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Assembly  
of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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Mercredi  
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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2023

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT STATUTE LAW  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT  
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE  
LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations / *Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When we last debated Bill 136, the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay had the floor. He still has time on the clock. I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Bon matin, tout le monde. Ça me fait tout le temps plaisir de me lever pour mes commettants ou mes citoyens de Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Ce matin, encore, je vais revenir un petit peu, vu que j'avais commencé—peut-être que ce sont de nouvelles personnes qui écoutent ce matin. On débat un projet de loi : la Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.

Ce matin, ce qu'on débat, c'est un projet de loi où le gouvernement dit : « Bien, on va protéger la ceinture de verdure contre le gouvernement. » Plus ou moins, c'est ça que ça veut dire. C'est assez—comment est-ce qu'on dirait ça? C'est ironique que le gouvernement veuille protéger la population de l'Ontario contre le gouvernement. Ce n'est pas plus compliqué à comprendre : le gouvernement s'est fait pogner les deux mains dans le plat de bonbons. Puis, il y avait plus que leurs mains dans le plat de bonbons—on se comprend, là—il y avait aussi leurs amis proches qui avaient les deux mains dans le plat de bonbons.

Puis, aujourd'hui, avec ce qu'on voit—c'est un précédent, là. On n'a jamais vu un gouvernement qui s'est fait

l'objet d'une investigation criminelle par la GRC. C'est un précédent. Si on se souvient, en 2018 quand le gouvernement Ford a été élu, ils disaient : « Nous, on ne fera pas comme les libéraux ». On se souvient que les libéraux—il y a une raison pourquoi ça fait deux élections qu'ils ne sont même pas un parti officiel. C'est parce qu'ils ont vécu un scandale eux aussi. Mais ils ne feront jamais comme eux autres. Ils ne feraient pas comme eux autres. Ils seraient un gouvernement qui serait pour le peuple, qui serait transparent et qui ne vivrait pas la même situation que les libéraux ont faite avec le gouvernement.

Ils n'ont pas fait comme les libéraux; ils ont fait pire que les libéraux. Là, on vit une crise. On voit un gouvernement qui se fait investiguer criminellement par la GRC—pas fort, là. On a un gouvernement qui se pète les bretelles et qui dit : « Nous, on est là et on fait les bonnes choses. On est transparent. On consulte. » Quand on entend nos amis du gouvernement parler, pour ce projet de loi—quand tu penses que, quand ils parlent pour ce projet de loi là, ils usent les mêmes mots, les mêmes arguments que, nous, on disait dans le temps, quand on votait, quand on disait : « Non, on ne peut pas supporter le projet de loi envers la ceinture de verdure. » Je peux vous dire qu'on a amené des amendements, puis ils ont refusé tous nos amendements. Mais on ne pouvait pas supporter le gouvernement. Quand ils disent : « Oh! oui, le NPD a voté contre; l'opposition a voté contre »—oui, on a voté contre. Je vais vous le dire honnêtement, je suis content qu'on ait voté contre, parce que regarde le jackpot qu'ils sont dedans, comme c'est là. Ils se font investiguer criminellement.

Je sais qu'il y a du monde intègre sur ce bord-là de la Chambre. Il y a des députés qui sont très intègres. Je veux répéter certaines paroles que mon collègue de Timiskaming–Cochrane a dit hier quand il a parlé justement de ce projet de loi, parce qu'on sait qu'on a appris que le caucus était mis au courant de la situation de la ceinture de verdure. Ça veut dire que vous ne pouvez plus plaider non coupables ou que vous n'étiez pas au courant, que vous avez à répondre à qui vient vous voir—puis, je sais qu'il y a du monde intègre là-dedans, parce que si ces investigations démontrent que vous étiez impliqués ou que le gouvernement était impliqué, ça va refléter même sur vous autres.

Mon collègue, la manière dont il l'a expliqué, il a dit : « Il y a quelqu'un qui va payer le prix pour ça. » J'espère que ce ne sont pas certains de vous qui vont payer le prix cher pour ça. Il y en a qui vont le payer, par exemple. Il y en a qui vont payer le prix, puisque ça prend tout le temps un « fall guy », comme on dit. Ça prend du monde qui va payer le prix. Mais vous pensez si c'est vous qui payez le

prix? Je sais que vous êtes intègres, certaines personnes là-dedans. On ne peut pas dire tout le monde, mais j'en connais—on bâtit des relations. Veut, veut pas, même si quand on parle des projets de loi ou on parle dans la période de questions, on fait de la confrontation peut-être un peu trop partisane, à la fin de la journée, il y a des relations qui se bâtissent. Mais comment allez-vous répondre à la GRC quand vous ne pouvez plus dire : « Bien, au caucus, on l'a appris et on n'a rien fait »? Parce qu'on est élu pour faire certain qu'on protège les intérêts des citoyens. Puis, je sais qu'il y en a de vous autres qui voyaient très clair.

Il y a une chanson qui me revient tout le temps à tête; elle est en anglais, par contre. Je vais vous la chanter ce matin.

It goes, “Whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you? Bad boys, bad girls, whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you?”

*Interjections.*

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** On rit de ça. C'est ironique, mais, veut, veut pas, ça peut arriver, sérieusement. On ne rit pas de la situation—des fois, il faut rire de ces choses-là. À la fin de la journée, c'est ce qui se passe.

Je veux vous parler un peu plus de mon comté et comment ça ne s'arrange pas, parce qu'on sait qu'avec tout ça, un projet de loi pour protéger les citoyens du gouvernement qui se fait investiguer par la GRC, par l'OPP—écoute, il y a un nouveau rapport qui va sortir. Bien, il est sorti : plus de 700 pages sur les MZO. Si, moi, j'étais sur votre bord, je serais inquiet, pas à peu près, parce que, moi, je me souviens qu'on a voté contre. On a voté contre pour les mêmes raisons qu'on disait : « Non, ça prend de la consultation publique. Ça prend de la transparence. » Puis ça prend bien de choses—on vous a amené des recommandations, mais non. « On sait plus. On est le gouvernement. We know best. »

Tu sais, on voit un aigle en haut-là et on voit un hibou sur notre bord. Il y a une raison pour ça, et il ne faut jamais oublier : parce que, nous, on est là pour conseiller notre gouvernement quand on voit des lacunes dans vos projets de loi. Ça ne veut pas dire que, à cause que vous êtes une majorité, vous faites de l'abus ou que vous faites—on a une obligation de vous le dire, puis on l'a fait. Qu'on soit sur n'importe quel bord, on a une obligation à nos citoyens de faire sûr qu'on protège leurs intérêts. Que ce soit le gouvernement, l'opposition ou bien donc même un parti qui n'est pas reconnu, on a une obligation de le faire.

Dans ce cas-ci, je peux vous dire qu'il y en a de vous, j'en suis certain, qui vous vous posez des questions avec tout ce qui se passe aujourd'hui. Si ça se détermine qu'il y a eu de l'abus de pouvoir et qu'il y a des charges criminelles qui se mettent, pour certains de vous ça va peut-être refléter sur vous, même si vous n'aviez rien à faire avec ça. Ça, c'est dommage pour des personnes que je connais qui sont très intègres.

Je veux revenir un petit peu sur la ceinture de verdure. Il y avait tout ce brouhaha-là et le gouvernement donnait des passe-droits à ses amis proches, les gros donateurs. C'est ce qu'on découvre. Là, ce n'est pas moi que le dit. C'est la vérificatrice. C'est le commissaire à l'intégrité.

**0910**

C'est notre chef qui a poussé pour avoir ces investigations-là. Puis là aujourd'hui, mais, on est rendu où on est : avec une investigation par la GRC. Mais c'est un gouvernement qui veut tout le temps se péter les bretelles, et qui a dit : « Non, nous, on ne fera pas la même affaire que les libéraux. » Ils ont juste fait pire.

Quant à bâtir les 1,5 million de maisons qu'on doit bâtir dans la province, on sait que le privé fait partie du portrait. On n'est pas contre le privé—au contraire. Même si le gouvernement semble dire, les conservateurs aiment dire, qu'on est contre le privé, on n'est pas contre le privé. Le gouvernement dit que le privé va être capable de bâtir certaines maisons, mais le privé le dit, eux autres mêmes, qu'ils ne seront pas capables de tout bâtir, les maisons. C'est là que le gouvernement doit venir aider.

Le gouvernement doit venir aider quand on parle de « supportive housing », quand on parle de « subsidized housing », quand on parle de coopératives, quand on parle des soins de longue durée et on parle aussi des—je me souviens dans mon comté, aux dernières élections, ils ont fait une grosse annonce. On sait que nous, on a une maison de soins de longue durée qui est un « C home ». J'en ai parlé cette semaine, puis j'ai envoyé une lettre au nouveau ministre. J'espère que le ministre revienne avec des bonnes réponses, parce que quand on parle de ma circonscription, que c'est prêt de—on attend trois ans et plus. La maison de soins de longue durée qu'ils avaient annoncée en 2022 est supposée d'être ouverte en 2025. C'est une maison privée—une des deux. À Kapuskasing, on parle d'Extencicare. Quand ils ont annoncé ça, c'était bienvenu pour la communauté. J'ai même remercié le ministre dans le temps ou le premier ministre Ford dans le temps. J'ai remercié le gouvernement de faire l'annonce, parce que c'est un grand besoin dans notre région.

Mais, là, il nous reste peut-être 18 mois avant 2025, et il n'y a rien de fait—zéro; zéro de fait. Il n'y a même pas une pelletée; même pas rien. La municipalité est très concernée. On entend d'Extencicare que, non, ils ont des projets pour le faire. Mais aussi, ils disent : « Bien, là, on n'a pas assez d'argent pour bâtir, parce que ça coûte trop cher. » Puis en plus, ils m'ont dit qu'avec la situation des agences, ça coûte trop cher.

Mais tout ce temps, par exemple, on a du monde—là, on parle de 60 lits. On a un autre 68 lits, les nouveaux 68 lits qu'ils vont bâtir. C'est, quoi, 122, 128? Les nouveaux lits qu'ils vont bâtir : il n'y a rien de fait. Le problème—c'est ça que j'ai expliqué au ministre. C'est pour ça que j'ai dit que j'espère que le ministre revienne avec des réponses positives, parce que la communauté est très concernée.

Le « C home » qu'on a, là, il va y avoir beaucoup d'investissements. Si tu regardes la loi, la manière qu'elle est structurée, pour donner des extensions—s'ils y en donnent des extensions, il faut qu'il y ait un plan pour améliorer le « C home », mais aussi pour—bien, qu'il y ait un plan. Mais s'ils ne bâtissent pas l'Extencicare ou s'ils ne rénovent pas le « C home » pour être capables d'avoir une nouvelle maison de soins de longue durée à Kap,



qu'est-ce qu'on va faire de ces 60 patients-là qui sont dans les lits? Où est-ce qu'on va les mettre? Parce qu'il n'y a pas de place.

Timmins est à plus de 150 kilomètres de Kapuskasing. Hearst : il y a un foyer qui n'est pas capable de les prendre. On a le Manoir, qui est plein à craquer. Ils vont demander pour une extension, et qu'est-ce qui va arriver? Où est-ce qu'on va les mettre? Ce monde, comme c'est là, ils ont une place. C'est ça qui est concernant. C'est ça que j'ai expliqué au ministre. J'ai dit : « Qu'est qu'on va faire de ce monde-là? » On ne peut pas les mettre dans nos poches; on ne peut pas les retourner à maison. C'est très concernant.

Il y a tellement une pénurie quand on parle de « supportive housing », « subsidized housing ». Mais c'est là que le gouvernement va falloir venir en aide pour suppléer ce que le privé ne peut pas faire, parce que le privé dit lui-même : « On n'est pas capable de le faire. » Mais on sait que le gouvernement est contre. Quand on parle de coopératives, c'est pareil comme si on parlait de la « plague ». On parle de : « Ah, non, on ne peut pas faire ça ».

On sait que ça s'est déjà fait. Ça s'est fait avant et après la guerre. Il y a des gouvernements précédents conservateurs qui l'ont fait. Ça fonctionnait. On sait que c'est un modèle qui marche; une fois qu'il est bâti, c'est auto-suffisant. C'est une coopérative qui fonctionne, mais on est fermé à cette idée-là. Pourquoi? Ça existe; ça marche. On sait qu'il y a du succès : il y a des modèles qui sont là.

Mais quand tu penses que dans les régions comme la nôtre, dans le Nord, quand on a déjà une pénurie de maisons juste pour les jeunes couples et tout ça, mais qu'on a en plus de ça—quand on parle de « supportive housing », il y a des familles qui déménagent. Elles s'en vont dans les villes pour être capables d'avoir des services, parce qu'il n'y en a pas. Il y a des attentes de trois à cinq ans. Trouvez-vous que c'est normal? Moi, je ne trouve pas que c'est normal.

C'est là que le gouvernement doit rentrer en fonction pour aider à répondre à ce besoin-là, parce que le privé le dit, eux autres mêmes, qu'ils ne sont pas là : « On ne sera pas capable de répondre à tout le besoin. » Mais on l'a déjà fait, comme gouvernement, y compris les conservateurs. On a une obligation de le faire pour répondre aux besoins des communautés comme le Nord.

Je pense à la famille qui a déménagé à Cochrane juste pour leur garçon qui était autiste. Il a fini l'école. Il était un adulte—pas de place. Ils ont vendu leur maison, et ont pris une chance de déménager à Cochrane pour trouver un placement pour leur garçon. Ils regardaient même Ottawa. Ils ne voulaient pas déménager. Ils voulaient juste de la place.

Puis, si on avait une maison de sept à huit lits, ça répondrait aux besoins de la région. On est fermé à l'idée. On est fermé à l'idée, mais on passe un projet de loi pour se protéger, par exemple.

On a une obligation de faire beaucoup mieux que ça.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the member for his address this morning. Clearly, Speaker, the housing

crisis is the most important issue facing not just Ontario but Canada today, and in our exuberance to get the job done, we made some mistakes, and the Premier has acknowledged that. The Premier has acknowledged that we were not on the same page with the people of Ontario. As a result, we brought forth this legislation that is going to codify the boundaries of the greenbelt.

But I'm going to ask the opposition: They know what a crisis we're in as well as we do. It's on the news every day. Will they get behind us now to help solve the housing crisis in Ontario, which will help solve the housing crisis in Canada—because without it, the future is bleak. I want to say to the members: Stop politicking on housing and let's get behind the solutions that are brought forth by this government that has shown leadership on this issue.

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** J'aime tout le temps écouter mon collègue de l'autre bord de la rue, parce qu'il est tout le temps intéressant à voir, mais disons que—pas tout à fait d'accord avec ce qu'il vient de dire là. On a fait une motion. Je vous rappellerais qu'on a fait une motion, puis que vous avez voté contre, pour adresser, justement, le manque de logements. Et, après ça, ils disent qu'on ne travaille pas avec eux autres? Je ne suis pas sûr, moi c'est qui qui n'est pas transparent. Ça a pris trois mois avant qu'ils s'excusent. Mais pas rien que ça : en 2018, ils ont dit qu'ils ne toucheraient pas à la ceinture de verdure. Ils ont touché à la ceinture de verdure. En 2022, on se souvient que le premier ministre a dit qu'il ne toucherait pas à la ceinture de verdure. Il a touché à la ceinture de verdure.

Là, ils vivent une crise de gouvernement, un des—comment je dirais ça? Ils sont entourés d'une investigation criminelle, un scandale—le vrai mot—puis ils essayent de nous faire la leçon de transparence. Ils essayent de nous dire que nous, on ne travaille pas avec—

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Merci, madame la Présidente. Merci aussi à mon collègue de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. Cette situation—je me souviens quand mon fils était jeune. Il aimait beaucoup jouer avec ses jouets—et c'est le temps pour prendre un bain, c'est le temps pour manger, c'est le temps pour faire dodo, et je lui dis : « Sam, viens ici, c'est le temps pour manger. » Et tout le temps, il m'a dit « après » ou « non merci, non merci ». C'est la même chose pour le gouvernement conservateur et le premier ministre. Quand le public est très fâché de cette situation, le premier ministre et le gouvernement conservateur disent : « Non merci, non merci. »

Mais maintenant, c'est une investigation criminelle et le public est très fâché. Pourquoi est-ce que le public est très fâché contre le gouvernement conservateur et le premier ministre?

**0920**

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Je veux remercier mon collègue pour faire l'effort de parler en français. Je pense que tu fais beaucoup de progrès; ça fait que merci pour la question.

Pourquoi les citoyens sont choqués? Parce que les citoyens voient très clair. On pense souvent que les citoyens ne nous suivent pas ou qu'ils ne comprennent pas.

Mais une chose qu'on sait, c'est que les citoyens, quand ils viennent et quand ils vont voter, ils vont être clairs.

Puis, je me demande, moi, où est-ce qu'ils vont être aux prochaines élections? Parce que, quand un gouvernement n'est pas intègre, n'est pas transparent et est en pleine crise, et qu'ils sont investigués par la GRC, écoute, il y en a qui vont revoler, là. Il va y avoir du monde qui va payer cher.

Je peux vous dire que les citoyens—il ne faut pas prendre les citoyens pour des cruches, comme ils disent en français, parce que le gouvernement, ils ont essayé de les prendre pour des valises et ils les ont bourrés bien comme il faut.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I was glad to hear this morning that when the member from Sudbury thinks of our government, he thinks of his children. I really appreciate that, and I really appreciate the support from the opposition on this bill that we have before us today.

I was just wondering if the member could state emphatically here before the House that he supports this legislation and will be voting in favour.

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Il veut savoir si je vais supporter le projet de loi 136, qui va protéger les citoyens contre le gouvernement. Oui, on va le supporter. Pourquoi? Parce que vous n'êtes pas capables de vous autogérer. Au moins, ça, ça va vous protéger. Ça, ça va protéger au moins les citoyens contre le gouvernement quand ça vient à la ceinture de verdure, quand il a eu de l'abus du gouvernement envers les citoyens de la province—c'est de l'abus que vous avez fait, là. Vous avez profité de votre pouvoir, de votre majorité, pour donner des faveurs à des personnes—puis des personnes proches du premier ministre, qui ont été aux noces de sa fille, qui étaient assises à la table du premier ministre, les plus gros donateurs.

Oui, on va voter pour ça. Pourquoi? On va protéger les citoyens contre vous, le gouvernement. Vous devriez avoir honte d'amener un projet de loi de même où vous dites aux citoyens : « On va vous protéger contre nous, le gouvernement. » Pas fort, pas fort.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Sandy Shaw:** Pour le député : vraiment, je crois que c'est un gouvernement vraiment honteux, et tous les gens en Ontario le croient aussi.

La crise du logement est vraiment réelle. Avec ce scandale, le plus grand jamais en Ontario, nous avons perdu beaucoup de temps pour améliorer les choses pour les gens. Nous avons plein de gens—les sans-abris. L'hiver s'en vient et il y a des gens dans ma circonscription qui vivent dans des tentes maintenant.

