve mental health services for communities across Ontario and support patients and families living with mental health and addictions challenges. The plan is built on four central pillars: improving quality, expanding existing services, implementing innovative solutions, and improving access. These are designed to work together to support the delivery of the services people need where and when they need them. We launched the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health to guide our work. To ensure the plan's success, we are investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system for Ontario. Since launching the plan, we have already invested more than \$500 million annually to help mental health and addiction services expand access to care and reduce wait times.

We have also launched innovative new programs, including the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program, to provide more Ontarians support for anxiety and depression with cognitive behaviour therapy, new eating disorders prevention, and early intervention programming.

Madame la Présidente, chaque année, plus d'un million de personnes en Ontario présentent un problème de santé mentale ou de dépendances, ce qui peut avoir de graves répercussions sur leur qualité de vie, y compris leur capacité d'aller à l'école ou de gagner leur vie.

Le système pour soutenir les particuliers présentant de tels enjeux ne fonctionnait plus et était fragmenté depuis plusieurs années. Les personnes qui avaient grandement besoin d'aide attendaient beaucoup trop longtemps pour être aiguillées vers des soins ou avaient de la difficulté à comprendre comment commencer à s'orienter dans un système compliqué et décentralisé pour obtenir de l'aide. Elles étaient trop souvent laissées à elles-mêmes pour lutter contre leurs problèmes.

Nous sommes déterminés à régler une fois pour toutes les problèmes de longue date du secteur des soins en

matière de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances. Parvenir à cela prendra du temps.

Il y a trois ans, nous avons lancé notre stratégie exhaustive—Vers le mieux-être : un plan pour bâtir le système ontarien de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances—pour améliorer les services de santé mentale pour les collectivités ontariennes et pour appuyer les patients et les familles qui vivent avec des problèmes de santé mentale ou de dépendance.

Le plan est construit sur quatre piliers centraux—amélioration de la qualité, développement des services existants, mise en oeuvre de solutions innovantes et amélioration de l'accessibilité—qui sont conçus pour travailler ensemble afin de soutenir la prestation des services dont la population a besoin, où et quand ce besoin se fait sentir. Nous avons inauguré le Centre d'excellence pour la santé mentale et la lutte contre les dépendances qui relève de Santé Ontario pour guider notre travail.

Afin d'assurer la réussite du plan, nous investissons 3,8 milliards de dollars sur 10 ans afin de développer et de déployer un système exhaustif et interconnecté en matière de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances pour la population ontarienne. Depuis le lancement de ce plan, nous avons déjà investi plus de 500 millions de dollars annuellement pour aider les services de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances à élargir l'accès aux soins et réduire les temps d'attente.

Nous avons par ailleurs lancé de nouveaux programmes innovateurs, notamment le Programme ontarien de psychothérapie structurée pour offrir à la population ontarienne du soutien pour l'anxiété et la dépression avec la thérapie cognitivo-comportementale, ainsi qu'un nouveau programme de prévention et d'intervention précoce en matière de troubles de l'alimentation.

Speaker, our government knows that when someone reaches out for help, they shouldn't have to wait. That's why we are opening new beds to care for children and youth with complex mental health needs.

We are investing \$10.5 million to address gaps in care and improve access while decreasing existing wait-lists and extensive wait times. Through this investment, we are expanding the child and youth mental health Secure Treatment Program and adding up to 24 new beds to serve vulnerable children and youth. This program provides intensive care for children and youth experiencing acute and complex mental health challenges that may put them at risk of self-harm or harm to others.

**1420**

Additionally, an investment of \$3.5 million for two new Step Up Step Down live-in treatment programs will connect more youth to care in communities in western and northern regions of the province. We will add up to 16 new beds to meet the needs of youth who don't require the highly intensive care provided at a hospital or secure treatment setting but who need more support than a community-based, live-in treatment program is designed for. Expanding this program will connect more youth to less intensive services in their communities and eventually help them return to their homes.

I am so thankful to the entire team at Southlake Regional Health Centre for the extraordinary care they

provide to my constituents of Newmarket–Aurora, for the patients and the families in northern York region, southern Simcoe county, and surrounding communities. Our local health care workers make a significant difference in people’s lives each and every day. I thank them for all they do to protect our health and our well-being.

On February 13, I had the honour of welcoming the Minister of Health to my riding to celebrate the grand opening of the new adult in-patient mental health unit at Southlake. This is a prime example of how our government is expanding health care services closer to home. The Ministry of Health is a tremendous supporter of our hospitals and the important role of local health care. We are focused on providing patients and families with more connected and convenient care, and this new adult in-patient unit provides exactly that to my region of northern York. With our investment of more than \$6.5 million, 12 new mental health beds and support spaces have been added, for a total capacity of 28 beds. With this expansion, Southlake will be able to provide care for more than 400 additional patients each year. The newly renovated space includes private rooms, more windows with natural light, and common areas to support patient recovery. These improvements will ensure that individuals who need emergency mental health support receive the care they need in a safe, modern and comfortable environment. From the time we announced the funding for these additional in-patient adult beds, Southlake completed the renovations within two years.

Thank you to the Southlake team for everything you do to support our communities and for helping some of our most vulnerable residents on their journey to wellness.

Another organization in my riding, CMHA York and South Simcoe—in early January, I had the opportunity to visit their Aurora office, alongside the Associate Minister of Housing, to announce that CMHA York and South Simcoe was the recipient of an Ontario Trillium Foundation Resilient Communities Fund grant. A total of \$104,000 was granted over a 12-month period that started on March 24, 2022. Since receiving this grant, it has assisted CMHA to rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 by hiring a mental health educator last year to expand the CMHA college course curriculum and also to train staff on virtual and in-person mental health education programming. The grant was also instrumental to the translation of materials to support outreach and inclusivity, development of a learning management system enabling clients to create individual learning portals, and technology enhancements to better facilitate synchronized and asynchronous learning. All courses at the CMHA College of Health and Well-Being are designed to inspire hope, support learning and provide new opportunities for growth and connection. It was wonderful to listen to a very young lady—my words, “a very young lady”—speak about the program, as she found herself in crisis. Through the guidance of the staff and this course, she was able to learn at a pace convenient to her schedule, while allowing her to speak with a counsellor. This is the successful outcome we are all striving for—for our young people to have convenient and connected care where and when they need it.

It is not-for-profit community-based organizations like CMHA of York region that strengthen our community by providing support to young adults with the resources required to improve one’s mental health and strengthen one’s emotional resilience. To quote the CEO of CMHA-YRSS, “We are incredibly grateful for the government’s generous grant that is enabling our CMHA college to bolster mental health and recovery support to marginalized clients in our community.”

Ensuring that individuals in our community have access to the support and resources they require has been and always will be a top priority for me. As the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, I am committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of all our community members.

I am proud of our government’s investment in the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Resilient Communities Fund grant as it supports agencies in our community to focus on their work and strengthen their programs for all our residents.

At the end of April 2022, the government announced an investment of over \$1 million in Newmarket–Aurora non-profits to help them offset the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—the goal being to ensure that they can deliver the critical services needed by their local clients and to create stronger communities.

I was thrilled to hear that one of these grants through the Resilient Communities Fund grant program from the Ontario Trillium Foundation would be supporting NACCA, the Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association. NACCA was granted \$49,600 over six months. These funds helped build an online virtual mental wellness support platform program for Black marginalized and under-represented youth ages 12 to 25. The seamless entry program helps to support strategies for those experiencing ongoing anti-Black racism that has had a tremendous impact on their well-being. Delivered with an Afrocentric focus, the program enables Black youth to experience a greater awareness of themselves, their mental wellness and community of peers. It is intended to be delivered in a partial virtual environment at the NACCA Black-led community centre in Newmarket and at various on-site community-based projects.

To quote the chair of NACCA, Jerisha Grant-Hall, “Youth are a foundational part and important beneficiaries of our programs and services and will continue to be a big focus for NACCA. This grant sets in motion the start of a mental health literacy, advocacy and healing support network for Black youth that is so needed.”

Speaker, we’re also expanding access to primary care to make it easier and faster for individuals of all ages to connect to mental health and addictions through community health centres, family health teams and walk-in clinics.

**1430**

Ontario health teams also bring together health care providers from across health and community sectors, including primary care, hospitals, home and community

care, mental health and addictions services, and long-term care, as one collaborative team to better coordinate care and share resources. Working together, they ensure that you can move between health care providers more easily with one patient record and one care plan that follows you wherever you go for help.

Ontario health teams are responsible for delivering care for their patients, understanding their health care history, easing their transition from one provider to another, directly connecting them to different types of care, and providing 24/7 help in navigating the health care system.

Across the province, 54 Ontario health teams are working to improve transitions between health care providers and are ensuring a patient's medical record follows them wherever they go for care.

Applications for four additional Ontario health teams are currently being reviewed. Once approved, these remaining teams will result in the province achieving its goal of full provincial coverage, ensuring everyone has the support of an Ontario health team.

With an investment of more than \$106 million, Ontario health teams are also investing in digital and virtual care options so you can easily connect with a mental health care worker when you need to from the comfort of your home.

To support health human resources to provide these services, last fall we began our work to develop an Integrated Capacity and Health Human Resources Plan for Ontario. We are analyzing current gaps in our system, anticipating needs over the next 10 years, and determining solutions to address growing health care demands. The plan will focus on how to meet this demand through investments, health human resources and innovative solutions. This year, we are building on this work and shifting our focus to working directly with leaders in our health care system on a workforce plan that includes where to prioritize current and future resources, addressing and minimizing system gaps, and building a strong health system for the long term. We will also look at specific strategies for increasing the number of health care professionals, starting with physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses and medical laboratory technologists. We'll also look at the retention of our health workforce through incentives, leveraging programs like the Learn and Stay program. We will ensure we have a greater understanding of each community and their needs, and that we have a plan to recruit and retain the health care workers needed, including family doctors, nurses, specialists and other health providers. We will prioritize areas most in need, like rural and remote communities, where gaps already exist. This plan will incorporate our lessons learned from COVID-19 and ensure we are prepared and equipped to meet the health care needs of Ontarians for years to come.