Est-ce que vous pouvez expliquer au gouvernement ce qu'il a perdu et comment c'est un autre échec à propos de cette crise de logement?

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Merci pour l'effort en français. Oui, ils ont perdu du temps. Ils ont mis tellement d'emphase là-dessus et là, ils vont mettre encore plus d'emphase pour se protéger. Tout ce temps-là, comme tu as dit, on voit des

« tent cities ». On voit des parcs de tentes pleines, des « renovictions », des « demovictions »—des mots qui n'existaient même pas et qu'on a inventés.

Mais, la réalité c'est qu'il faut que le gouvernement aille se promener dans les parcs—qu'ils sortent de leur tour d'ivoire et qu'ils aillent voir ce qui se passe.

Moi, je n'ai jamais vu des « tent cities » dans le nord de l'Ontario. On en voit à Sudbury. On commence à en voir à Timmins—du monde qui vivent dans des tentes où il fait des moins 25 degrés ou moins 30 degrés. Puis, le gouvernement, ils disent qu'ils sont là pour les citoyens.

On traite de ce projet de loi pour se protéger parce qu'ils savent qu'ils sont pris dans un scandale, puis que tout ce temps-là, ils auraient pu mettre les efforts. Il ne faut pas oublier, là, que leur propre comité leur recommandait de ne pas utiliser la ceinture de verdure. Nous n'oublierons jamais ça, qu'ils n'étaient pas obligés de la prendre. Mais ils l'ont prise pareil—

*Interjections.*

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Je suis contente de dire que partout dans notre province, nos communautés grandissent. La population de l'Ontario a augmenté de plus de 500 000 nouveaux résidents l'année dernière et a dépassé les 15 millions pour la toute première fois. Notre population devrait croître de quatre millions de personnes au cours de la prochaine année. Donc, je me demande si le député d'en face se joindra à nous pour aider à construire les maisons dont nous avons besoin, tout en protégeant la « greenbelt »?

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Merci aussi pour la question en français. J'aime toujours débattre en français. C'est sûr que j'apprécie les efforts que vous faites quand on parle en français.

Puis, oui, on reconnaît qu'il faut bâtir les maisons. Écoute, on a mis une motion devant le gouvernement pour demander votre support pour répondre aux besoins des personnes les plus démunies ou les personnes qui en ont besoin. Fait que, oui; mais ce n'est pas vrai qu'on va embarquer dans votre scandale. Ce n'est pas vrai qu'on va vous supporter et dire : « Oui, on va supporter ce projet de loi. » Ça protège les citoyens de votre abus—

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Good morning. It's great to see you all here this morning. As I was sitting down and preparing my notes, I thought, why are we here? Why are we here right now? That's really what the debate is all about. How did we get here?

But I do want to say in the spirit of the season that yesterday was Halloween, and what I did say with all sincerity is that I hope that the Premier can carve pumpkins better than he carved up the greenbelt, because that's what he was doing this time last year and he made a mess of it, and that's one of the reasons why we're here this morning.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'm glad I've got the minister all excited this morning; that's exactly why I came. That's why I'm here this morning. That's not why we're all here this morning. We're all here because the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner talked about all the things that this government did behind the scenes with brown envelopes and, in the commissioner's own words, deception, to benefit a small group, a very small group, of insiders, people who were connected. They were well connected; they were connected people. They benefited from it greatly, to the tune of \$8.3 billion. And by the Premier's own admission, they're his friends. They're at the wedding; they're at the stag and doe. They hang with him. It's all good—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** And they're fundraisers too. Thank you for reminding me. I actually didn't forget; I was getting there. So that's why we're here. That's why we're here, so you guys can protect the greenbelt from you.

To be fair to all of you, it wasn't all of you. It's a couple of people, mostly the Premier, that we have to protect the greenbelt from. And I'm glad that he saw the light. I really do believe that he felt the heat.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Speaker, I don't mind being heckled, but he doesn't have to come all the way over here; I can hear him. I can hear him. I hear him in my dreams.

So why are we here? Why are we here, Minister? We're here because you tried to carve up the greenbelt and give it to your friends, give it away to your friends—and not a lot of your friends, just a few friends. You know what? Families are struggling right now. I'm sure they really like the fact that you wanted to give a handful of people, well-connected insiders, an \$8.3-billion payday while they're just trying to pay the bills. We should be here talking about a return to real rent control. Why aren't we talking about that? No, we're talking about protecting the greenbelt from the Premier.

**0930**

So why are we here? I'm going to keep asking that question. Well, we're here because the Minister of Housing resigned. Another cabinet minister resigned. Then the Minister of Labour thought he was better off going to Woodbine than he was staying here. What does that tell you? He literally pulled the chute the day after the Premier did his backflip. That's why we're here. Three cabinet ministers—three. Maybe there will be some more.

Speaking of flip-flops, it's connected. We did this greenbelt flip-flop because the government was discovered. Everything was ripped back. So we did the flip-flop with the greenbelt. Then we did a flip-flop on the MZOs. Why did we do that? Well, we did a flip-flop on the greenbelt because the government essentially got caught red-handed trying to benefit a small group of well-connected insiders—by his own admission, the Premier's friends.

If we're reversing the urban boundaries now, is it because we're doing it for the same reason we did it for

the greenbelt? It certainly looks like that. This morning I read a story about a well-known Conservative, Quinto Annibale, who—Vaughan Working Families, if we all remember that, and God knows what else—successfully got his greenbelt excluded—sorry, his golf course, which is a bit of a greenbelt in some ways, excluded from the greenbelt. What's with that? Another well-connected insider.

**MPP Jamie West:** Another lucky coincidence.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Really, another lucky coincidence.

Why are we here? Well, the Premier's chief of staff, Amin Massoudi, no longer connected to the government—caught up in this. The Premier's director of housing, Jae Truesdell, no longer connected to government—exiled, gone, dismissed. The Premier's former executive assistant, Nico Fidani-Diker, also caught up in this, also implicated—gone. Then we have the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff for the Minister of Housing, Ryan Amato—gone, jettisoned. Four people directly connected to the Premier all gone, like that. That's why we're here.

You know why we're here? We're here because all roads in this scandal lead to the Premier's office. It's clear. The Premier can't even remember who he talked to—or he did talk to or he didn't talk to and then, all of a sudden, “Yes, I did talk to him but he talked to me about that before so there was no real problem with that.” Come on, do you think we're all stupid—myself excluded, but the rest of us? To the Premier directly: How do you expect people to believe that?

The Premier is saying that he knew nothing, but these four people who were well connected to him in the file that was one of the most important things to the Premier—because we know what the Premier likes to do; he likes development and he likes building roads, so we know he was interested in this file. Those four people are directly connected to him. They worked for him. They worked under his direction. And I would argue that the Minister of Housing was doing that, but he said, “I've had enough.”

I've worked in a Premier's office. I've worked with ministers' offices; I've worked in ministers' offices. There is no way on God's green earth that the Premier didn't know what was going on—not possible, not believable, not for a second. And if the Premier is trying to claim that he knew nothing and he was in the same position as Minister Clark and he stuck his head in the sand, that's fine; just do the same thing as Minister Clark did, if that's the case. I don't think that's the case, and I don't think he's going to do it, even if it was the case.

Now we have something else going on. Why are we here? We're here because we have an RCMP criminal investigation into the \$8.3-billion backroom deal. They're starting interviews this week. But here's the kicker. It's connected in this debate. Why does the Ontario taxpayer have to pay for the lawyers of the people implicated on the other side—the Premier, the minister, the staff—to cover up what went on? Why are we paying for it? Why are we paying for the Premier's lawyers? Why? It's a criminal investigation. It's not a civil investigation; it's a criminal investigation. Somebody did something wrong. That's

what people suspect. They broke the law, and now they want us to pay for their lawyers. Do you know who should pay for the lawyers? The people who benefited the most out of this \$8.3-billion backroom deal and the MZO and the urban boundaries: the Ontario PC Party. Let them pay the bill. Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay the bill. It's totally wrong. I think the Premier, if he was standing on this side, would say exactly the same thing, and maybe in less charitable terms. That's why we're here.

Hey, folks, I don't think it's all of you guys. I really don't. I don't think you knew any more than I knew. I believe that. But there are some people over there who did, and there are some other people over there who stuck their heads in the sand as the greenbelt was being carved up for purposes that were not for the people of Ontario, to the benefit of few well-connected, already-wealthy insiders who stood to make billions and billions of dollars.

I know it's \$8.3 billion for the greenbelt, but how much is the uplift for the MZOs? How much is the uplift for the urban boundaries which just got reversed by the minister this week? How many more billions of dollars are we talking about? Are we into double-digit billions of dollars: \$10 billion, \$15 billion, \$13 billion? I don't know. It doesn't matter.

It's about the way this government thinks it can do business here, the way the Premier thinks he can do business here. That's why we're here debating this morning.

A year and a half ago, we didn't need this legislation. Why do we need it? Because the Premier tried to carve up the greenbelt, just like he was probably carving a pumpkin last night—probably still cleaning it up, too.

Look, I think we should protect the greenbelt, but I think members on the other side have to ask themselves the question: What's going on inside my party? What's happening?

I saw last week—and I'll give another example of this. All of a sudden the government, in unwinding the urban boundaries, and maybe the MZOs soon, took the previous minister, who had already done the right thing, and he got thrown under the bus—because it's not just him, right? What I heard was, “We're going to back the bus over him again.” Rather than backing the bus over the previous minister, instead of doing that, why not just do the right thing? It would be a lot easier that way. I don't think it's fair to that minister. I don't think you can put it all on a small group of people. That's just preposterous.

The truth is going to come out, folks. It's going to happen. The Mounties—what about the Mounties?

**MPP Jamie West:** They always get their man.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's right. They always get their man. We'll say they always get their person; it doesn't sound quite the same. But they always get their man.

The truth's going to come out. It eventually will, so why don't we just get there? If you know you're going to end up somewhere, just get there. Just get there, because for all of you it's just going to be another story another day that you're going to have to explain to your constituents, that you're going to have to answer questions for—that you're going to have to defend the indefensible.

That happens over there on the other side. I know that sometimes you're in government and you have policies that you don't really believe in, but you've got to toe the line. You're on a team. You're playing on a team. I understand that.

**0940**

This is different. This is a criminal investigation into an \$8.3-billion backroom deal that benefited a handful of people who are already billionaires, for the most part, and who, by the Premier's own admission, are his friends and his fundraisers. Why should you have to defend that? You didn't do it. Maybe some of you knew what was going on and you just kind of turned your head; I don't feel as sorry for you as I do for other members who are thinking, “What the heck is going on here? How did that happen?” Why should you have to defend that? It's not a bad policy decision. It's an action that has ended up in a criminal investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and that is very serious. That's not a bad policy decision. That's a question of ethics, and it's important to the people of Ontario.

God love you, I'm glad I'm not in your spot.

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

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his comments.

Madam Speaker, why we are here: for the reason we got elected—from my riding, and most of my colleagues—for the historical reason that the people elected us to do the change and bring hope and dreams to the people of Ontario. That's why we are here. I have to remind the member opposite.

But we are in a housing crisis. I was talking to, regularly, on a weekly basis—from building the one house or somebody building a subdivision, the house prices went up. The number one reason is the process. The municipalities have red tape and bureaucracy is killing our housing industry—no supply.

Our government is taking decisive action. We know that the greenbelt issue is—we acknowledged that, the Premier acknowledged that, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing acknowledged that. That is what real leadership is all about—we admit and we move on.

This bill is a great bill, and I'm asking the member opposite to join us—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the member.

Response?

**Mr. John Fraser:** I just want to say to the member, who I greatly respect, I don't think you knew anything about this. I'm not trying to be critical of you. I'm being critical of the Premier and some other people close to the front row and in the front row who knew about it, or who were part of it, or who were in the offices.

It's good that we're here this morning to protect the greenbelt from the Premier or whoever else in the next couple of years ends up sitting in that chair from that side. I'm not sure who it's going to be—it will be somebody, I'm sure. We shouldn't have to be here this morning.

If it was about housing, you would go to real rent control; you would actually build a corporation that acted as a bank and worked with developers to build housing that was affordable, and a mix of housing. That's what you would do. I think all three parties here have suggested that. Actually, you did that, as a government, way back in the 1970s.

Just get your hands dirty. Pick up the tools.

But this greenbelt thing, why we're here this morning, is all about land speculation.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much for your words today. I agree with you; we shouldn't be here. It's unbelievable.

I want to pick up on your theme of how much this is going to cost Ontario, both figuratively and literally.

We see this government—I can't imagine how many of these individual MPPs had fundraisers with these developers. That's a connection that I wouldn't want to have to be worrying about in the middle of the night. So what about those fundraisers?

The Attorney General now is going to go to court, with our taxpayer dollars, to seek a special judicial review on environmental assessments simply so that they can ram through Ontario Place and their Highway 413. Who does that benefit? Insiders, speculators, friends of the Premier.

This goes way beyond the greenbelt in terms of what it's going to cost taxpayers and what's at stake.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Apart from that small group of well-connected insiders, the one group that's become rich in this government are lawyers. And they stand to become richer because the Premier wants us to pay for his lawyers and, everyone who's caught up in this investigation, he wants us to pay for their legal advice. There's a criminal investigation, and the Premier says, "Pay for our lawyers, taxpayer. Yes, I know you can't pay the rent. I know you're having a hard time putting food on the table. I know you're struggling to get your kids in sports. But you know what? Pay for my lawyers in this criminal investigation. Pay for my lawyers and the lawyers of my staff and the lawyers of my colleagues that are caught up in this."

I don't believe that the vast majority of people on this side knew what was going on. I think some people turned their heads, and there's a group of people in there who knew what they were doing. Now what they're saying is, "Pay for my lawyers." I say no, we're not going to pay for that. The Ontario PC Party should pay for it.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** To the member opposite, a very lively presentation you made there. I do have to say, 17 times that party carved out the greenbelt, so we could throw a lot of questions your way about lawyers etc. and transparency.

But through Bill 136, the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act—if this passes, and I hope it does—we intend to enshrine the greenbelt boundaries in legislation, which will be different compared to what the previous

government did. Any future changes would require discussion and a vote by all MPPs. My question to the member is, will you join us and support a fair and open process?

**Mr. John Fraser:** The greenbelt didn't need protection from us; it needed protection from you.

The last time it was changed—22 months; I think 2,000 people in the consultation; 17 changes, 340 acres; added 20 river basins and 20,000 acres. Okay? You guys took it out.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Hey, well, Quinto wants to know about his golf course that got taken out. Is it still taken out? Sorry, I had to put that in there.

Come on. Stop saying the "17 times." Just take it out of your talking points. Do we have whiteout? Does whiteout still exist? Somebody in the House leader's office, get some whiteout and just take that line out.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Okay, they're hearing me behind the desk. Just take it out, because it doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything.

We're not protecting the greenbelt from these people here. We're protecting them from you. And you have to put forward legislation—

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

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his presentation. I also have a question about—the government admitted that they made a mistake giving preferential treatment for greenbelt speculators. Do they also admit and do you think they should admit that they made a mistake in giving preferential treatment to the speculators when it comes to the arbitrary MZOs? Because that still has not been reversed, and there are a lot of parts of the greenbelt that are actually not reversed through this restoration act as well.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Oh, yes. Not many of you will remember this, but the Premier's going to do more backflips than Simone Biles when we get to the end of this. Yes, those MZOs, they're going to get reversed. Someone's going to take a look at them. We've already done urban boundaries. They didn't reverse the urban boundaries because they saw the light; they just felt the heat of a criminal investigation—the RCMP, a criminal investigation. So, yes, I expect that.

I think we've all seen it. I've seen a few MZOs where I'm going, "Yeah, they built the long-term care home, but how come they need all this other land? Oh, that's interesting. And who's building the long-term-care home and who owns all that land? Oh, that's interesting. And where do they put their money? Oh, that's interesting."

But you know what? Here's the good news: We're going to be able to talk about this for the next three years, because it's not going away, because the longer you drag it out instead of getting to where you need to get to—we're going to keep talking about this—

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

0950

Further questions?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** The member from Ottawa South made considerable reference to MZOs. An MZO was used to guarantee the Stellantis-LG plant got built in Essex county. Does the member from Ottawa South support the use of an MZO to guarantee that Stellantis-LG plant gets built in Essex county?

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's a good MZO, but do you know what? In 15 years, we did 18 MZOs—one, eight. In three years, you did 110. That's a factor of 35 times more MZOs. We don't have 35 times Stellantis plants across this province, right?

My point is, it's a tool that you use to help your community. That's a good thing. It's a tool that we used 18 times to help communities. But 110 times, over the will of councils? That's not to help communities.

Your MZO is a good MZO, and I stand behind that, and as a member you should do that. That was the right thing for you to do in this House. But for God's sake, don't attach it to the rest of the dirt.

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Good morning, Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today to speak on the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has outlined previously, our government is introducing legislation that, if passed, would restore lands and property back to the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. That's approximately 7,400 acres of land being put back into the greenbelt in municipalities across the GTA including Grimsby, Hamilton, Vaughan, King, Richmond Hill, Markham, Ajax, Pickering, Clarington and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The legislation would enhance protections by ensuring future changes to the greenbelt boundaries are done transparently and through the legislative process, meaning any changes to the greenbelt boundaries would require the approval of this House, which means better protection of our greenbelt lands. If this legislation is passed, the greenbelt will be better protected and even larger.

On top of the land being put back into the greenbelt, our government is adding an additional 9,400 acres. These are lands in the Paris-Galt moraine and 13 areas in the urban river valley. The new urban river valley areas include Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek in Hamilton, and Fourteen Mile Creek in Oakville. These are just to name a few. Our government is doing more to protect the greenbelt for future generations and following through on our commitment to restore lands, as well as protect and maintain the lands we're adding. We are a government that is following through on our commitments.

While our discussion remains centred on the greenbelt, we remain focused on the housing supply crisis in our province. This is something that we can no longer ignore, especially in my riding of Burlington. In Burlington, there's a lot of red tape. It's difficult to build new homes. The inability to get permits to build homes and the “not in

my backyard” mentality has left my community starving for housing.

Speaker, I'd like to share a story. I'm a member of the local curling club in town, and after our first game this season, I sat down with my team and our opponents just to catch up. We talked about the weather, about life, our summers, and our children and how much we miss them. Out of four couples that were seated at my table, each couple had children who had left Burlington and left the province of Ontario—some went to other provinces, some went to other countries. As I thought about this, I thought how sad it was. It's a real shame that our kids are no longer staying to live in Ontario. These kids were all born and raised in Burlington, educated in Ontario at world-class post-secondary institutes, but they can't afford a home in Ontario, let alone in Burlington. They've gone to other provinces, and even to the United States. They've gone to Texas, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia. That's where the children have gone, Speaker—mine included. They simply cannot afford to live here.