Finally, I'd like to remind this House that our government is making historic investments of more than \$75 billion annually in health and long-term care this year.

I look forward to budget day 2023, my first budget day as the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, on March 23, to share more details on how we will continue to build a strong province and invest in the things that matter most to

Ontarians, like health care and mental health and addictions services, for years to come.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I want to thank the official opposition for bringing forward this motion.

I want to also acknowledge the members from Nepean and Hamilton Mountain. It takes courage to share your personal experiences.

I want to acknowledge the government's work on the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, but the experts, the front-line workers, are asking now for funding. The government needs to spend some of the money they've been squirrelling away on more services that the people of Ontario need. We know that that money is there, and we know that the need is there.

I hope this government acknowledges that we are in an opioid and mental health crisis. Walk down any downtown in a large city or small town across our province, and you'll see the evidence. I hope the government will listen to great organizations like the CMHA and help them retain the incredible workers who are passionate about the work they do and the people whom they help. The government needs to think about what they can do now, not just in the budget, to help those workers stay in the jobs they love, instead of driving them to better-paying jobs, which is what we heard is happening throughout our pre-budget consultations. The CMHA talked about, I think it was, 250 open positions they have—positions for people who would be helping those who are in need on the streets and across our province to get the help that they need.

During those pre-budget consultations, we heard from numerous experts who stressed the need to expand mental health services and innovate our current approach to ensure that Ontarians get the support they need in a timely manner. For example, we heard from a psychiatrist at the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences who is doing incredible work in finding innovative pathways in the mental health space—to assess, treat and provide a plan for patients immediately, within 24 hours, after they need to access emergency mental health services.

We heard from people about the need to expand mental health services for youth, in small communities in particular, and make it simple and accessible for them to access the services they need wherever they live.

We heard about the impact on businesses and community members who want to see those who are suffering get the help they need and not have to resort to living, and seeking unsafe drugs, on the streets.

Innovations and solutions are out there. We've heard from the experts in the mental health space on what they need not only to ensure better and timely care for those who seek their services, but also to ensure they can attract and retain the workers who deliver those services to those in need.

We heard during those pre-budget consultations about the effects of Bill 124 on workers, including those in the mental health sector—that it has been devastating and humiliating for them. We've heard that those health care

workers do not feel supported by this government, and this bill was an example of that.

I've spoken to CMHA Toronto, and I know the great work they do and how committed they and their employees are to providing services to residents in my riding of Don Valley West and across Toronto, but they can't do it without the money to pay their workers who provide those services.

According to CMHA, one in four people in Ontario access mental health services, and 43% are finding it difficult to access the services they need.

CMHA has asked for a base funding increase of 8%. This is a small amount of the government's \$6.4 billion of money that they said they would spend in this fiscal year. This small increase would help to increase care across the province of Ontario; reduce wait times, especially for those accessing and needing emergency mental health services; and allow for early interventions, where needed, to prevent the loss of life that we heard talked about today by the members.

We know that there's money available—money that should and can still be spent on the people of Ontario. Increasing funding to CMHA to help increase their support and services, to help fill the gaps they've been experiencing in providing for the record level of demand that they see for their services—that will help individuals, that will help families, that will help alleviate this crisis. They need those workers to save people's lives, and they need money to retain those workers.

1440

The request by the CMHA is well thought out. It is modest. It is reasonable. And it would directly help the people who need their support.

I add my voice to those calling for this government to listen to the experts at CMHA and provide them with the resources they need now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Right now, my community is facing a crisis of mental health, addictions and homelessness. My office works with unsheltered and underserved constituents, and I recognize just how impossible it is for many in the community to navigate health care and support systems while struggling with addictions and mental health issues. For some people, it's nearly impossible to survive.

I've been glad to work alongside the Back Door Mission, which is a centre of care and service without equal in the province. Please understand, many of the vulnerable clients they work with, who are served at the Back Door Mission, can't access appropriate care elsewhere. More than 50% of them don't have health cards. They can't be served by a private clinic. They need the help and the care of a place like the Back Door Mission, which sees people who have little or no income, with no place to stay, who require treatment and medicinal support for their mental health and their medical needs. They also need a place to stay. They need nurses who have the time to show them that they matter and are cared for, case

managers who provide empathy and understanding, and volunteers and peers who make them feel protected as part of the community. They get that at the Back Door Mission. At the Mission United hub in Oshawa, this model of care happens every day; it's practised every day. It does so because of the commitments of CMHA.

At the beginning of the pandemic, other people shut their doors, but CMHA Durham found a way. They partnered with the Back Door Mission, which at that time was a local charity providing food and respite. Now, almost three years later, they're operating a high-functioning clinic for homeless individuals, literally keeping people alive on a daily basis. I appreciate the work of everybody connected to this project and across communities.

I talked to Nathan Gardner, the executive director at the Back Door Mission, and he wanted me to share this when I told him that we were asking for funding for CMHA to do the work that is so required across our communities: "It is clear that what is needed to support programs like Mission United and organizations like CMHA Durham is more. More funds to make sure employees have consistent access to training, respite and resources to support them. And more people, more workers with specialization in mental health and addictions to ensure" that they do not have to handle this on their own. "The people we serve who suffer from mental illness are some of the most complex and misunderstood we see today, and they require a commitment of our respect and dignity. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that we support those who work with them every day, and show them the same respect."

Government, support this motion. Increase CMHA funding today to support our neighbours in need.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I am also pleased to join the debate today about this motion regarding the Canadian Mental Health Association's pre-budget submission.

Mental health is an important issue and one which affects people from every walk of life in our province. It is one that our government takes very seriously.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I was pleased to travel across the province to hear from Ontarians about their priorities for the upcoming budget. We had the opportunity to hear directly from the Canadian Mental Health Association at the pre-budget consultations in Windsor, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins.

During our hearings, we heard from representatives about numerous mental health issues. The city of Kingston told us that they have declared a mental health and addictions crisis in their city. The Ontario Association of Social Workers and the Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists suggested expansion of services and a greater use of all mental health professionals to decrease the waiting lists. The Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and the Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health

Collective both spoke about mental health needs in their respective communities.

I know that the Minister of Finance will be taking all of these presentations into account when he prepares his budget.

The world continues to face the risk of high inflation and other economic challenges, but our government is continuing to work to navigate Ontario through this uncertainty. That's why it's important that we hear first-hand from many communities right across our province, including Kenora, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Kingston, London, Barrie, and in the GTA, in Mississauga, Brampton and Durham—all over Ontario—to seek advice from the people of Ontario on the best way forward.

We listened to people in their home communities, gathering their input on what the government's priorities needed to be in the upcoming budget. Everyone we heard from is crucial to our consultations and part of building an Ontario we can all be proud of, now and in the future.

Over the last couple of years, Ontario, along with the rest of the world, has faced challenges unlike any other that we have seen in our lifetimes. During this time, people across the province stood together and supported one another. The Ontario spirit was on full display. But due to the enduring impact from COVID-19, we also saw people's needs for health care, and particularly for mental health supports, increase. We know that health care workers went above and beyond in their front-line work during the pandemic. Our government made sure that the funds were available—some \$194 million in pandemic-related emergency funding enabled 98% of mental health and addictions services providers to remain open during the pandemic. We listened and acted then, and we are doing the same now.

We want to know what priorities people would like to see captured in the 2023 budget that will help us build Ontario together. Every idea has the potential to help us navigate the uncertainty that lies ahead, and our government looks forward to sharing that vision with all Ontarians on March 23. We are committed to the highest-quality health care for every patient, for every family, and in every community. We heard from Ontarians that they wanted to be able to get care where and when they need it. This means more hospital and long-term-care beds in each community, more diagnostic testing like MRIs closer to home, and more skilled health care workers available to provide care.

We are well on our way to delivering on this. We have added more than 3,500 hospital beds across the province in the last three years to ensure everyone has access to hospital care when they need it. This year, we've added 24 more pediatric critical care beds. With 50 new major hospital development projects, we will be adding another 3,000 new hospital beds over the next 10 years. Hospital funding is up an additional \$3.3 billion in 2022-23. We funded 49 new MRI machines in hospitals across Ontario, including two machines at Halton Healthcare in my

community, so people can be diagnosed faster and, if needed, begin treatment and follow-up care even sooner.

By building on our Roadmap to Wellness with additional investments and innovative new programs, we will make it easier and faster for individuals of all ages to connect to mental health and addictions supports. By the end of this year, funding from the Roadmap to Wellness and Addictions Recovery Fund will have supported the creation of almost 500 new addiction treatment beds in the province. To date, our government has invested \$525 million as part of the Roadmap to Wellness. This includes opening eight new youth wellness hubs, launching the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program, and adding more than 150 new addiction treatment beds across the province.

We know that people need mental health care that is comprehensive and connected and that offers high-quality, evidence-based services and supports where and when they need them.

A key achievement has been the creation of the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health. Inspired by the success Ontario had in transforming cancer services in the early 2000s, the centre of excellence has a mandate to create provincial service standards, performance metrics and reporting.

#### 1450

Speaker, we have also invested in growing our health care workforce. Since 2018, over 60,000 new nurses and nearly 8,000 new physicians have registered to work in Ontario, with thousands more personal support workers now providing care in Ontario. Last year, we promised to expand medical school education by adding 160 undergraduate and 295 postgraduate positions in the province over the next five years. Of the 295 new postgraduate positions, 60% will be dedicated to family medicine and 40% will be dedicated to specialty programs. This expansion—the largest of its kind in more than a decade—includes supporting all six medical schools across Ontario and allotting seats to the new Toronto Metropolitan University school of medicine, which recently found its new home in Brampton.