According to a poll by the Ontario Real Estate Association, 46% of prospective homebuyers under the age of 45 have considered moving out of the province in order to afford a home. Ontario, our province, is at risk of losing young, educated and skilled workers to other provinces, states or even other countries because they simply can't afford to live here.

Let's remove buying a home from the picture for a minute, because housing prices have doubled and even almost tripled in the last 10 years. Purchasing a home right now, with inflation and increased interest rates, has become incredibly challenging and difficult, and out of reach for most first-time homebuyers.

Statistics from the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington in September 2023 show an average purchase price of \$1.3 million for a detached home in Burlington. Just to add, the majority of homes in my community are single, detached homes. Speaker, for the first-time homebuyer, \$1.3 million is out of reach. Even with a 20% down payment of \$260,000—if you were able to save \$260,000, that means a mortgage of more than \$1 million. Calculating it out, based on some online tools that I used, it's about \$6,700 a month. To afford that kind of mortgage, a household would have to earn over \$250,000 with no other outstanding debt or liability.

I was speaking with another family in Burlington recently. Their son and his fiancé did everything right. They went to school. They worked part-time jobs to pay their tuition fees in post-secondary, and they've saved \$150,000 as a down payment on a home. Speaker, it's sad to say that saving \$150,000 for a down payment still doesn't cut it. I just wanted to add here that saving in this economy is hard, let alone coming up with the amount of money that you need for a down payment on a home. Yet this couple was still able to save \$150,000, and it's still not enough.

Let's look at rentals. On average, in Burlington, to rent a one-bedroom apartment is more than \$2,217 a month,

and a two-bedroom apartment can be upwards of \$2,600 a month. That's not including gas, utilities or food. All of those costs have increased due to inflation and the carbon tax.

Speaker, our young people are leaving Ontario due to a lack of affordable housing options. These are young people—our family—that we have educated and trained in our province, but they can't live here because they can't buy a house.

But our government is committed to our goal of building 1.5 million homes here in Ontario by 2031. Decades of NIMBYism across Ontario, coupled with red tape, have contributed to a housing supply crisis.

Still, the population of Ontario continues to grow. Although our children can't afford to live here, Ontario's population growth continues to rise because our province is a hub for research, manufacturing and innovation. Our province attracts people and companies from all over the world. Businesses that want to grow in dynamic North American markets come here. Immigrants who want to make a better life for themselves and their families overwhelmingly will choose Ontario as their home, because Ontario is the best place to live and grow and to raise a family, but we also need to be able to house people.

The greater Golden Horseshoe area is expected to grow to approximately 15 million people by 2051. That's why we remain committed to tackling the housing supply crisis.

Parliamentary assistant Rae spoke about the Housing Affordability Task Force in his address earlier this week. The report came out in 2022, with a total of 74 recommendations, and 23 of these recommendations have been fully implemented.

#### 1000

One of the recommendations was to set a bold goal of 1.5 million homes in a span of 10 years. Our government is supporting this goal through initiatives like the Building Faster Fund, which provides incentives for municipalities that meet and exceed their housing targets. This fund can be accessed by the 50 municipalities with assigned housing targets, like my community of Burlington.

Tackling the housing supply crisis is a joint effort that takes all levels of government, including our municipal and federal partners. We welcome the long-awaited decision from the federal government to waive the HST on new, purpose-built rental housing. We look forward to working with the federal government to ensure the increase in purpose-built rental housing and that the HST is waived from qualified buildings.

Municipalities are encouraged to meet their goals by adopting official plans and zoning bylaws that exceed three units per lot. This could be a main residence, a basement apartment or a laneway home. These additional options would make it easier for people to live closer to their families and their jobs, and to remain in their own communities.

The More Homes Built Faster housing supply action plan will help rural communities, cities and towns by increasing a mix of rental housing development like townhomes and mid-rise apartments.

Speaker, I live in a neighbourhood that has mixed development, and this type of neighbourhood works better than most NIMBYs could ever imagine. Interestingly, I was told that I was part of the problem because my home used to be a single-family home that was rebuilt into two residences. But I had the foresight to see that converting larger homes into apartments or towns could be a solution to Ontario's housing supply issue. On the street where I live, there are single-family homes, some large, some very small; there are multi-family homes, like the one that I live in, a semi-detached home; there are condos, and there are rental units, all within a one- to two-block area of where I live. It's neighbourhoods like these with all kinds of housing and developments that encourage density and diversity in population. Unfortunately, not everyone sees this as a good thing.

Our government often references NIMBYism from the other side—"not in my backyard"—but I think we're past that; in my community, we're at the BANANA phase, which is, people don't want to build anything near anyone at any time. That needs to change—and not just in my backyard, in all of our backyards.

The Housing Affordability Task Force recommends ways to reduce NIMBYism by streamlining the approvals process and urban design rules. This, along with eliminating exclusionary zoning, will allow for gentle density, like in the neighbourhood where I live, to make better use of existing infrastructures like multi-family homes.

Our government has given municipalities a number of tools to cut the red tape and to speed up the approval process to build homes faster and to build communities like mine, with different types of housing that will support the growing population of Ontario. This will help my riding and many other ridings in Ontario reach their housing targets, and it will get more shovels in the ground faster.

This is the kind of bold action our government is taking in keeping its promise to build more homes faster. The government is ending the housing drought caused by previous governments that put this province in a housing supply crisis in the first place.

Our government will continue to develop plans to address the housing supply because we know that continued action is necessary to meet the demand. It will take both short-term strategies and long-term solutions, as well as a commitment from all levels of government, to drive the change that Ontario needs. We owe it to future generations, we owe it to our children, to build homes so that they're not moving to other provinces, states and countries because that's where they can afford to live.

This also includes amendments to Ontario's building code to allow encapsulated mass timber buildings to be constructed up to 12 storeys high.

Speaker, the housing supply in Ontario remains a challenge. Our policies are working and delivering results by implementing the recommendations of the Housing Affordability Task Force. We're re-examining the process and looking for new and innovative ways of working to get shovels in the ground and get housing built.

As my colleagues have mentioned before me, in 2022 Ontario saw the second-largest number of housing starts since 1988. That's amazing news, but it has taken 34 years. That's far too long. Years of not building homes, years of saying "not in my backyard" have put us in this current housing supply crisis.

Ontario grew by more than 500,000 people last year, and we need to house these new Ontarians. Our province continues to grow and our economy continues to boom. With that boom we need more homes for workers so they can live near where they work.

Just this year, Volkswagen announced that they will establish an electric-vehicle battery manufacturing facility in St. Thomas. Again, we are attracting businesses from around the globe, businesses that are creating conditions for growth, economic development and job creation. As we attract these new businesses to Ontario we attract workers to good-paying jobs. That's why our population is expected to increase to 15 million people just in the greater Golden Horseshoe area alone.

Ontario is a place where it doesn't matter where you come from, who you love or how you choose to worship—everyone deserves the same opportunity to succeed. We have attracted the world's leading businesses and amazing people who have helped to build the identity of this province. That's why we're ensuring that municipalities across Ontario can build the homes needed to meet their housing targets, homes the people in our province need. I don't think we can sit back and watch as Ontarians are priced out of the market and I don't think we can allow NIMBYs to control the types of housing built in our province.

Our goal is 1.5 million new homes and our government will get it done. We'll achieve this by working together with municipalities and the federal government and staying focused on our commitment, our commitment to the people of Ontario and to future generations, our commitment to the greenbelt.

Our greenbelt is the largest in the world, permanently protecting two million acres of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas like the Oak Ridges moraine, Fourteen Mile Creek and Stoney Creek. Our government is following through on its commitment to restore lands that were originally removed and redesignated. We're adding in more lands, and we will continue to ensure that any future changes to the greenbelt are transparent. Through the Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, if passed, our government will be adding lands to expand and protect the greenbelt and to preserve environmental spaces for future generations.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you as well to the member from Burlington. She talked a lot about unaffordable housing, and we're hearing that from a lot of people for a very long time. But I think the Conservative government really has to reflect on the fact that this bill about protecting the greenbelt from the Conservative government is here because in the last year and

a bit, as they've been working toward rewarding wealthy, well-connected developer friends, they've not done work toward providing housing. Even if this went through—even if they rammed it through and the public wasn't able to catch them and the press wasn't able to provide all the information or the Auditor General—it still wouldn't have led to housing for several years. There is housing that could be built right now that they're not focused on.

I think they need to reflect on this, Speaker. So I would ask the member, why do you need a law to protect the greenbelt from yourselves?

1010

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you to the member for the question. Our government has listened to Ontarians and we're following through on our commitment to restore, to grow and to enhance protections for the greenbelt. That's why this legislation, if passed, would restore all properties that were redesignated or removed from the greenbelt in late 2022. While it restores all properties that were redesignated or removed, the government is proposing to keep the 9,400 acres in the greenbelt that were added in 2022. These include lands in the Paris-Galt moraine and in the urban river valley areas across the GTA.

At the same time, the truth remains that Ontario is growing at an unprecedented speed, with recent projections showing as many as 4 million additional people who will move to Ontario by 2031.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I really enjoyed the member from Burlington's speech. She touched on her "why." Why is she here? It's because she cares about her community and because she cares for her children. The fact of the matter is that I also have a child that's moved out of this province because she can never find a home here.

There's a saying that says, "Shoot for the moon and at least you'll be among the stars." I think one of the reasons why I love working with the Premier so much is because he's not afraid, for the sake of the people of the province of Ontario, to shoot for the moon. And when he has to, he'll apologize and he'll back off, and we see here one of those instances where we need to build housing in the province of Ontario for the sake of our own families and for the people that we care about back home, the 150,000 people that I represent in Brantford-Brant.

I was wondering if the member could speak a little bit more about her "why" and why she's proud to serve with our government and to shoot for the moon, so that at least we could be among the stars.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you to my colleague from Brantford-Brant for the question. I think my answer has two points. One, it's to keep our family close by and to offer the same opportunity to our children that I feel I was afforded as a young person growing up in the province of Ontario.

The other focus, and something that I hear from a lot of business owners in my community, is a struggle to staff and to get employees, and for employees to live somewhat close to where they work. One of the issues that we have



is that we have businesses, we have small manufacturers, we have medium-sized manufacturers, but we don't have workers who can afford to live in the same community or even neighbouring communities.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** We'll move right now to members' statements.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### BARBECUE EVENT IN NEWMARKET–AURORA

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** On Sunday, October 22, I hosted my second-annual community barbecue event for Newmarket–Aurora at Newmarket's Riverwalk Commons. It was an eventful afternoon and I was thrilled to see so many familiar faces while meeting some new ones too from our vibrant community. This event is more than just an opportunity to enjoy good food and fun activities. It is about bringing people together, fostering a sense of unity, building relationships and celebrating the diversity that makes my community so special.

I thank all my community members who came out, from the Chinese to the francophones to the Black community members; the Jewish, Muslim and Christian community members; to the members of the LGBTQ York Pride community. Thank you. And what do we all have in common? It is the desire to live together in peace, celebrating our differences while promoting a life of acceptance, kindness and compassion.

I will continue to proudly serve my constituents and to listen, understand, connect, advocate for them and to work together for the betterment of my community.

### CANADIAN REMEMBRANCE TORCH

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Remembrance Day is fast approaching, and today in the House I'm proud to speak of a recent initiative to help future generations actively remember and honour the sacrifices of all Canadians. This includes those who served and the many who made the ultimate sacrifice in World Wars I and II, the Korean and Afghan wars and the many peacekeeping missions, and to honour those who are serving or have served in Canada's Armed Forces.

The Canadian Remembrance Torch initiative was founded by Karen Hunter, and the torch was designed and built by McMaster engineering students. It was lit on Parliament Hill in September 2022. Its flame was flown by Air Canada to the Netherlands, where Princess Margriet participated in a "passing the torch to the next generation" ceremony.

Throughout 2023, the Canadian Remembrance Torch has participated in many high-profile events across Canada, and in 2024, the torch will participate in D-Day's 80th anniversary commemorations at Juno Beach Centre

in Normandy. Other initiatives of the Canadian Remembrance Torch include a Student TorchBearers Program, a Faces to Names initiative to create a digital archive of all Canadians who have died in war, and peacekeeping missions and community events that take place each year.

The Canadian Remembrance Torch will be passed on to future generations to help communities and students to remember and honour those who have served and are serving so we can live in peace and democracy.

### WINTER ROAD SAFETY

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** As winter approaches, each morning across many areas in all of Ontario, people will wake up to fresh blankets of snow. My riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington is almost 200 kilometres north to south and more than three and a half hours of driving time. The snow hits more in the Maynooth area than it does down on the shores at Bath and Deseronto.

I know that most of my colleagues here in the Legislature will be travelling a lot across their ridings, across this great province, and so this message is for all of you and for all of our constituents. As we come into the colder season, we have a number of important community events coming out. Remembrance Day is around the corner, followed by a great number of Santa Claus parades and festivals of all types. I hope that everyone participating in these events enjoys themselves but, most importantly, I want to take this opportunity to remind people to get prepared.

Winter can sneak up on you, so please, make sure your car is ready: snow tires, full washer fluid, emergency kits. These are obvious and fairly easy to do, and while they might not be needed every time, they are so very important when they are needed. I would also ask you to please take a couple of minutes to warm up the car and fully scrape off those windows. Those few moments can literally save a life.

No matter where you live in Ontario, I hope this winter is filled with cold weather fun and safe arrivals home.

### ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

**M. Guy Bourgoïn:** La saison froide est à notre porte. Elle arrive encore plus vite dans le Nord. Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour mettre à l'attention de tous mes collègues une préoccupation pressante qui touche les résidents du nord de l'Ontario, en particulier ceux qui dépendent des autoroutes 11 et 17 pour leurs déplacements quotidiens.

Plusieurs d'entre vous ne connaissent pas la réalité des routes du Nord. Je vais donc vous dresser un portrait : j'habite à Kapuskasing, une ville d'environ 8 500 habitants. Le matin, comme tous les Ontariens, on va amener nos enfants à l'école, on se rend au travail ou bien on va à nos rendez-vous médicaux.

La plupart d'entre vous utilisent des routes locales pour se retrouver sur l'autoroute lorsque vient le temps de faire de plus grandes distances. Quand vous amenez vos enfants à l'école, vous empruntez des routes pié-

tonnes ou vous utilisez les voitures en utilisant les routes et les boulevards. Vous vous rendez à vos rendez-vous médicaux en transport, en taxi ou bien en voiture en utilisant les routes principales et les grandes artères.

À Kapuskasing, pour toutes les activités quotidiennes, on prend l'autoroute 11. On l'utilise chaque jour. Qui d'autre l'utilise? À peu près tout le monde qui traverse l'Ontario, incluant les transports commerciaux effectués en semi-remorques.

Nos lois actuelles en Ontario manquent d'attention et c'est la réalité. Avec l'hiver qui arrive, c'est le temps de trouver des solutions et de mettre en place des lois pour augmenter la sécurité des autoroutes en Ontario.

### CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

#### UPPER CANADA CHILD CARE

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** After my private member's bill, Bill 157, received royal assent in 2021, I am pleased to recognize Wednesday, November 15, as the second COPD Awareness Day in Ontario. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a progressive but incurable lung disease characterized by a narrowing of the airways that makes breathing increasingly difficult as the disease worsens. I encourage everyone to educate yourself on the risks of COPD and to be proactive in maintaining good lung health.

1020

Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the pleasure of attending the opening ceremony for Upper Canada Child Care's new child care centre at St. Rene Goupil–St. Luke Catholic Elementary School in my riding of Markham–Thornhill, alongside the Minister of Education. As the African proverb goes, "It takes a village to raise a child," and in this case, it truly does. The York region Catholic board, Upper Canada Child Care, dedicated staff, supportive parents, the Ontario government and the federal government have joined forces to provide essential care.

Thank you to the Minister of Education and his leadership, and to our government for investing \$3.9 million in child care, and for making childcare more affordable and accessible for Ontarians.

#### WELLAND FOOD DRIVE

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** This Saturday, November 4, in my riding, the Hope Centre, Open Arms Mission and the Salvation Army will come together for the 32nd annual Welland Food Drive. Residents and businesses able to donate are encouraged to give online or donate food at their doorstep. Once collected, donations are sorted at Club Richelieu.

Welland is grappling with its worst food insecurity crisis in decades. Recently, Jon Braithwaite, CEO of the Hope Centre, said, "More people than ever are facing food insecurity in our community with close to one in 10 Wellanders accessing our food bank in the past 12

months." Open Arms tells me that they are projected to serve over 20,000 people this year.

We're hearing this across Niagara Centre. Port Cares in Port Colborne recently said that their agency has seen its monthly food bank usage soar from over 1,700 people just 15 months ago to a record 2,900 now—nearly one in seven Port Colborne residents, with numbers continuing to escalate.

Speaker, the demand and pressures placed on community food banks has never been greater, but I am proud of how our community is responding. Folks in Welland who want to lend a helping hand can visit [www.wellandfooddrive.com](http://www.wellandfooddrive.com) or their Facebook page, @wellandfooddrive, to learn more. Those looking to volunteer are encouraged to reach out to one of the three food banks.

#### VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Education should be the great equalizer, not the great divider in Ontario. Schools should be a source of hope, not of fear.

Mr. Speaker, I recently met with parents, teachers, teachers' associations and school boards, and one thing that they all said to me was that there has been a noticeable increase in classroom violence. A teacher from my riding recently wrote that, from grade 6 down to kindergarten, classroom violence is present at every level. She has been punched in the face, bit, kicked and hit numerous times by students.

And while classroom violence has increased, the number of educational assistants has decreased. There's a lack of educational assistants, a lack of resources and programs for students with special needs, a lack of mental health supports, and overcrowded classrooms. This has all led to an increase in violence and disruptions in our schools, putting the safety and well-being of our students, our kids and staff at risk. This is absolutely unacceptable in a province as prosperous as Ontario.

I'm calling on the government to reverse its cuts to education and invest that money to keep classrooms safe by hiring more educational assistants, reducing class sizes, expanding special education services, supporting mental health initiatives and bringing character education back to our schools. Let's respect our students and our educators by keeping them safe in the classroom.

#### GOODWILL AMITY POWER OF WORK AWARDS LUNCH

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** I'm happy to rise today to speak up about an upcoming event in my riding. Goodwill Amity's 17th annual Power of Work Awards Lunch is happening this Friday, November 3, in Burlington.

This is an action-packed event filled with inspiring stories and valuable learning opportunities. At this event, we'll come together to celebrate Power of Work Award winners, including two remarkable job-seekers who have triumphed over adversity to achieve their employment

goals, and also celebrate a local employer who has been unwavering in providing exceptional employment support and opportunities to job-seekers in Halton. Work gives people a sense of hope, purpose and confidence.

This event is not just about recognition of leadership in our community, but it's also a chance to connect with friends, community members and business leaders. Together, we make a significant impact and provide a hand up to those facing barriers to employment right in our own community.

Goodwill provides job seekers with access to free workshops, skills training, resumé assistance, job search guidance, mental health resources and basic needs support through Goodwill Amity's employment services in Burlington. Mark your calendars for November 3 and be part of a lunch that not only fills your stomach but also your heart.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** Lest we forget: This powerful phrase first used in Rudyard Kipling's 1897 poem entitled *Recessional*, and became linked with Remembrance Day after the First World War.

Lest we forget: This plea serves as a reminder to all countries to never forget the sacrifices of those who have served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations around the world.

November 11: A day we come together to honour and commemorate those brave men and women who serve and have served our country in times of war. We wear a poppy to remember, as a visual pledge to never forget those who have served and sacrificed. We wear our poppies to support and thank our veterans and members of the armed forces.

Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend three war memorial cenotaph rededication ceremonies. I was fortunate to be present at the Lost Villages Cenotaph rededication in South Stormont, the Van Camp Cenotaph in North Dundas and the Williamsburg Cenotaph rededication in South Dundas. My federal counterpart, MP Eric Duncan, chair of a few committees, worked for over a year to raise money to refurbish and modernize the Mille Roches-Moulinette War Memorial at Lost Villages Museum and the Williamsburg Cenotaph, as well as to raise funds to refurbish the Van Camp Cenotaph in North Dundas. These refurbished cenotaphs will serve the next generation and ensure they remember the sacrifice.

Thank you to veterans for their service. Thank you for your bravery. Thank you for protecting our freedoms. Thank you for your sacrifice. Lest we forget.

### ANTI-SEMITISM

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** In the days and weeks following October 7, my office has received hundreds of messages from constituents expressing their gratitude towards our government for our support of Israel and our recognition of its inalienable right to defend itself and its citizens. A

significant portion of these messages are from constituents who have family members in Israel or are Israeli themselves; almost every one knows someone who has been killed or kidnapped.

Others write and share concerns about what is happening in Canada, in Ontario and Toronto. People are concerned about the protests on our streets, in our schools and on our university campuses that glorify or promote terrorism by waving signs or flags of the Taliban and Hamas, and calling for the gassing of Jews. They are shocked by people who rip down posters of the hostages, including infants as young as nine months old, that Hamas is still holding, and by those who continue to spread misinformation.

On the eve of Remembrance Day, we appear to have forgotten what we once had learned. That's why I was delighted to join Minister Lecce this morning in announcing that lessons on the Holocaust will be expanded in grade 10 history, mandatory in September 2025, and will explicitly link the Holocaust to extreme political ideologies, including fascism, anti-Semitism in Canada in the 1930s and 1940s, and the contemporary impacts of rising anti-Semitism.

We cannot stand for the glorification of terrorism on our streets, and I, and I'm sure all of my colleagues will do everything we can to prevent that.

1030

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a group of grade 9 students participating in the Legislative Assembly's Take Our Kids to Work Day. Please join me in warmly welcoming our students to the Legislature today.

Also in the Speaker's gallery we have some special guests from the riding of Simcoe-Grey: my first cousin Todd Arnott and his daughter, Maile Arnott. Welcome. It's great to have you here.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Today is food bank day of action here at Queen's Park. I want to welcome all food bank representatives here with Feed Ontario, with a special welcome to June Muir of the UHC Hub of Opportunities in Windsor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** In the gallery up there is Brooklyn Mattinson, associate director of regulatory and government affairs at RBC, and her colleague Alanna Sokic, senior manager of provincial and municipal affairs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd like to welcome to the House Karen Hunter, the executive director of the Canadian Remembrance Torch, and Yuvraj Sandhu, a McMaster student and member of the original design team for the Canadian Remembrance Torch.

The torch is in the Legislature today, and if any members would like to get a picture with the Canadian

Remembrance Torch, it will be on the grand staircase after question period.

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** It gives me great pleasure to introduce Dianne Martin and Dickon Worsley. Dianne is the CEO of WeRPN; Dickon is the president of WeRPN. I'd like to thank them for their attendance today and for all the incredible work that their members do to serve patients here in Ontario. Thank you for being here.

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** I want to welcome some guests here from Thunder Bay today: a long-time friend, Amy Kemble, and her daughter, Olivia.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's my pleasure to welcome a number of guests from the great riding of Waterloo today. We have Justice Colin Westman, a.k.a. Santa Claus, for his kindness; Margaret Anne Voll; John Pendergast; and my friends Cheryl and Nige Gordijk, who are community leaders. They're joining us for lunch today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I'm very proud to bring my niece, Peighton Brady, and her friend Bella Argenti to the House today for grade 9 Take Our Kids to Work Day. I'm sure they're hoping that I take them to a big mall on the way home. Welcome to the House.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. Four grade 9 constituents from Markham–Unionville are visiting the Legislature today, including Jasmine Lau; Katelyn Mak; Nicholas Chow; and my son, Simeon Pang; along with my staff Dickson Mak. Welcome to the House.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's bring-your-kids-to-work day, and for some of our staff too. I'm really happy to introduce Nivine Zaher and her son, Moe, and Heather Douglas with her daughter, Evangeline. Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It's a real honour to welcome Elana Harte, Carine Nind, Jessika Kunkle and all the folks from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada to Queen's Park today.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** To complement the member opposite's introductions, in the members' gallery, from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, we have Tim Ross, Courtney Lockhart, Allison Chase, Cassia Kantrow, Mary Ann Hannant and April White. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today, from the Golden Horseshoe Co-operative Housing Federation, Doug Sider, Willy Noiles, Monica Brodeur, Janice Fisher and Lisa Britton. Welcome to your House. Thank you for building homes, and thank you for building community.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I would like to introduce Ms. Zoe Luo from my riding, who is a friend of one of our Sergeants-at-Arms here.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** It's an honour to introduce my staff member Rangina Kargar, who was an MP in Afghanistan before the Taliban came and took over; she had to flee to Canada. She has brought her son, Homan Kargar, to Queen's Park for bring-your-kids-to-work day.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm looking for him, but it's been more than 30 years since I've seen him: He's my former camp director, John Malcolmson. We called him "Malc." He's the executive director for Scleroderma Ontario.

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** I would like to introduce my assistant, Wendy Wei, and my guest, Jimmy Lin, who is a high school student. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'd like to continue, unless there's an objection.

The member for Burlington.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Oh, Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** That's okay. Thank you, Speaker.

I wanted to introduce some residents from Oakville. We have Carole Baxter, who is the Halton District School Board trustee for wards 1 and 2, and her son, Isaac. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome to your House Willy Noiles. He's from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, and he's here today representing the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I personally want to thank you for all your hard work, Willy, that you do on our riding association.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I, too, would like to welcome the members from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park and helping twist some arms to build housing.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** I'd like to welcome representatives from Scleroderma Canada and Scleroderma Ontario who are here today for a series of meetings, and they hosted many earlier this morning for a breakfast.

Please join me in welcoming John Malcolmson, Scott Munnoch, Karol Bedoya-Carvajal, Erin Stanhope, Stephanie Densmore-Farnsworth, Maggie Larche, Tanawan Sukonthapanich, Marta Braga, Jasmeet Kaur, Maureen Sauv , Silvia Petrozza, Scott and Tracey Heard, Hurmat Ahmad, and Nancee and Merle Henry.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I also want to welcome friends from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada: Caroline Chapman, Dawn Richardson, Diana Yoon, Patricia Tessier and Courtney Lockhart from the great riding of Ottawa Centre.

I also want thank the Scleroderma Society of Ontario for a fantastic breakfast this morning and for your wonderful advocacy. Thanks for all you do.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today the Indo-Canadian Council for Arts and Culture, the Toronto Malayalee Samajam and the Indo-Canada Kerala Chamber of Commerce. They are going to be hosting a Kerala Day lunch reception right here in room 228, starting after question period. Everybody is welcome.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I just want to introduce, from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and Feed Ontario, Kimberley Wilhelm and Michelle Rickard; Amy Slack from the Cambridge Food Bank; and Haedin Slack, also from the Cambridge Food Bank. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'd like to welcome Scott Helps, chair of Egg Farmers of Ontario, and its entire provincial board of directors for being here and starting our day off with a wonderful breakfast.

## INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa–Vanier has informed me she has a point of order she wishes to raise.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't realize introductions were finished.

I am seeking unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today.

1040

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Collard is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today. Agreed? Agreed.

## QUESTION PERIOD

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Providing honest testimony under oath is a core principle of justice in this province. I hope that's something we can all agree on. The Premier told the Integrity Commissioner that he was "not immediately familiar" with greenbelt speculator Sergio Manchia because, apparently, he meets thousands of people, he said. Yet senior political staff were texting each other that the Premier "needs to stop calling this guy." My question to the Premier is, what is the nature of his relationship with Sergio Manchia?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As we've said on a number of occasions, and as has been confirmed by both the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General, the Premier of course did not have knowledge of the lands with respect to the greenbelt. But at the same time, I've also been very, very clear that I was unhappy with the political staff involvement with respect to the official plans. That is why I briefed the Premier on it, and he asked me to repeal the provincial changes to those official plans. We've done that, and we're moving forward to make sure that we can build 1.5 million homes by working with our municipal partners. We'll get that job done.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It should have been an easy one to answer, I think, Speaker. But it's not just the phone calls; the Premier testified that he was not involved in any way with site selection of greenbelt removals and his first time viewing them was on November 2, 2022. He further testified that he had no recollection of meeting Mr. Manchia and had no recollection of any conversations with him about the greenbelt. Now we have a new docu-

ment that seems to contradict the Premier's testimony. It shows he had a meeting with Mr. Manchia, the then mayor of Hamilton and the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook on September 20, 2021, where they all agreed to pursue removing lands from the greenbelt.

My question is to the Premier again. Can the Premier confirm he met with Mr. Manchia in 2021 to discuss site-specific greenbelt removals?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this particular individual has been advocating for the removal of those lands from the greenbelt for many, many, many years and has met with every Premier in the entirety that he has held those lands.

We made a decision with respect to the greenbelt that was not accepted by the people of the province of Ontario. That is why we reversed that decision. At the same time, after reviewing the changes to the official plans that were made by the province, the decision was made that there was too much involvement from political staff in that. That's why, after I was given the opportunity to brief the Premier on that, he asked me to repeal the provincial changes. We're doing that.

At the same time, our municipalities will have the opportunity to provide additional comment over the next 45 days to some of the changes that they would like to see in those original official plans that they had provided some years ago.

We will move forward. We will continue to ensure that we can meet our goal of building 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, I'm sorry to say it, but it only gets worse. The Premier says he doesn't remember Mr. Manchia—remember, we just reviewed that—but Mr. Manchia hosted an intimate, \$1,200-a-ticket fundraiser for the Conservative Party at his home, also on September 20, 2021, and the Premier was there. In fact, new reporting indicates that the promise to remove Mr. Manchia's land from the greenbelt happened at that very fundraiser.

To the Premier: Does the Premier remember Mr. Manchia now? Did he provide assurances he would remove greenbelt lands at a private fundraiser for the Conservative Party?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The Premier has been clear that no, he did not. At the same time, that has also been made clear through the Auditor General's report as well as the Integrity Commissioner's report.

At the same time, as I said, this particular gentleman and others who own lands in the greenbelt have been advocating for years to have lands taken out of the greenbelt. They've met with many Premiers and many members of all parties.

We made a public policy decision that was not supported by the people. Ultimately, what we're trying to do

is build 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario. We've reversed the greenbelt decision, Mr. Speaker.

But let me also be very, very clear: We will not stop on our goal of building 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario. We will double down. We will work with our municipal friends to ensure that we build those 1.5 million homes. We will hold our municipal partners accountable, and at the same time we will hold developers and home builders accountable with a new "use it or lose it." We're in a crisis and we will get the job done.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Once again, none of this story is adding up, Speaker.

Back to the Premier: I'm not the only one who is going to be questioning the discrepancy between the Premier's testimony and the growing mountain of evidence. I would bet that the RCMP's special prosecutor, who is investigating the alleged criminal corruption by this government, is going to be interested too.

So I would ask the Premier, would the Premier like to take the opportunity to correct the record?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, as I have said on a number of occasions, we will assist the RCMP, the Integrity Commissioner or anybody who is doing work on this.

At the same time, we are going to continue to move forward on our goal of building 1.5 million homes for the people of the province of Ontario.

Look, Speaker, we are in a housing crisis in the province of Ontario ostensibly because the Liberals and NDP put obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in the way of building homes. We became one of the least enviable jurisdictions in order to do business. In fact, industries that had been the pillar of Ontario's economy for decades had said that they could no longer do business in the province of Ontario.

That all changed in 2018 when we doubled down to ensure that we cut red tape, that we reduce taxes for our small, medium and large job creators, that we reduce taxes for families, making life more affordable for them. It is the Liberals and the NDP who stand against families and stand against affordability. We're going to do all that we can to improve the economy and keep it growing.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, Speaker, they've replaced that red tape with brown envelopes and USB keys.

The Premier also testified that he had no conversations—no conversations—about the Gormley GO station area prior to November 4, 2022. But minutes from a meeting on October 13, three weeks earlier, say, "Gormley—decision on areas is with the Premier's office right now" and goes on to say, by the way, the "Premier doesn't understand [the lands are] in the Oak Ridges moraine."

Back to the Premier: Could he clarify his testimony?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I said yesterday, I actually campaigned—it's online—in two elections to have the Gormley lands taken out of the greenbelt and made available for Whitchurch-Stouffville to develop. Of course, the Premier, on both occasions when I've advocated for it, said, "Absolutely not." He has turned me down on both occasions. The Gormley lands were never taken out of the greenbelt.

The mayor of Stouffville asked for them to be redesignated as part of the official plan. The region of York pulled that out, Mr. Speaker, and that's where we're at.

It is so important that we continue to build on our goal of 1.5 million—they're going to stand in the way of all of it. It's no secret, right? They're against ministerial zoning orders that build social housing in their ridings. They're against ministerial zoning orders that build long-term care. They're literally against everything that is moving the province forward.

They have cornered the market on saying no. We have cornered the market on building a bigger, better and stronger province of Ontario, and we'll double down to do it.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, those lands were redesignated, and the minister knows that.

The Premier testified he was not involved in any way with site selection before November 2, 2022. He repeated the same claims to the media just yesterday. But now we know he was discussing a site-specific removal with Mr. Manchia a year earlier, and we just keep finding more evidence: meeting notes that say the Premier's Office wants this done, that the Premier's Office asked for a picture to make sure it's captured.

To the Premier: Does he still expect people to believe that he wasn't involved from the start?

*Interjections.*

1050

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, both the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General have confirmed the same, so I would suggest to the members opposite that if they don't have faith in either of those two officers of Parliament, they should table a motion in front of this House saying that they don't have confidence in either of those two—

*Interjection.*

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

The member for Hamilton Mountain will withdraw her unparliamentary remarks.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Withdraw.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

Restart the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the floor.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll conclude by saying this: Today, I was joined by the Minister of Finance in Toronto, where we announced that the province of Ontario will be eliminating the HST, so a 13% tax, on purpose-built rentals. Do you know what they're doing there? Two towers—I think 26 and 21 floors—of rental housing for the people of Toronto.

That is just the start. We are seeing purpose-built rentals at record levels in this province—record levels. For the past 30 years, they have never hit the targets that they are hitting today. And that's what we continue to do: double down on policies that bring housing to the people of the province of Ontario. They're against it; we'll remove the obstacles and remove the taxes—

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

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I guess, Speaker, they just want to drag this all out.

An internal document from this week's latest pile of evidence discusses a change to York region's official plan that would reclassify 29 hectares of Vaughan lands owned by the Milani family and designate it for future development. These lands are also located within the Oak Ridges moraine in the greenbelt. The document includes commentary from Ryan Amato, who reportedly said that the Premier's Office "wants this done."

So this question is to the Premier: Why did his office want this done?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** What we want done is we want to build more homes for the people of the province of Ontario, full stop. We don't want to drag anything on. We want to get down to the business of building more homes for the people of the province of Ontario. That's why we've brought policies to this House to do just that. That's why they have voted against every single one of those measures.

When the Minister of Finance brings in a bill to reduce, to eliminate taxes on purpose-built rentals, they will vote against it. When the Minister of Infrastructure brings a bill forward to build transit faster, they vote against it. When we bring a bill that would build homes around transit—transit-oriented communities—they vote against it. When we bring a bill forward to eliminate the lowest-income earners from tax rolls, they vote against it. When the minister brought in a bill to increase ODSP rates and to put it towards inflation, to mark it towards inflation, they vote against it.

They vote literally against everything. They stand for literally nothing, and that is why that party is so divided and spending more time fighting each other—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

The final supplementary.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's not about building homes; it's about who gets government favours just because they're Conservative insiders.

Late last year, the former minister added a "special provision" to York's official plan just so those specific greenbelt lands could be developed. And remember, those lands were owned by the Milani family. The Milani family and their companies have donated more than \$100,000 to the Conservative Party over the last 10 years.

So Speaker, I need to ask, to the Premier: What is the going rate for a lucrative land deal in this province?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** An odd question, since the member for St. Catharines announced somebody who is here with the co-op housing federation who serves on her electoral district association. I'm sure that person is doing really good work on behalf of the association that he represents, and also good work for the party. You can have it both ways.

But what we're doubling down on is this: building more homes for the people of the province of Ontario, eliminating red tape so that we can get more shovels in the ground, eliminating taxes so that we can have more purpose-built rentals—ensuring that the people of the province of Ontario can share in the exact same dream that millions of people who came to this country have always had: the dream of home ownership.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the party opposite—they're against immigration; they're against building homes; they're against working people.

The member for Sudbury can't get the smile off his face, because he voted against the miners in his own community time and time again.

If it was up to them, our economy would sink, there would be no homes built, and the people would only rely on government.

We want the—

*Interjections.*

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

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Will Bouma:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. The carbon tax is driving up the cost of utilities, as it is driving up the cost of everything. People across our province are struggling, and life is more unaffordable today because of the imposition of the federal carbon tax. Sadly, many individuals and families are worried about how to pay for home heating and are forced to make decisions.

Businesses and organizations are also feeling the same pressure from the carbon tax. They worry about their financial future and the ability to continue to provide goods and services to the people in their communities.

Can the minister please explain the financial impact the carbon tax increases are having on the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** I think the one thing we can agree on is that there's an affordability crisis across Canada right now, and it's because of the carbon tax.

What did the federal Liberal government do last week? They carved out their staple policy, the carbon tax—but only in Atlantic Canada—off home heating oil, which affects 2.5% of Ontario residents; over 70% are using natural gas. The carbon tax is adding \$300 on a natural gas bill; it's adding \$250 on propane users' bills across the province.