This year, we will launch the Physician Practice Ready Assessment Program, which will help internationally educated physicians with previous medical practice experience abroad undergo screening and assessment to determine if they are ready to enter practice in Ontario immediately, without having to complete lengthy re-education programs. This will add at least 50 new physicians by 2024.

We will continue to make record investments in health care now and into the future.

In my own community, we value the mental health care provided by Joseph Brant Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

In my community, we have many great organizations such as Acclaim Health providing mental health supports for seniors; the local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association; Bridging the Gap Halton; and ROCK, the Reach Out Centre for Kids.

I am proud of what our government has done to support mental health in Ontario, and I recognize there is still so much more to be done. We inherited a mental health system without enough funding or resources, and from day one we have been making the vital investments people in Ontario need and expect from us. Mental health is a priority for our government, as it is for every member of the Legislature. We will continue to deliver the funding and services Ontario deserves.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**MPP Jill Andrew:** It's an honour to stand today on behalf of the folks in St. Paul's.

I want to thank the John Howard Society for the outstanding work that they do for our community every single day.

I'm really hoping that the government will support our motion calling for this government to increase the base funding for each branch of the CMHA by 8% as an immediate emergency stabilization investment into our local community mental health supports.

Approximately one in five—and counting—children and youth in Ontario have a mental health challenge. I've heard 91% of Ontario schools report they need mental health supports. That's over 90% of Ontario schools in desperate need of mental health supports from psychologists, social workers and other mental health specialists to help support the crisis in our schools that I have to say is also a crisis in our communities—a crisis that, frankly, was created under this government because of Bill 124, because of underfunding, and because of understaffing in these essential, crucial parts of our community.

Last month, the Ontario Principals' Council conducted a survey among public school principals and VPs, and 1,868 of them responded, indicating their desperate need for supports due to chronic and worsening staff shortages, increased behavioural issues in classes, safety concerns, and the overall mental health of their students and caregiver adults.

We're seeing an increase in eating disorders here in Ontario. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate, second only to the opioid addiction crisis. I have to share that there are only 20 publicly funded beds in Ontario. If you can't get one of those beds—and really, people can't these days—you're on a wait-list for at least a year, if not more.

All of these challenges that I've outlined above are disproportionately impacting our most vulnerable children, whether Black, Indigenous or rural students, students with disabilities, newcomer and immigrant students, and certainly those within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The government has billions of dollars at its disposal—\$6.4 billion, to be exact. We're asking for \$24 million to help our schools, to help our communities so they can survive and thrive.

Please, government, say yes.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I was actually fully intending this afternoon to start this speech and kind of read the

notes in front of me and talk about the \$3.8-billion Roadmap to Wellness, the historic investment that our government has made. I was going to talk about \$77.35 million in supportive housing since 2019-20. I was going to talk about 60,000 nurses that have been trained under this government, and health care workers. I was probably going to make a few partisan points about how the members of the opposition voted against all of those investments. I was going to talk about education and how we've made a 420% increase in mental health supports for kids in our school system.

But after hearing a lot of speeches and hearing about the importance of this issue, I'm not going to do any of that today. In the spirit of non-partisanship, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this forward. Any day that we talk about mental health in this House is a good day for Ontario.

I want to talk a little bit about just some personal experience. I was inspired by some of the stories that we heard from other members in this House. I've recently been going to therapy myself. I try to go every two weeks. I don't always make it every two weeks, but I do it. I do it to deal with my anxiety and some past traumas in my own life. And I really believe that that therapy that I go through makes me a better brother, a better son, a better partner, probably a better legislator—the opposition might disagree sometimes, but I think I'm doing an okay job sometimes.

I just want to say to anybody that's watching at home that thinks that their brain is broken and wakes up every day trapped in their own head—I know what that feels like. Members of our caucus know what that feels like. Members of this Legislature on all sides of the House know what it feels like. We all have family members; we all have friends. We all have experiences, lived or supported, of our family members where mental health has really kicked us in the butt or kicked our family members in the butt. I just want to say you're not alone. Go get help. It is a very strong thing to seek help for your mental health, and I encourage everybody to take care of that.

Experience in my own life about—I've got a friend of mine that I grew up with—I've known him for over 20 years and I'm not very old, so you can talk about what kind of friend that is—who lost his sister a few years ago to suicide. I remember being over there that evening and seeing the pain on his and his father's faces as they went through that. It was a problem that we never saw coming.

Now, this friend of mine also dealt with different drug addictions—ketamine and some others—as well as alcohol abuse, and that same friend of mine tried to take his own life a few years ago. I'm so thankful that the attempt was unsuccessful and that he's here with us. But I remember speaking to not only my friend but speaking to his father, who I also consider a friend—I won't name you—and just seeing the fear in his eyes that not only was he going to lose one kid but lose his second kid a few years later.

So I think it's important that—I'm new to being a legislator. I'm new to being an MPP. I just want to make

sure that these real stories get put on the Hansard because these are issues that we deal with. So if anybody is sitting at home thinking that mental health is a bubble issue that only you deal with, you've heard stories from other legislators, you've heard some of the stories I'm sharing now. You're not alone. There is help, and things will get better.

1500

I'll wrap up the remarks that, look, regardless of the results of this particular vote and regardless of partisanship, I think we can all agree that mental health is in a much better place today than it was a few years ago. As I said, I just want to thank the opposition for bringing it forward. Any time that we talk about mental health in this House is probably a good day for certainly my constituents but certainly for Ontario as well.

I know what it feels like to not want to wake up in the morning, to not want to get out of bed, but I encourage all my constituents and anybody watching: Get out of bed, drink some water and go get the help you need. Tomorrow will be better.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Point of order: the member from Nepean.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I just rise on a point of order to correct my record. My husband texted me to tell me I said a word I absolutely hate, and I think during the debate labels are very important when we're having this conversation. I would like "commit suicide" stricken from the record and replaced with "died by suicide" or "died by depression" as far more important to categorize that. It is not a crime to die by suicide. So I apologize and would like that corrected.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Thank you.

Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's an honour to rise today to add my voice to the official opposition leader's motion today to do something incredibly important, incredibly timely, something that is not only a good choice for humans but is a good choice fiscally.

Mental health is apolitical. We've heard stories across the aisle today—really impactful, important stories. Like no other time before, it is as though the government and the opposition are on the same page. We have the opportunity today to employ a positive, proactive solution to the struggles that many people face across this province.

Middlesex-London Health Unit indicated that 48% of the population indicated that their mental health was declining as a result of the pandemic. We've seen cost of living going through the roof, whether it's the cost of housing, food, child care. People are also worried about possibly paying more for their health care. We have seen many people in the small business community living on a razor's edge, not sure if they were going to get the supports to make it through the pandemic, and employees that were worried every time that they showed up to their place of work whether the doors would be locked. It's not even to mention the folks who are on really terrible social assistance rates, because being on those rates exacerbates

mental health conditions even more when you're worried about the bottom line every single month.

This government also—as I had the opportunity to travel with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, my colleagues and I heard from many CMHA branches that they have had only a 2% base funding increase in the last 10 years. We have an opportunity today to address that with only \$24 million. Think about the lives that can be impacted. We as a Legislature can show that we believe in the great work of the CMHA. We as a Legislature have the opportunity today to make sure that we support all of those people in the communities who are on the front lines doing that life-changing work, and we as a Legislature can show today with our vote that we want people to get the mental health supports when and where they need them in their communities.

I urge this government: Let's get this done. Please vote in support. Vote for mental health.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I've often asked myself, "What will it take to get progress on mental health and wellness?" And somebody back home said, "Joel, it's going to take a hurricane of honesty." And I think that happened this afternoon in this chamber, Speaker. I think that happened with people bravely sharing their hurt and their pain.

It leads me to want to talk in the time I have to the need for mental health support for our neighbours struggling with addictions. It leads me to a song written by the great Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails called *Hurt*. It goes:

I hurt myself today  
To see if I still feel  
I focus on the pain  
The only thing that's real  
The needle tears a hole  
The old familiar sting  
Try to kill it all away  
But I remember everything....

And when I've thought about addiction and learned from neighbours at home who work with folks who have addictions or who themselves have lived experience about addictions and the need for mental health, I think about that last line—that so many people right now are trying to forget the trauma that has happened to them in their life, likely in childhood.

When we think about where addiction comes from and the need to get mental health supports to our neighbours struggling with addictions, there are so many immediate answers that are put before us. Is it just about our genes? That's not what the research actually suggests. Is it about our bad choices? No, it's much more complicated than that.

Addiction is not a choice. Addiction is a product of our environment, more often than not a product of our past. When I've had occasion, sadly, to see people in our community at home or in this great city of Toronto struggling openly with addiction, I don't see addiction; I

see pain. And I ask myself, “What can we do as a Legislature to help people with their pain?”

When I think about what this \$24 million could do in our own community of Ottawa Centre, I think about the Somerset West Community Health Centre, I think about fantastic harm reduction workers like Sophia, who I spoke to on the train ride down here yesterday, who told me we are losing people who make their way through the harm reduction facility with safe use because they get placed in supportive housing in an apartment—and I know in Ottawa, we’re lucky to have some of that—but then they’re left alone. They’re back on their own, not surrounded by that love and that community, because—what I’m hearing—they’re missing that support.

We need to make sure that support is available. We need to make sure people like Sophia can support our neighbours struggling with pain, struggling with harm. If we all agree, let’s vote to empower the change-makers in the community that are making people available, dealing with their pain and taking that big step toward wellness.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Not only does this government need to be supporting the work of community mental health organizations; it needs to address the stressors that are causing mental health breakdowns across the population in the first place. Let’s take the mental health of hospital staff—people we call heroes—on the one hand, while choking the physical and mental-health life out of them through repressive legislation; or our schools, where teachers and EAs are understaffed and under-resourced, paying for school supplies for their students out of their own pockets; or the university and college students mired in debt, working several part-time jobs because tuition fees are absurdly high; or children with disabilities and their parents desperately trying to navigate a hostile system that keeps children on wait-lists years after year with no communication, no guidance and no help in sight. And let’s not forget the adults with disabilities thrown under the bus, those abandoned by the WSIB along with others, forced to give up almost every asset so that they can access the few crumbs of ODSP the government throws out to them.