We've been doing everything we can, on this side of the House, to make sure that life is more affordable, just yesterday, the Minister of Finance and the Premier announcing that we are extending the gasoline rebate to 10 cents a litre until mid-next year.

While we're doing that, the feds are continuing to drive up the cost of gasoline by 14 cents a litre this year with the carbon tax, and plan to triple it over the next number of years.

We're working closely with the federal government. Let us help you get this right. Reduce the carbon tax.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's clear from the minister's response that our government has always been a steadfast opponent of the federal carbon tax.

However, the negative impact of the carbon tax cannot be overstated. I receive emails and calls from constituents sharing how the price of gas and food has dramatically increased, creating daily hardships. Drivers are forced to pay more at the pumps because of the carbon tax.

While our government has showed much-needed leadership and reduced the gasoline tax, sadly, the federal government has not. Instead, they increased fuel and gasoline costs by 14 cents, forcing individuals, families and businesses to pay more, all because of the carbon tax.

Can the minister please explain what action needs to be taken to respond to the negative impact that the federal carbon tax is having on the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks again to the member opposite for the question.

It's obviously impacting the price of everything that we buy, from gasoline at the pumps to our home heating fuels to the groceries in our grocery stores. It's costing more because of the federal carbon tax. And as we heard earlier this week from the governor of the Bank of Canada, it's also having a massive impact on inflation.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's Groundhog Day.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite from the Liberal Party knows exactly what happens when bad energy policy is presented. His party was reduced to a minivan party in not just one election but two elections. I'm concerned for the federal Liberal Party, under Justin Trudeau—that they're heading down the same bumpy road, that they're going to be reduced to a minibus party if they don't do the right thing.

Work with us. Help us help you, and reduce the carbon tax on everything, everywhere—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Help the Premier write another letter.

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

Next question.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, as reported by the Trillium today, last year the former Minister of Municipal Affairs approved amendments to Peel's official plan that would allow the development of a golf course located inside the greenbelt fingers in Caledon. The beneficiaries of this change include Michael Rice and members of the De Gasperis family. The Auditor General found that the ministry gave Mr. Rice and the De Gasperis family preferential treatment when their lands were removed from the greenbelt last year.

1100

Speaker, my question is, did they also receive preferential treatment when the former minister approved these changes to Peel's official plan?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform the NDP where the public's mind is. The public's mind is about the high mortgage rates—that people are losing their houses because of mortgage rates. They're concerned about the high gas prices, and that's why yesterday's announcement was massive: deducting 10 cents per litre off each litre of gas. I know you don't believe in driving cars. I know you guys don't. You don't believe in building roads and highways and bridges. We know that, because you vote against it every single time. We believe in getting rid of the tolls on the 412 and 418, but you don't believe in building any roads and highways, as I said. But you also don't believe in building long-term care. You don't believe in building hospitals, because you vote against us on every single issue.

My friends in the mining—by the way, I'm heading up to Sudbury to do another robocall to tell the people of Sudbury their own member doesn't support the mining industry—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. The Premier will take his seat.

I'll remind the House to make their comments through the Chair and that when the Speaker rises, you sit.

Start the clock. Supplementary question.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, do you know what people are thinking across this province? How they're going to keep a roof over their heads. They want transparency and accountability from this Premier and this government.

Speaker, this change to Peel's official plan was requested by Quinto Annibale, who is the Premier's hand-picked LCBO vice-chair and major PC donor. Mr. Annibale, along with Michael De Gasperis, was also involved in Vaughan Working Families, whose illegal ad campaign against teachers triggered an RCMP investigation just two years ago. And Michael Rice had hired another friend of the Premier, Nico Fidani-Diker, to lobby



in support of projects in Caledon and Peel. Mr. Fidani-Diker attended the Premier's daughter's wedding reception just last year.

Speaker, the question is, did the Premier or any of his staff direct ministry officials concerning this change to Peel's official plan?

*Interjections.*

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

The Premier.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, unless the NDP didn't notice, we pulled that back. I apologized to the province. We're moving forward.

But that member who just spoke, from Scarborough, maybe she should focus on Scarborough. She voted against the brand-new hospital we're building for Scarborough. She voted against the subway that people have been awaiting for decades out in Scarborough. She voted against the long-term care we're putting out in Scarborough. Maybe she should get her priorities straight and focus on what people are concerned about right now, and that's pocketbook issues.

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The carbon tax imposed by the federal government is negatively impacting the people and businesses of Ontario. The carbon tax raises the price on everything, especially for businesses and manufacturers that have no choice but to either take a financial hit or pass the costs on to consumers.

Our government understands that lowering taxes actually increases revenue, creates jobs and boosts the economy. Unfortunately, the independent Liberals and opposition NDP are working against affordability. They continue to support the carbon tax and vote against measures our government has implemented to help businesses start and grow.

Speaker, can the minister please share his views on how the carbon tax impacts Ontario's businesses?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, when we speak to companies all across the globe, they're so excited by what Ontario has to offer. It's our educated workforce. It's our low business costs. It's our innovative ecosystem—all of this and so much more. But the one concern they all bring up, because they don't understand this, is this federal carbon tax. We look at neighbours in the US: \$460 billion in two-way trade, and they ask us, "What the heck is this carbon tax that you have?" They want to think twice about investing and expanding in Ontario. Simply put, this carbon tax has stifled our growth across our economy. Every business, in every sector, has seen their costs go up because of this terrible carbon tax.

Speaker, our message to the federal government is very simple: Get rid of this tax.

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** The minister is absolutely right. Ontario can boast about the many successes we've witnessed in our province due to lowering the cost of doing business. A carbon tax never creates jobs and never provides more affordability. Its only purpose is to punish Ontario families and businesses.

Only one member from the Liberal caucus understood the negative impacts of the carbon tax and joined us in fighting to lower prices for all Ontarians. It's time for the rest of the Liberal members who are still saying no to our motion to remove the carbon tax, to do the right thing, do it now and vote to scrap it.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate how our economy can thrive without the need for a harmful, costly and unfair carbon tax?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Our government has proved that you can fight for the environment while keeping costs low. We reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion a year, and that has brought \$27 billion worth of EV business here in Ontario in three years. Those investments are to provide our end-to-end electric vehicle supply chain. So we are going to be producing every component of clean, emission-free EVs right here in Ontario.

Speaker, we are at the centre of environmental progress here in Ontario. Unfortunately, the federal government has taken the opposite approach. Their crushing carbon tax is making everything more expensive while doing absolutely nothing to fight climate change. We want them to scrap that tax today.

#### GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Joel Harden:** My question is to the Premier. For weeks on this side of the House, we have demanded that the government fire Mr. Phil Verster, CEO of Metrolinx, because of the many failures under his watch, but this gentleman earns \$1 million a year and he's just had his contract renewed for three years.

But yesterday, we learned that the government has removed Janet Ecker, a former Tory cabinet minister, from the Metrolinx board in the middle of her term. Reports suggest that it was due to a column she wrote that criticized the "chaotic decision-making process" that led to the greenbelt fiasco.

Speaker, to the Premier: What message is he trying to send? Is it that the Premier can excuse gross incompetence with Mr. Verster, but criticism will not be tolerated?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Since being appointed Minister of Transportation, I'm seeking a refresh at the Metrolinx board, and with that, we have one of the largest transit expansion plans in the history of this province and also in North America: \$70 billion over the next 10 years. Let the record show that the members opposite have voted against each and every single one of those investments, whether it's building the Ontario Line, which will move over 400,000 people every single day—they voted against that—whether it's the Scarborough subway extension

which, for years under the previous Liberal government, was talked about with no action.

Under the leadership of this Premier, we have shovels in the ground. We're going to continue to do whatever we can to build transit across this province.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Back to the Premier: I heard what my friend just said over there about a refresh at Metrolinx. Let's be clear: The refresh was restricted to one board member, and that one board member, on September 26, wrote an op-ed criticizing this government's internal culture, and then she was removed from the Metrolinx board. But Mr. Verster still has his job. He makes \$1 million a year while he's presiding over failure, and we have serious transit issues in Ontario. We actually have a \$500-million hole in operating funding across transit agencies in Ontario. Fares are going up and service is getting worse.

1110

Will this government get serious about the transit system we have—not the systems they want to exist some day; the buses and trains and streetcars we have—and make sure that they get the \$500 million that they need, they fire Mr. Verster right now and insist we get our transit system back on track?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Transportation can reply.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** The members opposite in the official opposition have done nothing to support transit in this province. When we came forward with record and historic investments to support transit systems across this province during the pandemic, the members opposite voted against that. When we put forward these historic investments to build and continue to maintain these transit projects across the province, the members opposite voted against that. Whether it be the Ontario Line for the people of Toronto, the Scarborough Subway Extension, the Hazel McCallon Line LRT in Mississauga and in Brampton, or the new extensions, the Finch West LRT, the members opposite, every single time, when given the chance to stand up to build a world-class transit system across the province, have always stood in the way of progress.

We will not take any lessons from the official opposition on how to build transit. We're going to continue to move forward on a \$70-billion plan over the next 10 years to make—

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

## MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** We know from the sound work of the Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner on the \$8.3 billion greenbelt scandal that this government has been meddling in land development processes to benefit their friends. The government is now under

criminal investigation by the RCMP for potential wrongdoing related to these development changes.

The public knew and opposition members knew from the beginning that the greenbelt changes and municipal boundary changes smelled bad. Similarly, changes to Toronto's Midtown in Focus plan smell bad too. The midtown plan for Toronto, developed with extensive consultation, was thrown out by this government without any consultation with the city or its residents.

My question to the Premier: Given the government's track record of political interference in land development, can the Premier assure the people of Don Valley West and Toronto that there was no political meddling in the decision to overturn the Midtown in Focus plan, yes or no?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** We are working with the city of Toronto, actually, very closely with respect to their official plan. We're also working with them on a host of other issues; issues that, frankly, have been brought on by the member's federal party—a federal party that refuses to pay for its share of services in the city of Toronto. We have shelters that are bursting at the seams because of the policies of the federal Liberal government.

This finance minister and this Premier have stepped up to the plate and are providing funding to the city of Toronto. The federal government has yet to match that funding, as they should be doing. We are working very closely with the city of Toronto, as I said, on its official plan. We are working very closely with them. The Minister of Finance is leading a team to ensure that we can address some of the challenges that they are facing, ostensibly because of policies of the federal Liberal government.

So if the member wants to be helpful, she can call 1-800-Justin and help them see the light so that we—

*Interjections.*

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Once again, we get empty rhetoric, spin-doctoring and pointing to our federal partners instead of a serious response to a serious question about this government's ethics and decisions.

My community had a plan in place to ensure thoughtful, deliberate density, but now the proposed developments in my community have big signs from the TDSB and Catholic school board warning future residents that their children will be unable to go to school in their own communities. That's not responsible development, it's not good for community building and it's not good for safety.

City staff, residents and elected officials did not ask for this change to the official midtown plan; in fact, quite the opposite. They continue to be shocked and outraged by the irresponsible development taking place in my community.

Once again, I will ask the Premier through you: Who advised him to overturn the Midtown in Focus plan, eliminating height restrictions and increasing the underlying value of the real estate, and are they the same people who stand to profit from these changes?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** There you have it, Mr. Speaker. There you have it from the Liberals right there: Not in my backyard. That is what 15 years of Liberal government brought to the province of Ontario. The member's own question is against building homes in her community and that is why we are in a housing crisis. When you put their NIMBYism on top of their NIMBYism, the radicalness of the NDP with the inability of the Liberals to ever accomplish anything, you have a housing crisis.

Do you know what we're doing? We're untying the mess. But it's even more than that. It's high interest rates. Why? Because of policies of the Liberals. We had a Liberal cabinet minister on TV the other day say that the only reason that there's tax relief from the carbon tax in Atlantic Canada is because Liberal members there said something about it. So why don't the Liberals here and the Liberals MPs in Ontario say something about it and do something to bring more affordability to the people of Ontario instead of sitting on your butts and doing—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. Stop the clock. Members will take their seats. The House will come to order so we can continue question period.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Brantford—Brant would like to place his question, if his colleagues will allow him.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The opposition will come to order.

Start the clock: The member for Brantford—Brant.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The carbon tax is hurting our farmers, hurting our families and hurting our businesses. The carbon tax raises the price of everything, especially for our businesses, who have no choice but to either absorb the loss or pass on the cost to their customers.

The massive cost of the carbon tax is unsustainable for the people of Ontario. The carbon tax's effects are widespread, including negative impacts to industries in the natural resources sector. Any barrier that creates delays and financial hardships in this sector negatively impacts Ontario's growth and economic prosperity.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax has impacted the natural resources, forestry and wood sectors here in Ontario?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Thank you to the member for the question. It's an important question because the carbon tax does impact lumber; it does impact the forestry sector.

I got a letter the other day from the president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, and here's what they said: "The next scheduled increase of the federal carbon tax on April 1 will have significantly damaging impacts on our sector. Fuel costs impact every stage of the supply chain

within the economy and have compounding negative effects on industry competitiveness."

Now, let's think about that. Let's think about the contractor getting in his truck to drive to the forest to do his work—paying carbon tax. Let's think about the equipment used to take down a tree—more carbon tax. Let's think about the trucks that take the logs out of the bush—more carbon tax. Let's think of the milling process—more carbon tax. Let's think of getting the lumber to market—more carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, this tax has got to go. We've got to scrap the tax. It's in the cost of every new home in Ontario.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Speaker, do you know what the worst part about the carbon tax is? That it's only going to get worse. The federal government, independent Liberals and opposition NDP want to nearly triple this regressive tax by 2030. This means fuel prices will increase, creating a chain reaction of rising costs throughout the economy. For example, the price to move and process lumber will go up. This will cause the price of transporting two-by-fours to the store to also increase.

Ontario companies, especially those in rural, remote and northern communities, are already struggling every single day to stay competitive and viable due to many fiscal pressures.

**1120**

In this time of economic and affordability uncertainty, let's not tax Ontarians more. Speaker, can the minister please share further details regarding how the carbon tax negatively impacts Ontario's natural resources sector and our entire economy?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** You know, Speaker, I had the chance to talk about the forestry sector, but let's talk about the aggregate sector too, something that is needed to build Ontario, and look at the different ministries down the line here that need aggregates to get their projects done. Every single load of those aggregates is subjected to carbon tax. The Minister of Health wants to build new hospitals—carbon tax. The Minister of Transportation wants to build new roads—carbon tax. The Minister of Infrastructure has myriad projects she wants to build—more carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, the resources that we need to build Ontario are subject to a carbon tax that has got to stop. We have got to scrap this tax. The members opposite know it. They've heard this message time and time again from Ontarians. They do nothing. They've got to do something to help Ontarians.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. For nearly two years now, the Ford government has refused to give Toronto the green light to move ahead with inclusionary zoning, which would require developers to build some affordable homes in new big developments.

This feels like a double standard. We've got the government letting lobbyists quickly rewrite official plans

to benefit their speculator friends, but at the same time this government is dragging its heels on making sure developers do their part to solve the affordable housing crisis.

So this is my question to the Premier: When will this government stop blocking Toronto's inclusionary zoning law and allow the construction of much-needed affordable homes?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Well, Speaker, we're working very closely with the city of Toronto on its official plan, but we just heard from the member from Don Valley, who doesn't want to build homes in her community. The member from University-Rosedale, who is in agreement with us that more lands needed to be opened up with respect to building more homes—I'm delighted to hear that she, unlike her leader and her party, agrees with us that we need to build more homes and we need to do it in a different fashion.

Actually, I was just in the member's community announcing two towers of rental housing—I think over 600 units of purpose-built rental housing. Do you know why that's getting done? I'm glad you asked, Mr. Speaker. The reason that that is getting done is because this Premier and that finance minister fought tooth and nail with the federal government to remove the HST from purpose-built rentals. And do you know what that means? That means thousands of dollars in savings per unit, which is unleashing critical purpose-built rental housing like never before. We're at the highest starts in over 30 years because of the policies of this government that that member continuously votes against.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is back to the Premier. Toronto has been waiting nearly three years for the government to approve the 59-home supportive housing project at 175 Cummer Avenue in Willowdale. As they wait for the approval of these already-constructed homes, they currently sit empty in a warehouse and the city of Toronto is spending a million dollars a year paying for that warehouse to keep them in storage. At the same time, this project at 175 Cummer is facing opposition from a Conservative donor who is building luxury homes across the street. So you say yes to luxury homes, but when it comes to supportive housing, crickets.

When will this government give the green light to build these supportive housing homes in Willowdale so we can house people who have no home at all?

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to reply.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** You can't make this stuff up from these guys. This is the same member and party that yesterday were railing against the MZOs that are building socialized housing in their community, right? I think there are six MZOs that we gave to build affordable housing in their community, and the members opposite don't want it to happen. Now, all of a sudden, they want it to happen.

So what is it? You actually want housing or you don't want housing? They're so busy fighting with each other, they have no idea what it is that they're asking for. The Liberals have no idea. The member for Don Valley doesn't want to build housing. This member wants to build it sometimes, but maybe not all the time.

The only party that the people of the province of Ontario can rely upon to get the job done is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario: four housing supply action plans, purpose-built rental housing at its highest level in 30 years, housing starts at their highest level in over 15 years. The people of the province of Ontario know a Progressive Conservative government will give them a bigger, better, stronger Ontario and—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

The next question.

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** There are more than 100,000 children living in poverty in Ontario. There are more than 12,000 Ontario children on a surgery wait-list in Ontario. There are more than 60,000 children on the Ontario Autism Program wait-list for therapy and services in Ontario. With just a fraction of \$8.3 billion, these children could be helped. But it's not just the greenbelt; now this government has decided to spend \$650 million on a parking garage for a privately owned exclusive spa.

My question to the Premier: Can you possibly explain how this government's priorities are so skewed toward privileged insiders and friends instead of Ontario's children?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** This is a member who sat in Ottawa and voted in favour of a carbon tax. Who does the carbon tax serve? We've heard from experts now that it is hurting every single Canadian—every single Canadian. We've heard about skyrocketing food prices. Why? Because of a carbon tax that that member voted in favour of.

She's sitting in a caucus where they accomplished literally nothing. Did they build hospitals in Ottawa? No, Mr. Speaker. Did they build transit or transportation in Ottawa? No. Did they build long-term care? No. In the member's own riding, we are building more long-term care than they built in the entire province of Ontario. That is the record of this government.

I say to the member opposite, do us a favour, call your former colleagues in Ottawa—the ones who are sitting on their hands, along with your caucus here—and ask them to do what the Atlantic Canadian Liberal MPs did: Demand that the carbon tax be removed. If they do that, we'll get progress and it's not just us fighting for the people of Ontario—

*Interjections.*

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

It's continuing to be very noisy in here so I'm going to start calling out members by name if they are interjecting.

Start the clock. The supplementary question.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon:** The minister's answer completely ignores the hundreds of thousands of children in need in Ontario.