These are social and economic determinants of health, and they are also the determinants of mental health. When it is easier to get MAID than to find the supports to live, people get a very strong message that no, actually they are not worth it. That is the message they are given, and that is a very significant part of people’s suffering.

Individuals trying their best to provide support services are also breaking down themselves, as they are forced to reapply for funding every year, never knowing whether they will actually even have a practice.

And then, I want to say, Indigenous children and families who are that much geographically removed from municipalities—well, they don’t have access to water; they don’t have access to health care. What is the message to them? The message again is, “You’re not worth it.”

I want to give my support to this motion. I’m happy that there is a conversation going on across the aisle. We may not always agree in our analysis of what is contributing to

so much mental health distress, but I think we can agree on the need for support.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate?

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I rise on behalf of the thousands of people I represent in Scarborough Southwest. I’m really glad that I’m having a chance to speak to this important motion, the motion that our leader has brought forward to increase funding for the mental health support that we need across this province.

**1510**

Last Friday, I met with Stephen, who came to ask for support for his wife, Lillian. He showed me pictures of the way she looked when they went away on a trip, and how beautiful they looked, and how healthy and happy, and what has happened since her brain injury, and the mental health support that she needs after. Just the stories of being tossed from one hospital to another to rehab agencies, and how difficult it has been for them—I just saw Stephen, this older gentleman who sat in front of me in tears, and we both talked about how painful it has been for their family.

That’s just one story, and I wish I had more time to share with you the amount of stories I hear about youth mental health and the support they need. I ask anyone here to just look at the data of our schools and the amount of violence we have had across our schools, and the amount of calls that we’ve made to 911 by parents, by teachers, by students. Those calls were not for an incident that was isolated for mental health; it was somebody who was going through struggles because of mental health, and they have resorted to violence. It was a parent who does not know how to control their young daughter, their child, their son, who is going through difficulty after COVID.

Just a few months ago, I was in this House talking about the amount of funding that CMHA receives. It was just about 3.9% over the last 11 years: That’s the amount of funding increase that they have received, regardless of the amount of increase that we have in the need for mental health supports, and yet we have had failures by government after government in really addressing the crisis and that increase in that need.

So today, when I look at this motion, it’s a very solution-oriented motion which is asking for this one specific thing, which is exactly what CMHA is asking for. The Canadian Mental Health Association is asking our government just for a little bit. When you look at the \$6.4 billion of unspent funding that we have right now in our coffers, from that, we’re asking for half a per cent. Just half a per cent of that funding is what the Canadian Mental Health Association is asking for from this government, so that they could do the work that we need for our adult mental health needs, for our youth, for those across this province who are dealing with mental health and addictions.

So I beg, I implore the House, every legislator who spoke for the need—we had members talk about how you need to wake up in the morning, look at the sunshine and hope for a better day. But if you don’t have the supports, if you don’t have the funding, if you don’t have the workers—the youth and child mental health support



workers; the social workers—you can't do that. You need the funding for those agencies to function, and that's what we're begging this House for, so I'm asking this government: Please, do the right thing and vote for this motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Further debate? Further debate?

The leader of the official opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I wanted to start by thanking all of the members here today from all sides who spoke in response to this motion. I think it's so important that when we are sharing our own experiences, we're listening, we're learning. And then I really do appreciate that so many of the members spoke about their own experience, their family's experience, what's happening in their communities, and raised so many examples.

I started off by saying I really hope that this government will support the motion that's before us, because I believe it's very reasonable. We've talked a lot about our mental health and addictions plan for Ontario, but we intentionally chose a very specific ask today, because we think it's something that any government should be able to agree to, especially in this moment. It's so achievable. We're talking about \$24 million, which really, in this day and age and in this moment, given the size of this crisis, how many people it's affecting and how broadly—really, there's an opportunity here for the government to do the right thing. It is achievable.

We know that the kind of work that the Canadian Mental Health Association does in our communities is so critical. It reaches so many people. But it is just one little piece, and so I will add by saying that I just came out of meetings, like so many of us here today, with some of our correctional officers. I will say that many years ago—oh gosh, it was almost 20 years ago now. I was working with Peter Kormos at the time, a former MPP here. I've mentioned this to others before. We went and did one of these inspections of a correctional facility, and the reason we went in was to look and see who was in solitary confinement. Everyone in solitary confinement was under suicide watch. Every single one of those people was somebody who actually needed mental health support and had not received it in the community and had not received it again and again and again. Talking with the correctional officers at that time, 20 years ago now, it really struck me how we were failing so many in our communities.

Well, today the crisis is deeper and wider, but the solutions are still not there. What we're seeing in our correctional facilities, what we're seeing in our hospitals, what we're seeing all throughout our communities is something that we could fix. There is a fix. We need to give people the support they need.

I'll just go back, because I'm running out of time. I just want to say I would really implore the government to support our motion. We don't have many opportunities in this House, in this place, where we get a chance to work together to do something truly transformational. That \$24 million is less than half a per cent of what this government has put aside—has not spent, let's just say—in money that was already allocated. That would go a long way. It won't

solve everything, but it will help to solve some of the problems that we're facing right now in our community.

I thank everyone for joining in this conversation today, and thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak again.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** MPP Stiles has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1517 to 1527.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** Members, please take your seats.

MPP Stiles has moved opposition day number 2. All in those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Hunter, Mitzie	Vanthof, John
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Barnes, Patrice	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Michael D.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 32; the nays are 65.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** I declare the motion lost.

*Motion negated.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ONTARIO ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

Mr. Gill moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to enact one Act and amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 46, Loi visant à édicter une loi et à modifier diverses autres lois.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Parm Gill:** I'm very pleased to be leading off third reading debate on Bill 46, Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act. I want to say that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara West. I want to thank him for his ongoing support and assistance in moving this important piece of legislation forward, and all of his tremendous work leading up to and since, especially during some of the committee hearings.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act is the first red tape reduction bill of this mandate, and our ninth red tape reduction bill since forming government in 2018. It's focused on improving Ontario's competitiveness in several key areas. It includes measures to strengthen our supply chains so more goods can get to more places. It supports our farmers and agri-businesses, laying out a path to produce and grow more food right here in Ontario. It helps grow Ontario's labour force so businesses can find the right people to grow and expand. And it makes government easier to interact and work with by simplifying administrative procedures across government to improve customer service and reduce compliance costs.

The bill, as well as related policy and regulatory changes, add up to 28 individual measures to reduce burden and red tape in our province. And it's never been more important for us to continue this important work, because red tape is anything, as we know, that causes frustration, expenses, delays and complications in everyday life. It is a significant barrier to our productivity and our economic competitiveness. It discourages investments and innovation.

We have heard these complaints from people and businesses across Ontario loud and clear. That's why we've passed eight red tape reduction bills since forming government. Combined, these bills and related packages have included more than 400 individual actions to reduce red tape and cut regulatory burden. This has, of course, led to a reduction in Ontario's total regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5%. That translates to annual savings of \$576 million in compliance costs for businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, school boards, hospitals and the rest of the broader public sector. That's more than half a billion dollars each year that is no longer being spent on filing outdated paperwork, paying fees to renew licence plate stickers or complying with duplicative regulations that exist across multiple levels of government.

We're very proud of this progress, of course, but there is far more work that still needs to be done. Ontario's people and businesses continue to face challenges: Two thirds of Ontario businesses across various sectors have reported last year that their supply challenges got worse, and more than one third of businesses say that labour-related obstacles will continue to limit their growth.

We know that it is incumbent on government to play a supportive role in solving challenges like what we're currently seeing with the labour market and our overall competitiveness. That's why we have brought forward this important piece of legislation. Bill 46, if passed, will build upon our government's previous work to save Ontario's people and businesses time and money. It will lead Ontario to more economic certainty, confidence and stability. Simply put, this package will help build a stronger Ontario where people and businesses can continue to thrive now and into the future.

Last month, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released their annual Provincial Red Tape Report Card where they grade each province in an effort to reduce red tape and regulatory burden over the last year. This year, Ontario was right near the top among all provinces for efforts to reduce red tape. I am proud to say that this is the highest placement that our province has ever received in the 13-year history of the CFIB red tape reduction report card. It's fair to say that our efforts to reduce red tape are being noticed.

This year, Ontario was proud to receive a Golden Scissors "One to Watch" award from CFIB for our efforts to implement regulatory modernization in permitting and licensing, including predictable timelines for licence and permit applications, approvals and information requests across our government. But we have ambitions to do even more next year, and make no mistake, under this government, Ontario will always show strong leadership on every front, including reducing red tape.

When it comes to our work, there are five guiding principles that guide our efforts to reduce red tape in our province. The first principle is to protect public health, safety and the environment. We do this, of course, by easing regulatory burden in a smart and careful way that always maintains or enhances important health, safety and environmental protections.

Second, to prioritize the important issues. We do this by assessing which regulations cost the most time and money while making more innovative ways to ensure rules stay effective and efficient.

The third principle is to harmonize rules with other jurisdictions, including the federal government, wherever we can. This is one of the most efficient ways to reduce compliance costs across the board.

Fourth, to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario on an ongoing basis to learn what we can do to remove obstacles that are in their way.

#### 1540

And our fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. This is key to delivering better services to people and businesses, making it easier for them to access the information, programs and services they need to succeed.

To be clear, Speaker, we do not believe that rules and regulations themselves are the issue but that unnecessary, duplicative and outdated regulations are the problem. That's a problem we're committed to solving, no doubt.