Speaker, the children of Ontario deserve a government acting in their best interest. The greenbelt scandal, the criminal investigation, the Ontario Place scandal, the MZO scandal—it all serves the best interests of select insiders.

How many RCMP criminal investigations, how many scandals, how many betrayals before this government starts governing for the people of Ontario instead of governing for their rich and privileged friends?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** The members of the Liberal caucus should be the last to talk about integrity when they were facing multiple investigations and charges. I would just point that out.

When it comes to support for children and youth and families across this province, it's been this government, it's been this Premier—we just recently announced \$330 million in pediatric support thanks to the Minister of Health. We increased funding to the Student Nutrition Program so that no student is left hungry in our schools. We doubled the Ontario Autism Program funding by \$300 million and further increased it by 10% again this year. Why? Because none of these were done by the previous Liberal government. And the NDP, when they had the opportunity, the balance of power—

*Interjections.*

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

The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Start the clock. The member for Mississauga–Erin Mills.

1130

## TAXATION

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** It was surprising and unexpected to hear a federal cabinet minister state that provinces that are looking for relief from the carbon tax should elect more Liberal MPs. I could hardly believe it. This is unheard of. In fact, it was a shocking admission by the federal government about the lack of respect for the concerns of the people of Ontario and other provinces across our country.

The reality is that we can see the negative impact that the carbon tax is having on the cost of everyday essential items that people need. While Ontarians struggle to cope with high costs, politics is not the answer to address affordability issues.

Speaker, can the minister please share what our government is doing to continue to reduce costs for all Ontarians?

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thank you very much, to the member opposite, for the question. Just yesterday, the Premier was out talking about the fact that we're extending the gas tax rebate by 10 cents a litre. We know that the federal carbon tax is driving that up by 14 cents a litre every year.

Our government is the one that removed licence plate sticker fees, saving motorists all across the province a significant amount of money every year. That's something that the federal government can't get their hands on, so that was a tangible thing that's in the pockets of the people of Ontario.

The Ontario Electricity Rebate, which was announced a couple of weeks ago, is reducing the cost of electricity for customers all across the province by 15% to 17%. That's farmers, small businesses and homeowners. And we also have the CER, which reduces the cost of electricity for our industrial customers.

It was very disheartening on Thursday last week when the Prime Minister came out and announced a carve-out from the carbon tax for only Atlantic Canadians.

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

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I share the minister's views that the federal government has created confusion and is, unfortunately, sowing division. Clearly, this approach works against the best interest of Ontarians.

Further, the independent Liberals and opposition NDP are out of touch when it comes to understanding the hardships facing the people of Ontario because of the carbon tax. The people of Ontario are struggling with the rising costs of food, fuel and everyday essential items because of this regressive and harmful tax.

Our government has a strong record of successful measures that can make life more affordable. It's time for the federal government to reconsider this approach and act in the best interests of all Ontarians by eliminating the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the detrimental carbon tax is affecting the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** We've heard from cabinet ministers and members of provincial Parliament from the Progressive Conservative caucus again this morning about the impact that the federal carbon tax is having on aggregates, the impact that it's having on the forestry sector, the impact that it's having on the agricultural sector, and on economic development. In spite of all the harm that that federal carbon tax is doing to residents in Ontario, we're continuing to see our economy thrive because we have cut taxes, we have cut fees, and we have created an environment in Ontario for multi-billion dollars of new investment in the electric-vehicle sector, in the EV battery sector.

Green steelmaking, Mr. Speaker: We have a great track record on reducing emissions and reducing the cost of business, and putting Ontario back on the map. But the federal government has to come to the table and realize that they're not just hurting Atlantic Canadians, they're hurting Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and that includes here in Ontario. It's time to scrap the tax.

## DENTAL CARE

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** My question is to the Premier. New Democrats know that dental care is health care. All Ontarians should have access to timely dental care with their OHIP card, not a credit card.

Heather, who lives in Windsor, was told there was a year-long wait-list for her to see a dentist through the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program. After seven months, she received a call to tell her she no longer qualified for the program because she makes too much money. Heather makes \$90 over the \$22,200 income limit for seniors, a situation many seniors in my riding and across the province are experiencing.

Speaker, when will the Conservatives prioritize seniors' health care and increase the income limit for the seniors dental care program?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite because there is no doubt that while Ontario is leading Canada in providing coverage for our individuals most in need, whether that is through dental care programs in our school programs or through our public health units, more needs to be done. It is exactly why in the last fall economic statement we made an additional investment of \$17 million. We'll continue to make sure that those investments ensure that patients and individuals like your constituent across Ontario get access.

But there is no doubt, as the federal government tinkers with what they are going to do with the dental plan federally, giving that uncertainty frankly leads to confusion within the provincial-territorial conversations as we try to manage a program that we have done very well in the past. We need to have a federal partner who understands where they're going so that we can match.

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

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** While the Minister of Health deflects to the federal government, food bank usage here in Ontario has increased; homelessness has increased; opioid overdoses have increased; ER closures have increased; code reds and code blacks for paramedics have increased under your government, not the federal government—your responsibility.

Speaker, Heather's income is well below the poverty line, yet the Conservatives think she earns too much and doesn't deserve dental care. Francis Hart had a similar experience with the seniors dental program. Francis hadn't seen a dentist for years because he couldn't afford to. In July, after waiting months for an appointment through the government's program, Francis had to have all of his upper teeth removed. He was told to come back in a few months for dentures. When he returned, he was told he no longer qualified for the program. The government basically said, "Tough luck. Either live on liquids or live in even deeper poverty by earning less."

My question is, when will the Premier stop treating dental care as a luxury that seniors must try to save up for or go without?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The \$17-million investment that was a result of the fall economic statement, of course, the NDP opposite voted against it. But I'm going to give you some very specific examples of what that investment purchased because frankly, if you have not seen it in your own community, you should make the effort to; I have. That investment supports new and renovated dental clinics and the procurement of additional mobile dental buses, including in Windsor, to connect more seniors to the care they need closer to home.

As I said, we will continue to make those investments. I just wish that the member opposite and the NDP would start to support those investments, and then we can work together. In the meantime, we'll get the job done.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Since the introduction of the carbon tax, production costs for farmers like Graham Green of Abby Hill Farms in Richmond, greenhouse growers like Devon and Ben Allin of SunTech Greenhouses in Manotick and food processors all across the province have risen substantially. The delivery of every single consumer good in our province, particularly fresh and processed food, is being affected by one of the most economically harmful taxes our province has ever seen.

The carbon tax harms hard-working individuals, businesses and farmers. It provides absolutely no value other than taking money from families. The carbon tax increases the cost of transporting inputs like seed, fertilizer and packaging and drives up the cost of transporting fruits and vegetables to market.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what impact this harmful and regressive tax is having on our agricultural sector?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I appreciate the question very much, because it allows me, in this House, to stand up and speak on behalf of Ontario farmers. They've told me over the last couple of weeks that cost of production this year alone has jumped 20% to 30%. That translates into horrendous prices at the grocery store.

**1140**

You know, a farmer told me once that he can manage fluctuations in commodity prices; he can adapt to changing weather conditions, but what worries him and keeps him up at night is bad ideology. And let me tell you very clearly, there's no worse ideology than the Liberal carbon tax.

We need to face the facts: Right now, the carbon tax is at a rate of \$65 per tonne. Under the Liberal federal government, in six short years, they want to see that rate increase to \$170 per tonne. We can't afford life under the federal Liberal government now, and their carbon tax—

God help us all if that Liberal federal government is allowed to continue. We need to scrap that tax—

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

Supplementary question.

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** The reality is, under the carbon tax system, farmers, processors and grocers are forced to raise their prices because of this harmful and regressive tax. In 2022 alone, Ontario's greenhouse growers were assessed and forced to pay an additional \$12 million under the federal carbon tax regime. This resulted in a tax of approximately \$3,400 per acre on fresh fruits and vegetables. This is unacceptable and simply not fair.

Unlike the independent Liberals and opposition NDP, who are content with hurting our farmers by supporting this regressive carbon tax, we believe that Ontario-grown food must remain on the shelves without interruption.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain why our food producers are being punished with a carbon tax?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I agree with the member opposite. Our farmers throughout Ontario are being punished by a ridiculous Liberal ideology that is driving this carbon tax to increase the cost of production and ultimately the cost of everything, and it is unsustainable.

Do you know what's really worrisome for me? That ideology is being sustained, because just last week, Liberal-leaning senators absolutely gutted C-234. That was a bill that would have seen farmers exempted for heating barns and drying grains and oil seeds. That would have saved hundreds of millions of dollars across this province and Canada. Quite frankly, with that gutting of C-234, cost of production is going to continue to rise.

Ladies and gentlemen, do the honourable thing. Join our government and stand up against bad Liberal ideology that's doing nothing but driving up the cost of living in—

*Interjections.*

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

Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

The next question.

#### PROSTATE CANCER

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier. Today is the first day of Movember, when people across the world raise awareness of health issues affecting men, such as prostate cancer.

In 2022, close to 25,000 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer, and close to 5,000 lost their lives. Those are our dads, our brothers, our uncles and our grandparents. Early prevention and detection saves lives—100% of men live five years with early detection—but this government voted down my motion to expand PSA testing for prostate cancer, which is critical to early detection.

It's been nearly a year since the Conservatives voted down my motion. Since then, 4,600 men have died.

Eight provinces and three territories cover the cost of the test, and nine in 10 Canadians support increased government health care spending on the test for early detec-

tion. Why are the Conservatives ignoring the recommendation of doctors, experts and patients with prostate cancer by refusing to cover the PSA test as men die every single day?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I know this is an issue that is very important to the member opposite, as it is to all of us in this chamber. We will continue to follow that clinical guidance.

But I do agree that early detection is so important, which is why I was so proud to be able to stand earlier this week and announce that mammograms for women 40 to 50 are going to be available for self-referral. It truly is all about early detection and empowering individuals to make decisions based on their health. We'll continue to work with clinical advice and experts to make sure that as we move forward, those types of decisions, when they are appropriate, will be announced.

#### 4-H ONTARIO

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has a point of order.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Today I would like to thank everyone who has worn green in support of support of 4-H across this province of Ontario. Wearing green shows that we care about the leadership development of our rural youth. Thank you very much.

Please join us for a picture on the stairs right after this.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Technically not a point of order, but thank you.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, point of order.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** She wasn't in the House when I was able to acknowledge her, but she's here now: Rangina Kargar, who was my staff, who was a member of Parliament in Afghanistan who had to flee Afghanistan when the Taliban took over the country, making it extremely unsafe for women to lead and for women to live. I'm so thankful to have Rangina serving here in Ontario with her family. Thank you, Rangina.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Technically not a point of order, but welcome.

#### CANADIAN REMEMBRANCE TORCH

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Spadina–Fort York.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Just a reminder to the members of the House that the Remembrance Day torch is in the Legislature today, and immediately after question period, it will be on the front steps of the Legislature. Any members who want to get a picture with the torch and the people who founded it can come out to the steps.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Technically not a point of order, but good information nonetheless.

## CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley West, point of order.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Just a point of order—a correction to my earlier introduction: Ms. Zoe Luo is a friend of Mr. Marcus Pacheco, who is one of our dedicated security officers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL  
POLICY

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

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

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

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BONGO STUDIOS INC.  
ACT, 2023

MPP Wong-Tam moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr34, An Act to revive Bongo Studios Inc.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

## LABOUR LEGISLATION

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Chris Galloway from Capreol in my riding for these petitions.

“Enact Anti-Scab Labour Law....

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993, and in Ontario under the NDP government, it was repealed by the Harris Conservative government;

“Whereas anti-scab legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of scab labour during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and long term, as well as the well-being of its residents;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To pass the anti-scab labour bill to ban the use of replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Beckett to bring it to the Clerk.

## MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I want to thank the Bayview-area residents’ association in my riding for assembling this petition. I have a petition regarding the government’s overturning of the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan, with over 200 signatures from residents in my riding of Don Valley West. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas people want to live in a community with good access to services and amenities;

“Whereas the city of Toronto adopted the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan (2018) with predominantly mid-rise density for the Bayview focus area, which was supported by the community following extensive consultation, but was overridden by the government of Ontario, permitting high-rises in 2019 without further consideration or consultation;

“Whereas the scale of the high-rise development applications proposed in the Bayview focus area creates needs for public infrastructure, such as schools, medical services, daycares and parks, which exceed those provided for in city (and provincial) planning;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately restore the Bayview focus area plan as approved by the city of Toronto in the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan (2018).”

I support this petition. I will add my name to it and give it to page Caesar to take to the table.

## HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the “reopen the Minden ER” group for submitting this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board of directors has, without consultation with the affected stakeholders, closed the emergency department



located in the municipality of Minden Hills, Ontario, on June 1, 2023;

“Whereas the loss of service is jeopardizing the lives of residents in the community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health to use her powers under section 9.1 of the Public Hospitals Act to immediately reopen the Minden emergency department.”

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

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**MPP Lise Vaugois:** I would like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for her tireless advocacy for people on OW and ODSP.

“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 fully support this petition. I will sign it and give it to Ananya.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I have a petition entitled “Pass the Safe Night Out Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are experiencing a sexual violence epidemic, with Statistics Canada reporting in 2021 that sexual assault was at its highest level in 25 years and community support organizations reporting more crisis calls than ever;

“Whereas 65% of women report experiencing unwanted sexual advances while socializing in a bar or restaurant, and incidents of sexual assaults involving drugs and alcohol most often occur immediately after leaving a licensed establishment or event; and

“Whereas there is no legal requirement for the people who hold liquor licences and permits, sell and serve liquor, or provide security at licensed establishments and events to be trained in recognizing and safely intervening in sexual harassment and violence;

#### 1510

“Whereas servers in licensed establishments also face high risk of sexual violence and harassment from co-workers and patrons;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pass the Ontario NDP’s Safe Night Out Act to make Ontario’s bars and nightclubs safer for patrons and staff by requiring training in sexual violence and harassment prevention, by strengthening protections for servers from workplace sexual violence, and by requiring every establishment to develop and post a policy on how sexual violence and harassment will be handled, including accessing local resources and supports.”

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

#### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This petition is entitled “Our Health Care: Not for Sale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians should get health care based on need—not the size of your wallet;

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Sylvia Jones say they’re planning to privatize parts” of the health care system;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals, making the health care crisis worse;

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to” further “privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124” to help with recruitment, “retaining, and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs with better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario, who wait years and pay thousands to have their credentials certified;

“—10 employer-paid sick days” to keep people healthy;

“—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals;

“—incentivizing doctors and nurses to choose to live and work in northern Ontario,” where there is a shortage;

“—funding hospitals to have enough nurses on every shift, on every ward.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Owen.

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Claire Quenneville from Azilda in my riding for this petition. She is one of 1,170 people to have signed this petition.

“Save ‘the Spot’ Supervised Consumption Site ...

“Whereas Sudbury’s overdose death rate is three times the rate of the rest of Ontario;

“Whereas an application was submitted to the government in 2021 for funding of a supervised consumption site in Sudbury called the Spot;

“Whereas the Spot is operated by Réseau Access Network with municipal funding that ends on December 31” of this year, “the province must approve funding very soon, or the Spot will close putting many people at risk of death;

“Whereas in 2023 alone, the Spot had 1,000 visits, reversed all 17 on-site overdoses, provided drug-checking services and prevented many deaths;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“Immediately approve funding for the supervised consumption site in Sudbury to save lives.”

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Saniyah to bring it to the Clerk.

### DON D’ORGANES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier Jeanne D’Arc de Val Therese dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Sauver des organes pour sauver des vies ... »

« Alors que l’Ontario possède l’un des meilleurs programmes de greffe d’organe au monde;

« Alors qu’il y a 1 600 personnes en attente d’une greffe d’organe en Ontario;

« Alors que tous les trois jours, une personne en Ontario meurt parce qu’elle ne peut pas obtenir une greffe à temps;

« Alors que le don d’organes et de tissus peut sauver jusqu’à huit vies et améliorer la vie de jusqu’à 75 personnes;

« Alors que 90 % des Ontarien(ne)s appuient le don d’organes, mais seulement 36 % sont enregistrés;

« Alors que la Nouvelle-Écosse a connu une augmentation du nombre d’organes et de tissus destinés à la transplantation après la mise en oeuvre d’une loi sur le consentement présumé en janvier 2020;

Ils et elles demandent à l’Assemblée législative « de changer la loi pour permettre un système de don basé sur le “consentement présumé” tel qu’énoncé dans le projet de loi 107, commémorant Peter Kormos (Sauver des organes pour sauver des vies) ... »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à ma bonne page Saniyah de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

### ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Charlene Bradley from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

“Protect Kids from Vaping...”

“Whereas very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth; and

“Whereas aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes; and

“Whereas the hard lessons learned about the health impacts of smoking, should not be repeated with vaping, and the precautionary principle must be applied to protect youth from vaping; and

“Whereas many health agencies and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada fully endorse the concrete proposals aimed at reducing youth vaping included” in my bill;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to immediately” implement the bill, “Vaping is not for Kids Act, in order to protect the health of Ontario youth.

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask my page Saniyah to bring it to the Clerk.

### ASSISTANCE SOCIALE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier Nicole Sabourin de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Doubler les taux d’aide sociale ...

« Alors qu’il y a plus de 900 000 Ontarien(ne)s qui sont obligés de dépendre sur l’aide sociale;

« Alors que le gouvernement Ford a promis d’augmenter les taux du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées (POSPH) de seulement 5 %, et n’a fourni aucune aide supplémentaire aux personnes qui bénéficient du programme Ontario au travail (OT);

« Alors que l’inflation n’a jamais été aussi élevée depuis 40 ans et que les personnes à revenu fixe sont obligées de faire des sacrifices tous les jours, simplement pour survivre;

« Alors que les bénéficiaires ... vivent dans une pauvreté profonde imposée par la loi, une maigre augmentation de 58 \$ ... et aucune aide supplémentaire aux bénéficiaires d’OT ne feront pratiquement rien pour améliorer la vie des personnes vivant de l’aide sociale;

Ils et elles pétitionnent l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « de doubler immédiatement les taux d’aide sociale, afin que les gens puissent vivre une vie digne et saine. »

J’appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer, et je la donne à Saniyah, ma page qui est très bonne avec moi, pour l’amener à la table des greffiers.

### CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Judy Summer from Capreol in my riding for these petitions.

“Improve Ontario’s Children and Youth Mental Health Services...”