Let me take a few minutes to review some of the proposed initiatives in this package. One of the more impactful initiatives being proposed in this bill has to do with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Our government is proposing an amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act that is the first step toward eliminating barriers to adoption of carbon capture and storage technology in our province. If passed, our colleagues at MNRF would begin establishing a clear framework to safely regulate this activity as part of a phased approach to implementation.

As we've heard at committee, carbon storage is an essential tool in supporting a low-carbon economy here in Ontario. As just one example, Trevor Harris from Stelco said the following: "Stelco views the adoption of a carbon capture and storage program as a vital part of this decarbonization pathway that will require both regulatory and financial support from all levels of government. We see the passage of schedule 5 of Bill 46 as an important step in the development of our made-in-Ontario low-carbon economy."

The phased approach proposed by our government will help to open the province to carbon storage projects in a responsible way. It's also good for the economy. Existing carbon capture and storage projects in Canada and around the world support thousands of construction jobs and help ensure the continued viability of critical industries as the world transitions to a low-carbon economy.

This is a critical time for Ontario's businesses. Acting now to enable carbon storage projects will allow them to take advantage of existing federal incentives and funding opportunities and provide greater investment certainty. Delaying these important measures, as some on the other side of the House have suggested, will lead to Ontario businesses missing out on significant incentives and funding opportunities that are already available in other parts of our country. As with all the burden reduction measures in our bill, we will take the necessary steps to ensure that any carbon capture activity is done in a responsible way, with all appropriate measures in place to safeguard people and, of course, the environment.

Speaking of jobs, I'd also like to discuss how the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act proposes to cut red tape and support competitiveness of Ontario's energy sector. If passed, the proposed legislation will make it easier to build electricity transmission lines by exempting customer-funded projects from the Ontario Energy Board's leave-to-construct process. Proponents of these projects will continue to have the right to apply to the OEB to cross a highway, a railway or a utility line in circumstances where an agreement cannot be obtained. Our government is also proposing changes that would simplify the gasoline volatility regulations, aligning Ontario's regulations to national standards.

I also want to touch on a number of modernization measures for the agriculture and food industries, which are a central part of this proposed bill. We are proposing to

amend the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act and the Innkeepers Act to give beef farmers more flexibility and improve the competitiveness and profitability of their businesses, helping to ensure a stronger and more resilient food supply for the people of Ontario.

The legislative amendments in this bill are in addition to announcements we have made to the larger red-tape-reduction package. Also included are policy changes and consultations in the agri-food sector to support research that better promotes innovation that enables farmers to implement new technologies and techniques that will increase the competitiveness and sustainability of the agri-food sector.

Additionally, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act proposes to amend the Animal Health Act to provide authority for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to take temporary actions to protect the health and well-being of the public and animals when faced with a potential animal health crisis such as an animal disease outbreak. These measures aim to enhance animal-disease emergency preparedness, help mitigate risks to animal health and human health, as well as boost the competitiveness and resiliency of Ontario's livestock and poultry sector. Ultimately, it will help to ensure Ontarians continually have a reliable, safe and stable food supply.

Our red tape reduction package also includes the OMAFRA growth strategy, which is the province's comprehensive plan to build consumer confidence and support farmers and Ontario's food supply. The plan focuses on three key priorities:

The first is to strengthen agri-food supply-chain stability by increasing both the consumption and production of food grown and prepared in Ontario by 30%, increasing Ontario's food and beverage manufacturing GDP by 10%, and boosting Ontario's agri-food exports by 8% annually by the year 2032.

The second is to increase agri-food technology and adoption by boosting research infrastructure; advancing the uptake of new technologies; growing the market for Ontario's innovative technologies, both domestically and globally; and growing the use of data to support efficiencies in the agri-food sector and value chain. This, of course, includes beginning consultations on modernizing the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act to fuel innovation and support efforts to provide modern, relevant research information to farmers and agri-food businesses.

The third priority is to attract and grow Ontario's agri-food talent by increasing the province's total agri-food sector employment by 10% by the year 2032; as well as increasing awareness of modern, high-tech agri-food careers, opportunities for mentorship and hands-on job training; and supporting efforts to increase veterinarian capacity in underserved areas of our province. As a first step, the province has launched public consultations to explore opportunities to modernize the Veterinarians Act as part of the plan to increase access to veterinary care in Ontario.

These are important measures, of course, to support our agriculture sector and build a stronger Ontario.

The next set of proposed changes I would like to discuss, Speaker, supports Ontario's workplace insurance and compensation system. The proposed legislation will make several updates to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to streamline and modernize outdated practices within government to make life easier for Ontarians.

The proposed changes would:

- ensure injured or ill apprentices receive loss-of-earnings benefits at the same amount as journeypersons employed in the same trade would receive;

- provide more flexibility on how often the WSIB board of directors must meet by changing the requirements to meet to a minimum of four times per year versus every two months;

**1550**

- update the requirements of WSIB-governance documents to ensure they are consistent with, and do not duplicate, other government directives;

- streamline the requirements for WSIB office lease transactions by excluding them from the LG in Council approval requirements; and

- ensure the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, does not reference repealed statutes.

The WSIB is one of the largest insurance organizations in North America. These are simple but reasonable changes that will help reduce administrative burden. They will enable the WSIB to operate more efficiently, creating an agile system that is able to better focus on meeting the needs of Ontario's workers.

The proposed Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act also includes several changes to modernize and reduce administrative burdens in the justice sector. These proposed changes will help improve customer service and make it easier for Ontarians to interact with our justice system. Our government is proposing to amend the Provincial Offences Act to make life easier for Ontarians by helping reduce the backlog at Provincial Offences Court. The proposed amendments will allow court clerks to reopen certain proceedings if they believe the defendant missed a notice or was unable to attend a meeting or hearing through no fault of their own.

We're also proposing to create more judicial capacity and alleviate backlogs in criminal cases at the Ontario Court of Justice by temporarily raising the limit on the number of days that a retired judge can work.

Lastly, the proposed legislation will also reduce administrative costs and make it easier for prospective jurors to participate in the court system through updates to the Juries Act.

The bill, if passed, would also introduce a pilot program that makes the jury questionnaire available online by default. This proposal will allow us to test the feasibility of moving away from sending hard copies of jury questionnaires through the mail, providing Ontarians with a modern, convenient, streamlined way to participate in the justice system while reducing costs and administrative burden. Piloting this approach will help the government assess the impact on response rates in different communities. In all cases, the right to receive a paper questionnaire will be maintained.

Bill 46 also proposes legislation to confirm the continuation of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. If passed, the legislation would confirm the OSPCA's corporate status and associated regulation-making authorities, which would support the charity in continuing to deliver their important work across government.

Speaker, I'm pleased to have introduced the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act and to have the opportunity to continue debate today at third reading. Through the 13 legislative initiatives in this bill that stretch across government, we are creating the conditions that let businesses thrive and people prosper. And as a result, if passed, the proposed legislation would benefit Ontario's people and businesses.

Finally, Speaker, I just want to offer a quick reminder for anyone that might be watching at home that our government is always looking for good ideas to reduce red tape in Ontario. People and businesses can submit their ideas directly to us through our online portal, [ontario.ca/redtape](http://ontario.ca/redtape).

With that, Madam Speaker, I'd like to turn it over to the PA and member from Niagara West.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):** The member from Niagara West.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and such a pleasure and honour to be able to stand today in the House. I just want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for his incredible speech already this afternoon. You know, all of us have important events in our ridings over the weekends. I know we have the opportunity to speak with constituents about the issues that matter to them, and we hear from them about the things that they care about, the ways they want to see their governments making changes and responding to the needs of the people. I know I come fired up and ready to go on Monday to hear about red tape reduction, and I think that the speech that the minister gave spoke so eloquently to the needs of the people of this province and how our government is stepping up to that challenge.

So my thanks to the minister and his entire team as well as my team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, who are continuing that work led by, of course, Premier Ford, first and foremost, who understands the importance of ensuring that businesses and people are able to access the services they deserve in a rapid fashion and that they're able to rely on that, but also the leadership shown by so many previous Ministers of Red Tape Reduction who demonstrated their commitment to reducing the red tape here in the province of Ontario, and then Minister Parm Gill stepping forward and leading the charge today as only he can do. So my thanks to the minister here for speaking about what is in the legislation that I have the privilege of contributing to debate on this afternoon.

Bill 46, Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, is an important piece of legislation that builds on a legacy. I know all of us who come to this chamber come here for various reasons, but all of us come to ensure that our province is being built up. I look around and I see members

from every corner of this beautiful province. I see some who have been here perhaps not that long, but I see others who have been here for quite a time—in fact, some from, you know, prior to the time that I was even born. I see the member for Oxford over there, elected in 1995 as part of a government that wanted to get things done as well, if I remember correctly, the Common Sense Revolution coming in and ensuring that people were getting money back in their pockets, that the proper role of government was being restored by perhaps being removed from the lives of some of the people in Ontario and that taxpayers were being respected. I know he has also led the charge on reducing red tape here in the province of Ontario.

Unfortunately, we saw for some 15 years governments that didn't care. We saw a Liberal government come in to this chamber, actually sit on this side of the House, on the governing benches, and for 15 years just slap on red tape after red tape and regulation after regulation. You know, we would see the Canadian Federation of Independent Business release reports about Ontario having the most regulations of any province in Canada, and the Liberals didn't care. The Liberals wanted more red tape. They seemed to enjoy tying up the entrepreneurs and the hard-working people of this province with this red tape. And we saw them: They were choking out when it came to business leaving this province. We saw our job creators flee. We saw them move to the United States. We saw them move to other jurisdictions. We saw them even move to other provinces.

I have to say, growing up in that environment, for most of my life only ever experiencing a provincial Liberal government, was disheartening. It was disappointing. And so much of that was tied up with red tape. What I heard from my family members who started small businesses or were the sons and daughters of immigrants, people who came here to Canada to build a better life—they would talk about just the onerous regulations, the ridiculous rules and measures that were being put into place. It frankly disheartened me. It disheartened me, and so when I was first elected in 2016 on a promise of hard work and hydro, to make sure that I was addressing the issues that the people in my riding cared about, one of the things that I spoke about already at that time was reducing red tape.

I'd had the privilege of serving as a policy adviser in Ottawa. At that time, I did some work, actually, on the standing committee for the scrutiny of government regulations, a federal committee that then had the opportunity to go through these regulations which the new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau was bringing in—red tape upon red tape, regulation after regulation; I mean, just a repeat of what we saw here for 15 years in Ontario.

I think I'm not the only one to say that there were many in our constituencies who were losing hope that there would be a government that would listen to them—challenging times. But that changed. In 2018, we saw a government elected to this chamber that said, "We're going to take leadership. We're not going to take the status quo as the answer. We believe that better is possible, and we're going to make better our reality."

**1600**

Today, some nine months into a new mandate, having been sent back here with the largest majority in some 30 years, I believe—the largest returning majority since the 1920s, again if my memory is correct—we're continuing the legacy of cutting red tape, putting money back into the people's pockets, reducing the time it takes to access government services and unleashing the creative potential of the people of this province.

I know that that's what the minister spoke about so eloquently. He spoke about the ways that this legislation is going to accomplish that, and I think he spoke very well about the changes to the various acts that the legislation is going to have, but I'm going to be speaking a little bit about some of the perhaps non-legislative ways that our government has made changes.

With that, Speaker, I speak to the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2023, by highlighting the fact that we've brought forward two high-impact red-tape-reduction bills every single year since coming to office—one in the spring; one in the fall—and that has been going on now for coming close to five years. Since July 1, 2018, our government has reduced the number of regulatory compliance requirements affecting businesses by 6.5%.

Now, that might not sound quite as large as you want it to be, and I think we agree. That's why we continue to bring forward measures to say, "No, we can do better. We can keep cutting red tape." But you have to remember, this is after an institutionalized inertia that was within government after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement that grew red tape year after year after year. The ship of state doesn't turn on a dime. It doesn't turn around like one of these tops that people play with. It's something that takes a lot of time and a lot of effort to spin around.

The reason I say that, Speaker, is that I do think 6.5% is actually a high number, because if you look at how many regulations are coming out on an annualized basis, how much red tape was being introduced into this House, to not only slow that growth—which is what I often hear governments say: "We're not necessarily growing the state as much as it was before. We're not nationalizing as many things as there were before. We're not taking over whole industries and sectors, like we know the NDP want us to do." That's good enough, right? No. We said, "We're not just going to slow down the creep of the bureaucratic state. We're not just going to slow down the growth of red tape. We're actually going to stop it, turn it around and start cutting that red tape."

Now, of course, it's not the rules and the regulations that are protecting the health and safety of our hard workers, and ensuring that the environment that we all enjoy, cherish and participate in when we're out for walks with our family or when we're enjoying a glass of clean water—it's ensuring that those things are being maintained, that we have good regulations in place, that we have practical protections in place, but not ones that are onerous and burdensome, that are duplicative and don't accomplish their intended, or at least stated, reason for existence.

Actually, reducing by 6.5% is a rate of reduction that compares very favourably with other leading jurisdictions.

It's above what we're seeing in other jurisdictions, and it has provided significant and sustainable relief for Ontario's business. That's because this Premier and this government made a commitment to grow good jobs and investment in Ontario by making it less expensive, by making it faster and easier to do business, and to set out one of the best regulatory service standards in North America. Under the leadership of the Premier and of Minister Gill, we have delivered on that.

We also made a commitment to save Ontario businesses when we first came to office. We made a commitment to save them some \$400 million a year. This wasn't \$400 million in one-time costs, and that's something I've spoken with my constituents about. They said, "Well, \$400 million seems like a lot of money, but I guess if you do \$100 million a year over the course of four years, that's \$400 million, so yes, that seems doable." No, no, no. We're talking about \$400 million a year in annualized savings, so \$1.6 billion over the course of our mandate. It seems like quite a lofty goal, and it's one that I'm very proud to be able to tell this House we not only achieved, but in fact exceeded—exceeded substantially. Our red tape reduction measures have so far saved businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities, hospitals—the institutions that we all expect to be functioning well in our society—more than \$576 million per year in compliance costs.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Yes, and give yourselves each a round of applause for that, because at the end of the day, it's the members who have come forward, after listening to stakeholders in their ridings, with ideas about how we can reduce red tape and how we can incorporate best practices and ensure that we have a lean government that responds to the needs of the people. It's each and every one of you who are here in this House today who have helped to make a better reality.

It's more than half a billion dollars every single year being poured back into our economy in savings and services that are able to be delivered by these businesses, municipalities, hospitals and other organizations. Now, it wasn't an easy feat. I know now, when we sit here and we look back, we think, "Yeah, it makes sense. Seems good—6.5%. Let's do it. Let's go." But that wasn't something that just happened on its own.

Again, I'm going to go back to that constant regulatory creep that we saw under the Liberal government, just cajoling the expansion of the state into more and more aspects of life—more regulations, more red tape, more ways of interfering in people's lives. And frankly, that puts a stark contrast with our government's approach of reducing unnecessary regulations and burdens on Ontario businesses.

Now, in the past, Ontario had a reputation as being the most regulated province in Canada. Businesses were being suffocated by red tape. It's why we introduced over eight reduction bills that included over 400 different measures. And these measures have included changes to legislation, regulations and policy across the entirety of government.

The minister spoke about this briefly, but I want to encourage the members who are in the chamber today to speak with their constituents about [ontario.ca/redtape](http://ontario.ca/redtape). One of the most important ways that our government can solicit ideas to reduce the burden on the people of Ontario is through the government's red tape reduction portal. Again, that's [ontario.ca/redtape](http://ontario.ca/redtape), where people and businesses can quickly share their ideas with our team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction.

Every single submission through that portal is reviewed and shared across government, working with all stakeholders and all ministries to help identify effective and lasting solutions. This is important because the people who run businesses, who apply for permits and licences, or interact with government each and every day are the experts in identifying red tape. They are the front lines when it comes to engaging with government red tape. And it ensures that the efforts we have put in place to reduce red tape have the maximum impact for the people we all serve.

We're going to continue our efforts to proactively consult with people and businesses right across this province, so that we can really focus our efforts on the types of changes that will make a real difference.

Again, the minister did speak about the legislative proposals brought forward in Bill 46 in his remarks, but I want to take a few moments to speak about some of the other policy and regulatory changes contained in the package.

In the fall, our government proposed regulations that will reduce red tape for things like the operators of certain types of hotel spas and hot tubs, such as in-suite hot tubs or a tub on a private balcony or deck intended for the exclusive use of its guests, by exempting them from the public pools regulation. Signage requirements will still remain in place to ensure that the public is aware of any risks.

But Speaker, we have also listened to concerns raised by stakeholders and have amended the Mandatory Blood Testing Act and the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to speed up application processing for those who are victims of crime, first responders, correctional services staff and others. We proposed to remove the costly and resource intensive tissue testing requirement under the Public Hospitals Act regulations, and this is based on scientific advice and health sector stakeholder recommendations.

We've proposed to provide authority to local medical officers of health to order rabies testing of deceased animals that were under observation after biting a person, and to recognize rabies vaccination status from other jurisdictions that have similar rabies standards. What this means is that bite victims may no longer have to undergo unnecessary post-exposure rabies vaccinations, since a deceased animal's rabies status will be known, and animals brought in from other jurisdictions will still need to be revaccinated in Ontario.

1610

We've also been making improvements to some of the essential but often invisible functions of government. At the end of the day, so many people I speak with in my community—and I'm sure you all have the same experience—don't want to hear about the standing committee on XYZ. They don't want to hear about the policy priorities and the red tape even just within this chamber that it takes to accomplish the things that they send us here to do. We understand the necessity; I'm all for due process and ensuring that we have proper checks and balances. I think it's a very important role that we have here in our democracy. It's crucial that we have oversight over the decisions that are made. But at the end of the day, they want to see that they're able to access their services rapidly. They want to see that they're able to have a responsive, nimble government, one that is easy to access and that they're able to rely upon. They want to see good management. At the end of the day, Ontarians are people of peace, order and good government, and that includes wanting to see that the little processes that can be so frustrating when they go wrong aren't going wrong and that they're able to continue to live their lives and have a government that is providing that service.

That's why we're bringing many government programs and related IT systems onto the Transfer Payment Ontario system. The process to become a transfer payment agency, to have these transfer payment agreements, is burdensome, it's cumbersome. I've spoken with many small service providers in my communities who feel that that process that they have to go through, sometimes on an annual basis, even just to be receiving the funds to provide the services that we vote upon in our budgets and through the fall economic statement, can be an onerous one. So to reduce paperwork and administrative burdens for government-funded organizations, we are creating Transfer Payment Ontario, which is ensuring that all of those services are being provided in a rapid, consistent and streamlined fashion.

We've also extended certain temporary corporate governance rules to the end of September 2023 while the government continues to analyze consultation results and explore potential permanent changes. These temporary rules were put in under legislation including the Business Corporations Act, the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act as well as others, including the Condominium Act. This will allow meetings, votes and elections to be conducted virtually under certain circumstances. It allows notices to shareholders, directors and members to be sent electronically, and allows a corporation to store records electronically and have them examined electronically.

It's important that we continue to provide flexibility and predictability while taking the time needed to consider changing these governance rules permanently.

Speaker, we've also heard from Indigenous businesses and economic advisers that information about the full range of government supports and services available to them is not widely known and can be difficult to obtain. That's why our government is working with Indigenous

partners to better understand how we can increase awareness of and access to government initiatives.

Speaker, I'm going to briefly talk about the proposals in this package which will help make the transportation sector more competitive and keep our supply chains moving. I don't know about any of you, but this was something—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Yes, absolutely. This was something that has come up so often over the last couple of years. Frankly, at some points, I wasn't even sure if I believed it. I would hear from people: "Oh, we have supply chain challenges." Sometimes you would have a conversation, trying to order—I don't know—you're trying to get a new black lock for your door or something like that, and there are supply chain challenges. I never figured out why Home Depot would have the challenge and Lowe's next door wouldn't. Anyway, it's neither here nor there.