“Whereas children and youth across Ontario experience mental health and addiction issues that impact their lives and the lives of those around them;

“Whereas the demand for community child and youth mental health services is increasing, in Sudbury-Nickel Belt, 50% of them are waiting over six months and 20% for longer than a year for services;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to tell the Ford government to properly and equitably fund community children’s mental health services immediately to improve access to timely services for children, youth and families in our communities.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask my very patient page Saniyah to bring it to the Clerk.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BETTER FOR CONSUMERS, BETTER FOR BUSINESSES ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 POUR MIEUX SERVIR LES CONSOMMATEURS ET LES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to enact the Consumer Protection Act, 2023, to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and to amend or repeal various other Acts / Projet de loi 142, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2023 sur la protection du consommateur, à modifier la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et à modifier ou abroger diverses autres lois.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** The member from London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It is a privilege to join the debate today on behalf of the people I represent in London West and to continue from the remarks that I had started the other day.

As I was saying, the people in London, in my community, are struggling like never before with the affordability crisis that has hit this province and this country. And just to give you a sense of how deeply that crisis is affecting Londoners, I want to share some statistics from the London Food Bank that were just released at the end of September. The food bank reported that in the first eight months of 2023, they saw a 43% increase in the number of families they helped each month. That is an increase over the previous year, 2022. It represented a 91% increase over the number of families they had helped in 2021. They also report that more first-timers, that is, people who have never used the food bank before, are getting monthly hampers.

1520

The food bank is strained, Speaker, as Londoners are faced with the challenges of trying to make a paycheque last the week or last the month. That’s why consumer

protection legislation and strengthened protections for consumers are so important, particularly for low-income consumers and vulnerable consumers who absolutely need to be able to rely on consumer protections when they purchase goods and services. While we are pleased to see some of the protections in this bill, and we will be supporting this bill, we believe there is much more that the government could and should be doing to provide those protections that consumers need.

I talked about the demands on the food bank, and certainly we have all heard about the price gouging that is taking place in this country. We have seen Loblaws and Sobeys and some of the giant food retailers reporting record profits—record profits—and massive wage increases for CEOs while consumers are hit with food prices for basic necessities that have skyrocketed since the pandemic. And so while this legislation includes new provisions to prevent price gouging, one of the concerns that the NDP has raised is that the price gouging provisions only apply to individual businesses; they wouldn’t apply across a sector. When you have a whole industry with inflated prices, the provisions of this bill won’t have an impact. It won’t help ensure that consumers aren’t hit with unfair price gouging when they go to the grocery store, and that is one of the biggest concerns that I think all of us hear from our constituents, the rising price of groceries.

The other concern is very much around enforcement. We all know that legislation on the books is only as good as the enforcement that is available to make sure that the protections are in place. This legislation improves consumer protection laws—certainly it’s an improvement over the previous act that had been in place since 2002—but it still leaves consumers having to go to court if they want to seek justice against companies that have treated them unfairly. And we know how expensive it is, how intimidating it can be to take a case to court, and so, therefore, there is a real concern that, when court is the only way to seek a resolution, that consumers won’t actually be able to get the redress they deserve.

That’s why, Speaker, one of the missed opportunities for this government was to include in this legislation the creation of an Ontario consumer watchdog. That position has been proposed in private member’s legislation from the official opposition, from my colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek, and it would create an independent watchdog organization to oversee all consumer protection matters in Ontario. This would give another avenue for consumers who have a complaint about a good or service that they have purchased, and it would be much less barriers than having to pursue redress in the courts, much less costly and disadvantaging to the consumer.

As I said, it’s a missed opportunity that this government had before them to really create strong consumer protections by creating that consumer watchdog position, as had been proposed by the official opposition.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** My question for the member who just spoke, the member from London West: She made some representations with regard to enforcement that I disagree with. She suggested that a court order is required and that people would have to go to court.

I draw her attention to section 95(1), which reads: “If the director is satisfied that a person has contravened or is contravening a prescribed provision of this act or the regulations, the director may, by order, impose an administrative penalty against the person in accordance with this section and the regulations made by the minister.”

So, the question is this: Now that I have read that section, does the member agree no court orders are required; you just need to go to the director?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to ask a question of the member on the opposite side about the consumer watchdog position, which is the proposal that had been brought forward by the official opposition.

We know that it can be very difficult for consumers to exercise their consumer protection rights. Often, the only avenue is to pursue matters legally. That is not available to many consumers, and it is cost-prohibitive. So, a consumer watchdog position would be able to provide those protections that consumers deserve and need without having to pursue legal action.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I just want to point out that yesterday we heard very clearly, and the member from London also referenced it today, the predatory door-to-door sales, which were banned but are still somehow happening, especially, based on the CBC Marketplace investigation that was done on this very topic—it demonstrated through a hidden-camera exposé on the tactics that some of these companies engage in. They witnessed high-pressure sales tactics. They witnessed claims that were not backed up in truth. They saw these salespeople engage in what this government should stand up against, and yet we have a piece of legislation before us that is really permissive. It allows that loophole to continue.

What does the member think about a government bringing another weak piece of legislation to the floor of this Legislature?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Yes, I agree with the member: It’s not often that we get opportunities to amend legislation. The last time this bill was amended was in 2002, so we’re updating legislation that has been in place for a period of 20 years. This would have been the opportunity to really do the fulsome review and updating that is required to really provide the protections that Ontario consumers need, especially with regard to door-to-door sales. We have all heard about vulnerable people in our communities who are just abysmally taken advantage of by unscrupulous, unethical door-to-door salespeople. This would have been an opportunity for the government to really strengthen those protections.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** So, carrying on with the line of questioning that I started earlier, now, if I had a constituent

who was worried about what the member from London West was talking about, price-fixing, let’s say it was grocery price-fixing, I wouldn’t tell that constituent to go to court; I would tell that constituent to go to the director, write a letter to the director and then seek enforcement under section 95(1).

**1530**

So I just want to ask the member from London West, you will agree with me, right? You wouldn’t tell your constituent to go to court; you would tell your constituent, “Write a letter to the director, and seek enforcement under section 95(1).” That’s what you would tell your constituent, right?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** The issue with the price-gouging provisions of this bill is that they apply to companies. They don’t apply to sectors where similar suppliers are all charging the same inflated price. So if a constituent comes to me with concerns about price gouging, I would tell them to advocate to the government to put in place strengthened protections for consumers to prohibit unscrupulous price gouging by large companies across a sector, as we are currently seeing in the sale of food and groceries.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Madam Speaker, through you: In our fight for consumers’ rights, how can we strengthen our advocacy for seniors and other vulnerable populations to ensure they are adequately protected from scams and predatory practices underneath this new legislation?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you to my colleague for that question. One of the real opportunities that was available to the government that they chose not to pursue is to create that consumer watchdog position. My colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek had tabled legislation to mandate the creation of the Ontario consumer watchdog, which would be an independent organization to oversee all consumer protection matters in Ontario. That has been recognized by consumer protection advocates as something that would really ensure that Ontario became the gold standard in terms of the consumer protections that are available.

Unfortunately, this government voted against the private member’s bill that we had brought forward and also chose not to create that consumer watchdog position, despite the support for that position and the advocacy for that position from many consumer protection experts.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** So now, on the topic of consumer protection, if you read section 80, there’s a whole section about investigations and the power that the director has to launch investigations, including issuing a search warrant. So the director can actually issue a search warrant, get a justice of the peace search warrant, and order an investigator to go into any business in Ontario. Wouldn’t that be what you would tell your constituents to seek? Why would you send your constituents to court? Why wouldn’t you just send them to the director, who has the authoriza-

tion and the power to investigate every single business in the province of Ontario with a search warrant?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I do want the member to understand that we are supporting this bill. We do acknowledge that the bill is an improvement over the consumer protections that had been in place since 2002, but there is still more room for improvement.

We have pointed out several places where the legislation could be improved. We've also raised a concern about a number of provisions being shifted to regulation, and so without being able to see those regulations, it is difficult to ascertain how exactly this legislation will impact consumers in this province.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Madam Speaker, through you: We've seen the potential pitfalls of shifting protections to regulations. As the opposition, we've seen the cost of lack of transparency in this House. Why is it important to ensure that these regulation changes are closely monitored and that the consumer protections are not diluted within this whole process?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you to my colleague for that question. We have often seen, in this place, government bring forth legislation that includes many, many provisions in regulation, and sometimes that has the effect of delaying the implementation of the legislation because it takes time for the regulations to be written. But one of the big concerns is that there is no legislative oversight over the regulations. The legislation is improved with the broad provisions, but many of the details are buried in regulation and, as MPPs, we don't have an opportunity to review and analyze the impact of those regulations.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay, I just thought the government would want to speak to this particular piece of legislation, if you're so proud of it. But I'm very happy, Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Well, if you're so critical, why don't you speak?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You give me lots of material to work with, I just want to say—but happy, happy, very happy, of course, and it's always a privilege to stand in my place in Ontario's Legislature and bring forth the concerns of the good people of Waterloo. It's been a pleasure to be doing this for 11 years.

I join the debate here on consumer protection, and I just want to say, this is a government that continually says, "Why don't you support us? Why don't you like us? Why don't you vote with us?" You give us so many reasons to take pause and to take a step back when you present legislation. I've always said in this House, much of it has to do with the process of creating said legislation. If you do your due diligence, if you do appropriate consultation with stakeholders, you will create a better piece of legislation.

Why the government has brought forward a consumer protection bill that hasn't been updated in a fair sense since

2002—and we know so much more about where the weaknesses are in consumer protection for Ontario. We know who's actually being taken advantage of: primarily seniors; to a large degree, new immigrants and refugees; and then there are a number of marginalized folks in our communities who have no choice at some point, right? They sign on to a contract, sometimes for hot water heaters, sometimes for a service around the house, and they are locked in.

The government is well aware of this. You're well aware of the vulnerabilities. I know as an MPP in Waterloo that the services that our constituency office provides—we are seeing a growing number of seniors come into our office, I want to say primarily women, who have signed a contract for some services, who have been promised—because it's incredibly misleading. The company is incredibly misleading. They have an official Ontario name. Sometimes, they use the provincial government's logo and people feel that this is a service that is legitimate—so why Bill 142 actually prevents this from happening in Ontario is beyond me.

I will say that when you look at this bill—and any bill that aims to increase protections for consumers has to be given some consideration for approval, right? Because it is so, so bad out there right now. This bill does fall short. If there is a willingness on behalf of the government to send this bill to a committee and have that committee actually try to make the legislation stronger, we will have many amendments and many recommendations for the government with regard to Bill 142. I hope that there's a genuine interest in getting to that place. I know that sometimes bills get sent to committee where they die. They die there. I personally have a very important bill that's currently at social policy, the Till Death Do Us Part act—

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's a great bill.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Yes.

1540

I would just think that the government right now is really desperately looking for a channel changer, like if I put myself in your seat. And I think that if you want to extend an olive branch to the people of this province after really undermining some core trust issues, a lack of transparency and accountability—that core trust is broken—calling that bill to social policy and having an honest discussion about why we still separate seniors in long-term care or care options, why it's not enshrined in legislation that we want couples who have invested in this province, have paid their taxes, have volunteered in their communities and then, at the end of their lives, much to their dismay and stress, they find themselves unable to find care options where they can stay together—and I've said this from the very day. When the new member from Cambridge was elected, I said, "Listen, if there's ever a non-partisan issue, reuniting seniors in care options should actually be something that we can all agree on."

I just want to say, just on this final piece about the committee and where bills go and trying to make legislation better, I'm happy to say that if you call the Till Death Do Us Part act and you call the experts and we call

in the delegations and we can make that piece of legislation stronger, I'm 100% already there. Time is ticking, though. There is an urgency here. I don't want to get emotional about it, but Jim and Joan McLeod have been separated now for six years, and they've been married for 65 years. The clock is running down here. So let's help each other out, hey? Let's get a good-news story out of Queen's Park, because it isn't happening any time soon, and let's call the bill to committee, identify the weaknesses in the legislation—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Oh, no, Queen's Park—I'm talking, really, about the Ford government. I was just heckled, and I'd like to clarify. You guys are on the ropes. Let's change the channel together. Let's do something good. Let's restore some trust by calling the Till Death Do Us Part act. And I have to—

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Coming from somebody who was convicted of an integrity violation.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** “Convicted”? This member from Peterborough—my goodness. This is the guy who threatened his mayor when she wasn't nice to him that he was going to pull the housing funding. I mean, this is what we're actually dealing with here, Madam Speaker.

Just to my friends across the aisle and the new Minister of Long-Term Care, when this bill goes to committee, we will be fully embraced and fully engaged in trying to make it a piece of legislation that actually protects consumers. Do you agree, my friends?

It is interesting to hear—because people are pretty sensitive around here these days. But it's worth noting that for a number of years experts have been calling for regulation on new home sales and their warranties. I just want to thank members of our caucus. MPP Rakocevic has been stellar on this file. He knows it inside and out. He's been solid.

This bill puts in new provisions for NOSIs—NOSIs are notices of security interest—but does not include any provisions on putting in rental hot water heaters in contracts for new homes. Why does this matter? It matters because this is a situation where people will sign the biggest purchase of their life—their entire life—and then once they've moved in, once they have start receiving those bills, they realize then that they've signed up for something that they didn't necessarily know they were agreeing to. This is a huge concern. It's a huge concern, and it's a gap in the legislation, and considering that we are in a cost-of-living crisis in Ontario, these shady dealings—because this is predatory. This needs to be addressed. It needs to be addressed in the legislation, and it needs to be addressed in the regulations, because you can write the best legislation, but if there's no oversight or if the regs don't guide the behaviour or change the behaviour, then you have a weak piece of legislation, and that's what I would suggest we have before us.

Our office in Waterloo has been supporting a growing number of seniors who have been victims of these types of scams. As I mentioned, right now they're primarily elderly women. The feeling when they come into the office is

complete desperation. They are filled with anxiety. They have panic attacks. They're wondering how this could happen in the province of Ontario.

In the middle of an affordability crisis, it's all the more reason to bring in a piece of legislation which does protect the finances of seniors, which are often fixed incomes. Why not make sure that they are protected? It's actually in the best interests of all of us to make sure that these predatory practices are gone from the province, or at least discouraged—or at least send a clear signal that Ontario knows what's going on and wants to deal with it.

These scams began years ago when illegitimate HVAC companies went door to door selling products to homeowners, typically targeting seniors. Sales of home appliances like air conditioners and furnaces eventually resulted in companies placing notices of security interest, NOSIs, on the properties without the homeowners knowing. Lawyers claim that these scams have resulted in homeowners losing tens of thousands of dollars.

My colleague from London was mentioning the affordability crisis in Ontario, and I too just met with the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. I hope some of my other colleagues also had the time to meet with them. But this is how bad it is in Waterloo, which is why you need to protect the very limited resources that seniors have at their disposal today: Numbers are higher for food bank use than they were in 2008, in the recession. That's how bad it is. If you remember that time, that was a time of panic, that recession. The peak of the pandemic were also very bad in this regard, but in the riding of Waterloo, 5,201 people used the food bank last year—this was 15% more than 2021—making 58,684 visits, or 7% over 2021 as well.

There is an impact for inaction. This is a core understanding that we certainly have. I know our member from Kiiwetinoong has also tried to draw the connection to the social determinants of health, the impact on the economy, the impact on the health care system, the impact on education. That's what the Food Bank of Waterloo Region really drove home today, along with Feed Ontario, is that there is a cost to not addressing the risk factors around affordability.

When people have paid their higher rent, their rent that goes up now—obviously in new builds—by 3%, 5%, 10% or 24%, a senior cannot absorb a 24% increase in their rent. It's just not possible, and so they have a choice: They either pay their rent and stay housed or they go to the food bank. It's a huge issue for a senior to go to a food bank after their entire lives. You can't underestimate that.

And yet, the piece of legislation that is before us is very permissive, actually embedding some loopholes whereby people can still practise these predatory practices of ripping off seniors.

Actually, I just met with the Canadian Bankers Association, as well. They have identified that this is now a priority for the Canadian banking sector, to train their tellers to look for fraud—I was going to say “corruption;” it just comes so naturally—and for predatory practices. Their tellers are specifically trained to watch for those vulnerabilities, because they're happening so often.

So the private sector, the Canadian Bankers Association—I had a great meeting with them. We talked about some common areas that we can move forward on, but certainly consumer protection was an issue where we found common ground. I feel that they may be actually submitting a delegation to this particular piece of legislation, as well.

So I just wanted to give a shout-out to the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, Feed Ontario and the Canadian Bankers Association. It's so good to see a not-for-profit that understands the affordability issues in Ontario also connect the need for labour laws, for housing, and for the social assistance reform that is needed.

**1550**

We can do so much better for the most vulnerable in our society. I don't know who in this House could possibly live on \$730 a month; it's just not doable, on Ontario Works.

I think there's a level of malaise, if you will, with this government—to bring forward a piece of legislation, understanding where the gaps are in society, understanding that those safeguards do not exist, and claiming to understand how vulnerable seniors are, in particular, and then leaving these loopholes in the legislation.

I reached out to the Waterloo region police, as well, and they say that scams like these persist due to loopholes in provincial legislation, under the Consumer Protection Act, that make it possible for the notices of security interest to be placed without the homeowners knowing. We're in a housing crisis, everybody agrees; it's one of the very few things that we can agree on in this House. Why make that very precarious purchase even riskier by not addressing these loopholes? Homeowners, especially senior homeowners, deserve to be protected, and this bill, this government is failing to do that.

It always leads me to wonder, if you had the power to fix this, if you had the privilege to be in a position of power to address a piece of legislation and to get it right, why wouldn't you? This goes back full circle to the whole trust issue. Who's driving the agenda for this Ford government? We've seen multiple examples now of decisions not being driven or not even being motivated by the people of this province. Therefore, you have the Auditor General calling the greenbelt issue indefensible. You have the Integrity Commissioner calling into question the lack of oversight and accountability and lack of transparency of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

When you get to this point, when trust is so broken, this is an opportunity for the government to say, "This legislation is going to be strong. It's not going to be weak. It's not going to be flaccid. It's not going to be passive. It is going to be a strong piece of legislation," to demonstrate that the government actually understands what the people of this province are experiencing, that lived experience of Ontarians.

If you go back—and you have to go a little bit way back—we don't actually see the actions that will address the situation where consumers are exploited by unethical HVAC companies. It's not here in the legislation.

Back with the Liberal government, we saw that there was a ban on door-to-door sales, and that was a good thing. It did take them a monumental amount of time to actually bring in this ban, after multiple cases that were brought to their attention here on the floor of the Legislature. It was near the end of 2018, and let's be honest, people were getting a little desperate to do something good, so the ban on door-to-door sales happened. That was a start, sure. It was another half measure. However, as I mentioned, that legislation had no teeth, so there really wasn't much by way of enforcement.

This government has heard for numerous years about the exploitive actions of many of these companies. I just want to say that some of these companies are fully aware of where those loopholes are. They have pushed the envelope. They've never got caught. There were no consequences—almost like the Landlord and Tenant Board, when we saw that only 11 landlords over the last five years actually faced punitive measures for being negligent, for being predatory landlords in Ontario—only 11 in that time. We have 11 open cases right now in Waterloo, in my office, of landlords who are looking to renovict or demovict or just evict, just testing the system. That's the power imbalance with regard to consumers and with regard to some of those predatory businesses.