The point is that supply chain challenges plagued many of our supply chains throughout COVID, and we saw the necessity of responding to that. I actually had the opportunity to work on a consultation with the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction to hear from stakeholders, including from our ports, the trucking authorities' organizations, hearing from those who are working in logistics. The interconnectedness of our economy in terms of providing the resources that we rely upon in just-in-time sectors is truly remarkable, and also quite fragile, but also resilient in terms of the ability for these structures to respond to the challenges that COVID had in ways that really still were remarkable. I don't think any of us had to go without something that was crucial to us. I know that we saw governments also step up to the plate when there were unique challenges in areas like baby Tylenol and some of those particular areas where we saw supply chain challenges come to a challenging place. But that's why our government is making improvements to Ontario's Highway Corridor Management System. It will provide a seamless and integrated online platform for approvals and permits along provincial highways. No more goods being tied up, waiting for permits before they're able to move forward and deliver those much-needed products to you in your community. Work is also ongoing to allow applicants, including home builders and municipalities, to submit, track and receive all their Ministry of Transportation approvals online, which will save substantial amounts of both time and money.

The Highway Corridor Management System has already significantly reduced the burden on Ontario businesses and individuals by streamlining the permit application review and approval process. Sometimes these kinds of pieces, where we're talking about moving something into the 21st century—it's 2023, I think, at the beginning of March, and we're sitting here. This is stuff that could have been online decades ago that we should have seen previous governments take rapid action on as just a matter of course, as a best practice. But no, it took the election of Premier Doug Ford and this government to get that done,

to make sure that we're moving these very reasonable processes—that are frankly just part of the dotting your i's and crossing your t's and getting your permits—online. This is something that our government is taking the lead on because we know it reduces that headache for small business owners and at the end of day ensures that the goods that you rely on are getting to you faster and more affordably.

These new improvements will also reduce red tape for businesses and organizations interacting with the Ministry of Transportation. But we're also reducing the weight given to the corporate performance rating when the Ministry of Transportation evaluates bids for engineering services. We're doing this to improve the fairness and efficiency of the procurements process, ensuring value for taxpayer dollars and making the bidding process more competitive for all participants.

Finally, during the spring thaw, some Ontario roads are designated and signed to limit the weight of trucks that can use them. This reduced load period helps to limit the damage that might otherwise occur to the roadway weakened by spring thaw. I know this very well as the street that I live on is one of these. You're not allowed to get any loads of gravel or anything brought up and down that road between, I think, November and May. But that's why our government is now working with the Ontario Good Roads Association to improve frost-depth prediction models, which will allow municipalities to optimize the timing of these periods on our roads and to be responsive in real time to the needs of the local community and recognizing that frost might be different in terms of an area like Niagara than it is in other areas. Perhaps Halton region has a slightly different road variation in terms of their soil structure and how frost is impacting the road patterns in those areas, and we need to be responsive to that, ensuring that we're not creating artificial barriers to people being able to transport goods and services. This will hopefully include shortening the period when conditions permit, enhancing our supply chains by allowing more goods to reach places during those crucial summer months.

Let's take a look back at some of our past red tape reduction accomplishments. I could spend more time going through the aspects of this package; I think it's very important, but I recognize we're all busy people and we want to make sure we're moving on. So I'm going to try and make sure that I can walk through very quickly just a brief refresher for those members who are newer in this chamber and perhaps even for those of us who have become more seasoned veterans, so to speak.

The first red tape reduction package was in fall of 2018, when the Legislature passed the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, which removed onerous regulatory burdens introduced by previous governments. I've heard from many members, including some of the members from Brampton, that they wish they had actually been elected at that time in order to be voting for that legislation. They thought it was such an important piece of legislation. This is the bill that also addressed the backlog in Ontario's skilled trades by replacing Ontario's outdated model with

a 1-to-1 person-to-apprenticeship ratio for every trade for which ratios applied, which aligned Ontario with other territories and provinces. I know this change was massive for so many young people especially who were sitting on that stack of papers that—people were waiting to get into an apprenticeship. There was a stack of papers, but they didn't have maybe enough journeymen to have those apprentices brought on and to be able to bring more people into the skilled trades. This was a massive change.

In April 2019, the Legislature passed the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act with 31 actions, which cut red tape in 12 sectors and had numerous regulatory changes which cut business costs, harmonized regulatory requirements with other jurisdictions, ended duplications and reduced barriers to investment.

**1620**

In December 2019, the Legislature passed the Better People, Smarter for Business Act, which was part of a broader package of more than 80 actions to cut red tape and modernize regulations to make life easier for people and businesses. This included support to various business sectors, including agriculture, trucking, construction, forestry and mining. It streamlined and consolidated rules and requirements for quarries, farming and waste management—before you applaud, just hold it to the end, because man, there's a lot more where this came from—and it created a one-stop shop for trucking safety and emissions inspections and hydroelectric dam approvals.

And then, of course, just a few months after we introduced the third red tape package in late 2019, COVID hit. Ontario has long been the manufacturing engine of Canada. The pandemic made it clear that we are a supply chain economy.

The fact is, Ontario supplies components to businesses across Canada and right across North America. We can't afford to let our costs get out of line because we're up against competition from suppliers in other regions.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Nope.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Nope.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** No, we can't.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Well said.

We need to keep operating costs for Ontario businesses as low as possible, while maintaining and strengthening those standards that are essential to keeping people healthy and protecting the environment.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** The heckling needs to stop.

The biggest single way we can support Ontario businesses is to make regulations easier and faster and less costly to comply with. We've been working very hard to do that so we can intensify our work to modernize regulations so that businesses can stay open and grow.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoché):** Order.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** In July 2020, the Legislature—thank you, Speaker—passed the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act was the first step in our plan for growth, renewal and



recovery. This was designed to get infrastructure projects built faster, while positioning Ontario as a modern regulator in response to an evolving pandemic.

To help address infrastructure backlogs for businesses and communities, that act cut red tape by modernizing and streamlining the environmental assessment processes, while ensuring protections were still maintained. This was accomplished by updating the almost-50-year-old environmental assessment program to focus resources on projects which would have had the most impact on the environment. Through this change, approval timelines for some projects have been reduced from upwards of six years to three, and a greater number of important infrastructure projects have been able to move forward without unnecessary delays. To reduce delays for sewage and stormwater projects, the act was updated to provide a single consolidated environmental compliance approval process for low-impact municipal sewage collection and stormwater management projects. And this change is allowing simple, routine changes by municipalities, including alterations, extensions, enlargements or replacement projects, to be preauthorized so that construction can start without needing separate approvals for each project.

In addition to this, to help people and businesses in the construction sector, the act made it easier and faster to update the building code. Streamlining the building code development process by supporting harmonization with national construction codes and allowing Ontario to respond faster to the needs of the construction sector helped keep more people working and communities operating smoothly across the province during a very challenging time.

I think one thing we can all agree on is the importance of speeding up construction projects to keep people working and, especially during the current affordability crisis, to build more homes for all Ontarians.

In November 2020, the Legislature passed the Main Street Recovery Act to support the small and main street businesses that fuel our economy and bring life to our communities. It was part of the main street recovery plan to support small businesses and modernize rules that would help them innovate and meet the challenges of today so that they could pursue new opportunities. Small and main street businesses all over Ontario dealt with urgent and unexpected pressures related to cash flow problems, customer limits and physical distancing since the onset of the pandemic. The last thing they needed as they navigated a profoundly disruptive event was outdated and unnecessary rules that slowed them down and cost them more money.

One important measure in the Main Street Recovery Act was making 24/7 truck deliveries to retailers, restaurants and distribution centres permanent, building on temporary changes that had been brought in to keep store shelves full through the first wave of the pandemic, when many retailers were experiencing low supplies. Benefits of this measure include reducing rush hour traffic—something we all want to see—lower fuel costs for businesses, as well as reducing greenhouse gas and other emissions.

It's a simple solution that helps boost productivity, cut costs, and give businesses the flexibility they need to be successful and grow.

Other examples from this act include increasing the diversity of products sold at the Ontario Food Terminal and allowing the terminal to promote local food. These changes help support main street retailers, restaurants and shoppers by giving them greater access to the products they need. Thousands of small businesses, including independent shops and restaurants, rely on the Ontario Food Terminal for their supplies. It helps support the growth of Ontario's agri-food economy, and it gives the terminal support in competing in a crowded marketplace.

In December 2020, the Legislature passed the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act to strengthen Ontario's economic recovery, support businesses on the ground, and help governments deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. Changes in the act, along with other measures, included:

- requiring gas and electric utilities to adopt Green Button technology, which allows utility consumers to automate the secure transfer of their energy use so that they can understand their energy consumption and reduce costs;

- allowing single traffic studies for an entire specified highway corridor or area to reduce duplication and enable developers to get shovels in the ground faster for crucial infrastructure projects, like the 413, that we all rely upon;

- making it easier to get environmental information that we need by moving from a manual, paper-based process to a much faster digital delivery platform; and

- cutting red tape for intercommunity bus carriers to improve transportation options in rural and northern Ontario, making it easier for workers and families to access more transportation options.

In June 2021, the Legislature passed the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act to help businesses and governments deliver clear, modern and effective rules that promoted public health, safeguarded the economy and created jobs. This was a comprehensive package of some 90 regulatory and legislative actions and announcements to position businesses for new opportunities as competition ramped back up and as the economy reopened. Among other things, this red tape legislation was intended to help consumers save money on electricity, to help innovative pilot projects that supported our automated vehicle industry—a fledgling industry, but one that's taking off—bringing more Ontario processes and services online, such as the sticker renewal for commercial vehicle licence plates. I would also note this was around the same time that we got rid of licence plate sticker fees for regular vehicles, which I think is a very important step towards affordability. And it also supported the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to continue virtual meetings.

In December 2021, the Legislature passed the Supporting People and Businesses Act to continue our work

cutting costly red tape and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens. Highlights included making it easier for people to become volunteers by providing free police checks. And the act laid the groundwork for licensed restaurants and bars to extend their outdoor patio spaces last year, when they needed it most. It also laid the groundwork for additional financial supports and a simplified application process for the Second Career program—a program that helps those looking for employment training for occupations in high demand.

The Fewer Fees, Better Services Act introduced last February was our eighth red tape reduction bill. It consisted of legislative changes and policy announcements designed to support businesses and individuals with the certainty for successful economic recovery as Ontario emerged from the pandemic and moved beyond. This package included financial relief for millions of Ontario vehicle owners, including removing the requirement for and providing refunds for the licence plate renewal fees. It also gave drivers a break by removing tolls from Highways 412 and 418. It also put Ontario businesses front and centre for government procurement; established a single window for business services that set service standards so businesses will know how long it will take them to get the information they need from government; as well as unlocked the value and optimized the use of government real estate to attract investment, identify social benefit opportunities and support communities across Ontario.

In March of last year, we announced the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, strengthening supply chain resiliency.

And in the 2022 budget, we committed to cutting more red tape to support individuals.

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Speaker, I am running out of time.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I know that many members in this chamber wish to hear more about the measures that we're taking to cut red tape, so I'm going to get a copy of this and provide it to each and every member of this House. You'll be able to get it at the Hansard table tomorrow.

As mentioned before, the previous red tape packages we have introduced since 2018 have saved Ontario's people and businesses over half a billion dollars in regulatory compliance costs. This is real money back in the pockets of the hard-working people of this province.

We know that smart, modern regulations can improve how people go about their lives, making it easier for them to interact with important public services. That's why, under the leadership of this Premier and this minister, we continue to update regulations and reduce burdens in ways that save people time and money.

We're removing the requirement for high school students to submit paper-based forms on community involvement activities. We're saving time and frustration for students and administrators alike. It's a simple fix—

just like that—that just makes sense. It shows how regulatory modernization and burden reduction can affect Ontarians in every walk of life.

Speaker, on this side of the House, we stand with the people and the businesses of Ontario, as I know a few members on that side do, too. We're going to continue working each and every day to reduce these burdensome and onerous regulations—the duplicative ones that continue to frustrate jobs and businesses and prosperity. We're going to make it affordable to grow and start a business in Ontario. That's where we stand.

Unfortunately, we don't really know where the opposition stands. They say they support making life easier for people, but then they vote against our measures to do exactly that. They say they support a transition to a low-carbon economy, but then they try to downplay the enormous potential of new technology to do that. The other side of the House always seems to be in favour of more costs, more delays and more red tape. Perhaps that's why the NDP supported the Liberals for 15 years.

I'm proud of the work we've done to ensure that we're making life easier and more affordable for the people of this province, and I'm even more proud that we're committed to doing more through this legislation.

Speaker, the initiatives in the Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act will build on the legacy that we've already brought forward. It will build a stronger supply chain, support agribusinesses, shore up our workforce, and make it easier to interact with government. These combined measures, together, will seek to build a stronger Ontario in which people and businesses will thrive, now and into the future.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoché):** Questions?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Today, that member voted against prostate screening testing right here in the House, and against mental health. That was just today; I don't have time to go back on his entire record.

One of the government's priorities within this bill is the agriculture sector—to build confidence in Ontario's food supply chain. Obviously, this is a big priority as we see the rise in food prices from 11% to 14% across our province. If we could be more self-reliant on our food supply, I think most members would agree that's a good thing.

So my question is, could the member discuss if they believe that tearing up our greenbelt will help us build confidence in our food supply system, as we lose over 300 acres of prime farmland each and every day?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Speaker, the member opposite had the opportunity to vote for legislation—the budgets that were brought into this House—that would fund the new \$3.6-billion hospital going into his community. He voted no. He had the opportunity to vote for legislation that would help address the historic housing crisis that was built on the back of the NDP and Liberals. He voted no. He voted no to expanding nursing programs at Brock, doubling the amount of nurses. And then he voted no to the investments that are needed in order to ensure that people have affordable lives. We talked about the things

that were brought forward here: cutting the licence plate sticker fees, cutting the gas tax, ensuring that we're building up a skilled workforce; each and every time, the member opposite voted no.

I'm not going to be surprised if the opposition votes no to this bill too, because it's ensuring that we have stronger supply chains, more opportunities, more prosperity and more jobs for the people of this province. Unfortunately, all we seem to see from the opposition is no.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I want to thank the member from Niagara West and our Minister of Red Tape Reduction for two excellent presentations.

One aspect of this legislation has to do with modernizing the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario—particularly the agri-food sector. My colleague the MPP for Oshawa would agree that the agri-food sector is a big part of our economic recovery in the region of Durham.

I'd like the member from Niagara West to talk a little bit more about the modernization of that act and what the effect will be not only for the region of Durham, where we have close to a million people, but other upper-tier areas, like Niagara.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to the member for Whitby for his advocacy for his community when it comes to ensuring affordability, ensuring opportunity, and also ensuring that governments are being responsive to the needs of their constituents.

I would say to the member that the cumulative effect of these types of red tape barriers that we're seeking to address ends up meaning less food at a higher cost. At the end of the day, time is money, and money impacts the ability of farmers and agri-food processors to bring more of that product to market at a reasonable rate. So the modernization of both the Grow Ontario Strategy and some of the changes that he referred to which have to do with feedlot allocations and some of the paperwork around that—when people are spending that time on that paperwork, they're not able to be spending that time farming. We want to have less time on paperwork, more time on farming, and more food on the shelves.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Questions?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is pertaining to schedules 2 and 3. I'm just going to combine them together.

Having the retired judges go back to work seems to me like a form of double-dipping—not only are they accessing a lucrative pension; they're also now accessing very substantial salary compensation. At the same time, it's not a sustainable solution with respect to clearing the backlogs in the courts.

The Ontario trial lawyers have put forward a long-time position where they want to be able to remove the choice of a jury trial, especially for most civil matters. This is a long-standing position of the Ontario trial lawyers. It also means that Ontario right now is the last jurisdiction in the country that actually offers that. They've noted that it costs more—it's more time to administer and not necessarily a good use of court resources.

Why does the government not invest in that type of red tape elimination, and why are they proposing something else that's not sustainable?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I would have to say that I encourage the member opposite to—again, [ontario.ca/redtape](http://ontario.ca/redtape), if there are ideas that she or her constituents have to reduce red tape in ways. I'd love to get some of those ideas. I know the ministry reviews all suggestions to reduce red tape and takes those very seriously, of course also interacting with various ministries.

I would also say that increasing the part-time availability of retired provincial court judges will serve to ensure greater access to justice. I'm sure that the member opposite understands the importance of ensuring access to justice for those in our communities and ensuring that we're able to see people brought to trial and brought forward to have their cases heard in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, we did see a backlog build up over the course of COVID, and we're taking these actions to ensure that we're addressing that backlog and to ensure people have the access to justice they deserve.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Questions?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to my colleague for the great speech—I really enjoyed listening to his words—and the great work he does for his constituents in Niagara.

I wonder if my colleague—he mentioned it in his speech, on the reduced load periods. I also have a lot of rural roads and dirt roads in my riding. It's something that I hear often from my municipalities, but also the farmers and the truckers—around the reduced load periods and the important work this legislation does for that. I was just wondering if my colleague could elaborate a bit about how this model works, how it will roll out, and how it will support our municipalities to make those decisions.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** This is not a legislated piece; this is talking about the broader red tape reduction package, so it's actually some regulatory changes that are already under existing legislation. But the piece that's being brought forward is to have the Ministry of Transportation work more closely with the Ontario Good Roads Association to improve their frost-depth prediction models, which obviously have an impact on how those restrictions are put in place in different areas, and trying to improve those with more regional variation, recognizing that maybe it's four months in some areas—maybe it's only December until March in one area, but maybe it's November to May in another, depending on what things look like. My understanding is that it's going to be continued promotion of that—that work that moves forward—and then allowing for flexibility in the Ministry of Transportation's guidance to local municipalities on what that signage looks like. So it's definitely good news for your constituents and mine.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche):** Questions?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction: Schedule 5 of this bill makes changes to the oil and gas act, but I notice that there's nothing here to address the 27,000 oil and gas wells across Ontario, 15,000 of which are identified as abandoned and almost 4,400 that have been identified as posing an immediate

and significant risk to property and to life. The Auditor General talked about this in her most recent report. She said the province failed to identify and inspect high-risk oil and gas wells, even though improperly maintained or abandoned wells are safety risks for people. And we know this to be true because we had the explosion in Wheatley, Ontario, which flattened the downtown core and sent 20 people to hospital.

So my question is, when you were given this opportunity to open this act, why did you not address this ticking time bomb that are these abandoned oil and gas wells across the province of Ontario?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to the member opposite for the opportunity to speak a little bit about this section of the bill.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the important and incredible work that has been done by the Minister of Energy and his team to ensure that we have safe, affordable, reliable energy here in the province of Ontario—

something that we didn't have for many years under previous governments, unfortunately propped up by the NDP. I know he is taking sincere and steadfast action to make sure that all of these types of concerns are being addressed and is working with all providers to make sure that everyone is safe, in each and every corner of this province.

I want to speak about the component of the bill that she referenced, and that is with regard to removing the prohibition on carbon sequestration here in the province of Ontario. What this really opens up is opportunities for a nascent industry. It helps us achieve our climate goals by ensuring that carbon sequestration is an important component of reducing carbon emissions, and also storing those in very deep and intensive ways that reduce the output into the environment. So there's a number of different components to that.

*Report continues in volume B.*

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Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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 (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	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	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	