As I said, many in the private sector have recognized that trust is important in building those relationships and ensuring that the most vulnerable are kept safe and secure. And then you have a government that doesn't necessarily understand that when that trust is broken, you should use every opportunity—every opportunity—to rebuild that trust.

Obviously, this piece of legislation is going to move through the House. It is going to go to committee. When it gets to committee, we, as Ontario's official opposition—and certainly as the finance critic for the province of Ontario and Treasury Board critic, I'm going to be following the money on this because there is a cost to the economy and to our communities when a piece of legislation is so weak and flaccid.

Once again, Madam Speaker, what a pleasure to stand in my place and address this piece of legislation.

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

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** I just feel like I've been hit by a ray of sunshine, that the opposition and the MPP from Waterloo have agreed with this bill.

There's a lot of good in this bill. I think what made me very passionate about it was seeing the Waterloo Regional Police video transcripts of people being abused, the elderly being abused. The thing that really sickened me was watching the same perpetrators come back to the same people they had first, basically, ripped off, and trying to rip them off again.

There is so much good in this bill, and the fact is, we're still consulting until December 1. And when this bill becomes law, it's going to be a wonderful thing for the people of Ontario. I say again, I'm glad that the opposition will help pass this bill.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Yes, there's some sunshine over here; it happens on occasion.

But I do want to say to my friend from Cambridge, I did talk about the Till Death Do Us Part legislation. I know that he has met with Jim McLeod. I know that he's been trying to work with the new Minister of Long-Term Care and trying to navigate a way forward with that piece of legislation. My understanding is you may reinvent your own piece of legislation. You know what? At the end of the day, I don't care too much. I just want to make sure that Joan and Jim and other seniors have a chance to be reunited.

I share your concerns with the Waterloo Regional Police video. It really is heartbreaking to see the worst in society really target the most vulnerable. That's not the best of us. That's not the best of our humanity. I just wish the legislation could be stronger, but perhaps we'll get another chance to do that.

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

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the Minister of Northern Development.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** To continue, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to recognize the member from Waterloo for her comments today. You were talking about this government rebuilding trust, and in this consumer protection bill, there are some real weaknesses in it. One that came up in the debate is that it's not retroactive. We've got homeowners who have been hit with liens of \$40,000 on hot water tanks and furnaces. This legislation does nothing to backtrack, to say that those liens are going to be expunged with this legislation. What should the government do to protect the consumers who have already been ripped off?

1600

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** What a good question. It actually gets to the heart of the critique of the bill, quite honestly, that the government is acknowledging that there are vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the Consumer Protection Act. It hasn't been updated since 2002. They're acknowledging and have heard from various advocates across the province in the not-for-profit sector and police services—acknowledging that these weaknesses exist and that there are known victims of fraud. And, yet, the legislation protects those previous predatory businesses. That really is an issue for us, I have to say. Why not grandfather for even a certain amount of years? Why not even address the fact that all of those seniors are now paying \$40,000 for a \$500 hot water heater? If we can agree that that is wrong, then let's try to fix it. We will try to fix that when it gets to committee.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you for the member from Waterloo's statements. She talked about the most vulnerable, and I truly appreciate the ray of sunshine that we're all feeling in this room on this bill. As a government, we always want to stand up for our most vulnerable, and consumer protection is no exception. We created this legislation to balance the interests of both consumers and businesses, because we know that when consumers' rights are protected, we're in a better province and we have more competition. Better legislation provides for a better environment for business.

You talked about oversight and consultation. One of the things that's built into this bill is a consultation that ends on December 1. I guess my question to you is, will you take advantage of the possibility of comments to be submitted on December 1?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Yes, of course. Of course that's going to happen. But just to circle back, my original comment is that if you're crafting a piece of legislation, the best time to apply that knowledge transfer through the consultation process is to build a really strong piece of legislation that doesn't need major overhauls through that December 1 date.

But, of course, we are going to weigh in. I even think the Canadian Bankers Association may even weigh in. But that is the point. The point is that you've left it open, and then it's going to go to committee, and then we actually have to tinker around the edges of this very important piece of legislation instead of just doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons.

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

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thanks to my friend from Waterloo for her comments. This is a very risk-averse piece of legislation. My friend brought out many of those issues in her speaking. For example, there are minor improvements to tackle unfair business practices but there is nothing to stop industry-wide price gouging. There's nothing to stop the installation of rental heaters in new homes.

Why would the government come out with this kind of risk-averse legislation? Does it have to do with the scandals they're going through, or is this an attempt to calm the Legislature down?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's actually a really good question. I think it's on all of our minds right now. It has to be on the minds of government members because a criminal investigation by the RCMP is fairly unprecedented for this government and a special prosecutor to look into the greenbelt and hopefully the urban boundaries, hopefully the MZOs. If you've lost track, you're not alone. There's a lot going on here.

But what I want to say to the member's question is that one of the big pieces that was lost is around Tarion. Ever since I've been here, for 11 years, Tarion has been a broken mess. You want to talk about a housing crisis, but when you finally get to buy that house, it is a huge deal. To have that entire experience completely corrupted by Tarion is almost like the biggest poison pill that we're not talking about in Ontario.



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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It's great to hear my colleague from Waterloo region take part in the debate today. I think there's one thing we can certainly share in this conversation, and it's definitely our disgust around the people who take advantage of the most vulnerable.

I don't necessarily have a question, but I'm going to give you an opportunity to comment a little bit more on notices of security interest, or NOSIs. I, too, have had an opportunity to meet with Waterloo region police on multiple occasions to discuss this. They're certainly at the forefront when it comes to investigations and enforcement here in the province, and I want to thank them for the fantastic work they're doing on that.

I'm just not sure if the member knows; there's about \$700,000 registered currently as a notice of security interest within—I think there's, is it maybe five or six folks who live in Waterloo region right now, and it's certainly something that we want to shut down. We're looking forward to the consultation that's going to happen on this. I'm a firm believer that we're going to get to a good place. I just wanted to hear her thoughts a little bit more around the NOSIs and how they're affecting people in the region, because it's atrocious.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** We certainly have some common ground on this. So the sunshine is back. We had a little storm there for a second.

I just want to say, NOSIs turn into liens, and this is the crux of the issue. I guess the return question is, if we have these shared concerns, why doesn't the legislation get to the heart of the matter and address it? And I'm not saying that the government won't do that.

Certainly, Waterloo region police—and I want to thank them for their excellent work. That unit that actually addresses some of these vulnerabilities that we're seeing—they're seeing people's lives destroyed, essentially, when they're incredibly insecure.

So, yes, if you feel strongly and I feel strongly, let's make sure that we address it in this legislation. Hopefully that happens after the consultation process, but also happens at—

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

Further debate?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is my pleasure to add a few words about Bill 142, An Act to enact the Consumer Protection Act, 2023, to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and to amend or repeal various other Acts, better known as the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act.

I wanted to start by sharing a story that happened in my riding, as well as in Sudbury. There was this home renovation business called EcoLife Home Improvements; that was at a time, back in 2015, 2016, when there were quite a few programs coming from the government to help people do renovations in order to cut their usage of electricity, mainly by heating. So you were able to get a little bit of money if you changed your windows to better-

insulated windows. You were able to get a little bit of money if you put insulation in the roof of your house or in and around your doors; or if you did, basically, an assessment of your house to see where your house was leaking heat; changing doors, changing windows; reframing; adding some insulation into the wall, your basement—anywhere in your home, really.

Many constituents of mine were interested in doing such renovations. They have older homes. In my riding, many people still heat with wood or electricity because those are the only two available. Some of them will have access to propane or oil heaters, but natural gas—I don't have it at my house, and we don't have it in most of Nickel Belt. They were trying to decrease their heating costs, their electricity costs, and there were those opportunities that the government was advertising. So EcoLife Home Improvements went and got a series of contracts, mainly from elderly people living in older homes, who could certainly benefit from a retrofit so that they could bring their heating costs and electricity costs down. He went and signed up contracts for everything from changing doors to rebuilding porches to changing windows to spraying insulation—many, many of those contracts, 35 of them, to be exact, in and around my riding, and he did zero of the work.

**1610**

People started to come to our office, saying, "What can I do? He's giving me an estimate for a \$90,000 job. He's giving me an estimate for a \$50,000 job." They had to put 50% of the value of the contract up front, and they would only need to pay—90% of it if the job was done, and the rest at the end. They had to come up with tens of thousands of dollars up front to secure, and he was using the fact that—those facts were not accurate: "Oh, you have to sign up now, because if you don't sign up now, those discounts that the government is giving you to change your windows, to better insulate, to change the doors and all of this won't be there anymore." People knew that this was happening. The government had put out information that they were helping people decrease the cost of electricity.

Similar to what my colleague from Waterloo was saying, he seemed to have targeted mainly older women living alone in older homes that were in need of renovations. Some were couples, but a lot of the people who came to see us were women. This went on for a long time.

I had multiple meetings with David Murray, and he made promises up and down that, "Oh, yes"—it was, the windows were not coming; the train had derailed; the workers had gotten sick. There were all sorts of really good reasons why none of those jobs were moving ahead. Then, winter came. In the winter, you don't really want to change windows, because it's winter and all of this. Then, the next spring came and nothing got done, to the point where we ended up going to see Sudbury regional police and saying, "Something is going on."

Well, something is going on. David Murray and EcoLife Home Improvements have been charged with 35 counts of fraud over \$5,000, for a total of \$800,000. This

has been going on since March 2019, and absolutely nothing has happened so far, except for his case being delayed and delayed and delayed in court.

For a lot of people who are on limited income, who are at a time in their lives when they cannot go back and get a second job—when you're an 85-year-old woman who stayed at home all of your life, you're not about to go and get a new job. But they have this huge debt to somebody who basically—he hasn't been found guilty in court, but he certainly has been charged with 35 counts of fraud over \$5,000 for renovation contracts that he got a whole lot of money for, but did very little or none at all.

We did everything we could to try to help those constituents. As I said, we met with David Murray. We went to the police. We called consumer services. We called everybody and anybody—the construction industry in Sudbury, anybody who can help—and at the end of the day, it always ended with, “Tell them to go get a lawyer.”

The consumer protection services in place, when you go with contracts in hands—because the people would come to see us and we would show them, “Listen, those contracts are pretty similar to one another.” We can start to see a pattern here. There is no work that has been done. No windows have been ordered. There's nothing that has been done, yet there was nothing to protect them.

Even after we became aware, after I contacted the Sudbury regional police, he continued to do the exact same thing. It was impossible to stop this. And when I read the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, frankly, Speaker, I don't see how the changes that we have in this bill would prevent another David Murray from doing the exact same thing he has done to 35 homeowners in my riding, or another person from doing the exact same thing to another person in another riding in other areas of Ontario.

This is wrong. We all know it's wrong. The court process is taking forever; I don't know why. We're in November 2023 and he still hasn't gone to court. It has been in front of the court at least a dozen times, being postponed, whatever. It's rescheduled for December, in a month from now. I hope that something happens then.

But still, these kinds of consumer protections were lacking back then. When I read the bill, I don't see how we are any better protected. But I hope they exist, that I just didn't fully understand the reading of the bill, but I would like this to be included. I don't want anybody else to go through what my constituents have gone through in Nickel Belt with EcoLife Home Improvements.

That being said, something else that, on this side, we have been pushing for is the Ontario consumer watchdog. So that would be an independent organization that would oversee all consumer protection matters in Ontario. I would have loved to have one of those to call because every other phone call that we have made led us to the same thing: “Call a lawyer.”

When you're an 85-year-old woman living alone in your home that hasn't seen renovations in 40 years, you don't have money to go hire a lawyer. You already have a \$40,000 debt to someone who hasn't done any renovations

in your home. To tell her, “You'll have to go see a lawyer,” we're basically telling them, “Nothing can be done for you.” All this would change with an Ontario consumer watchdog that could see those cases coming, that could act upon them, that could help, so consumers are not left with the only recourse to find a lawyer who is willing to take the case—that's not easy—and willing to take the case at a price that somebody could afford is even tougher where I live and for the people that I represent.

We don't have too many lawyers' offices in Nickel Belt. I can tell you that you can go from Ivanhoe Lake, Foleyet, Mattagami First Nation, Gogama, Biscotasing, Westree, Shining Tree, Benny, Cartier—none of them have any lawyers' office or lawyers available close by, but some of them have been scammed by EcoLife Home Improvements.

#### 1620

When we talk about “better for consumers,” I want to talk a little bit about the consumers of midwifery services, which are women who are about to give birth. The midwives have been asking to be allowed to prescribe whatever is within their scope of practice for a long time, but right now, the government gives them a list of the medications that they are allowed to prescribe and not allowed to. This makes no sense. New medications are added to the formulary all the time—new medications that could be very beneficial to women who are about to give birth, which is what midwives do. They help women through pregnancy, through delivery and then when their babies are born, things like genetic testing; things like thyroid screening; things like nausea and vomiting; things like heartburn management during pregnancy—lots of women who have babies know what I'm talking about—preterm labour etc. They're not allowed to prescribe those medications. That makes no sense.

If we're talking about better for consumers, it would be way better for the women that I represent who are able to gain access to a midwife—we do have a fabulous midwifery practice in Sudbury; thank you to all of the midwives who work there, but I can tell you that 40% of the people I represent do not have a family physician or a nurse practitioner. They do not have access to primary care. So they won't be able to gain access to the midwife while they're pregnant. Through their pregnancy, they start to get a lot of heartburn because of the change with the baby and change in their weight etc. Well, in order to get a prescription for heartburn, they will have to go wait for hours and hours and hours either at Health Sciences North, the only hospital that serves our area, or at a walk-in clinic.

When you are pregnant, the last thing you want is to spend 18 hours waiting your turn at Health Sciences North to be able to get a prescription. Just sitting in the waiting room when you're in an advanced case of pregnancy is actually dangerous for you. All of this could be changed. The midwives in Ontario have the knowledge and the skills to do all of this. They just don't have a government who gives them permission to work within their full scope, which means that, for many of the people that I represent

and for the 2.2 million Ontarians who don't have a family physician—many of them women; many of them pregnant. Better for consumers? It would be way better for them if their midwives were able to prescribe any treatment, therapy or medications that they need that are within their scope of practice, if only the government would give them the right to practise within their scope, but so far this is not happening at all. There are a number of other health care professionals that face the same limitation.

Another part of the bill where I would have liked to see more is in the new home sales and their warranty. I was there when the Auditor General did her review of Tarion, which is supposed to be a consumer protection agency, but has been doing pretty much anything but protecting consumers when they purchase a new home. For most people, the purchase of a home is the biggest purchase we ever make in our lifetime. That's why Ontario has a consumer protection agency, but when the consumer protection agency fails to do their work and has been taken over by the people who build those homes and the people who control that money, it makes for a pretty sad state of affairs.

When Tarion came to the committee on public accounts to answer to some of the questions that the committee on public accounts had for them, they basically promised that they were going to implement all of the recommendations that the Auditor General had put forward—that they had seen the wrong that they had done and seen the light at the end of the tunnel. They were going to do what needed to be done to protect consumers and make sure that they regained the trust.

I am really sad to say that if the experience in my riding is the same in the rest of Ontario, nothing has changed. Tarion is still very, very rigid. You call one day after the deadline that they put you—“Oh, no, the warranty doesn't work anymore.” If something needs to be done, and you call them and you leave a message, they don't call you back.

For a consumer protection agency—they still have not implemented the recommendations that the Auditor General had put forward. They have not implemented the recommendations that the committee on public accounts—those are MPPs in this House who made recommendations that Tarion had to put into place, and it's as if the MPPs from this Legislature did not exist. They said all of the right things when they came and met with us and then did very little to change their ways.

The big complaint, right now, in my riding is similar to what we have with EcoLife Home Improvements. Remember, David Murray—35 counts of fraud over \$5,000, selling people heat pumps and rental hot water heaters as well as rental furnaces. This seems to be covered in the bill.

So I'm happy to see those changes were included in the bill, and I hope they are put in place in a way that will make it easy for people who were sold those NOSIs and sold those payment plans—to put them in place as quickly as we can so we protect consumers in Ontario.

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

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I listened, as I re-entered the assembly this afternoon, to the comments of the member and her concern about having to retain a lawyer. I trust the member has considered section 71 of the proposed act, which opens the door to mediation without lawyer input, resolution of disputes of these matters, which is different and new, so the cost of a lawyer wouldn't be involved—the ability to enter a class action where no retainer fee is required; you can opt in or opt out of the class without any consequence in terms of legal fees—and section 76, complaints and mediation to the director, that mediation is part of what the director's mandate is; again, quick, early resolution of disputes, initiated by the consumer or investigated by the director, that can result in early mediations that are timely and cost-effective, without lawyers. Has she not considered those sections?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I know that the member is a lawyer and I am not.

What I can tell you is that the experience that I went through with the 35 homeowners in my riding who are now in court with EcoLife Home Improvements and Mr. David Murray—I don't see how negotiations would have helped anything. I sat down and negotiated with this man many times, and he basically told me what I wanted to hear but never followed through.

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

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for your comments.

I have a lot of seniors who have problems with furnaces, water heaters and so on—contracts that are quite old, that are costing them lots and lots of money, and they don't know how to get out of those contracts. Can you explain to me whether the bill addresses that? Does it go backwards? Is it going to help people who have been stuck with this now for 10 years?

1630

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I can tell you that you are not the only one who faces that. In parts of my riding, when an elderly person dies, by the time you pay those contracts for an old furnace, an old water heater, it's like the value of the home. The inheritance comes down to very low, because they are stuck having to pay for a \$5,000 or \$6,000 furnace and they end up paying \$40,000 for it because they did not pay for it up front.

I did not see anything in the bill that would go retroactive for all of the people that are going through this right now, including succession where the homeowner is deceased and the family is trying to sell the house.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I heard the “députée de Nickel Belt” speak about these unconscionable transactions where some homeowners were required to pay \$40,000 for something that really only costs \$5,000. That certainly sounds like an unconscionable transaction to me. Were I still practicing law, I would certainly tell my clients,

“Don’t pay that. Get that contract set aside under the Unconscionable Transactions Relief Act.”

I’m wondering if the “députée” from Nickel Belt has advised her constituents, “Don’t pay that contract; get it set aside under the Unconscionable Transactions Relief Act”?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would never pretend to give legal advice to anybody. What we do when we are faced with things like this is that we send them to consumer protection. We tell them what their options are going forward. We let them know that they have access to free legal advice for half an hour and we give them the phone number to do this.

We direct them, but I would never pretend to be a lawyer because I am not. We don’t give people false hope. What we give them are the consumer protection resources that presently exist. We link them up, we help them connect with them and we follow through, but we don’t give legal advice.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch to the member from Nickel Belt.

In her presentation she spoke about midwifery, midwives’ services, and I thought about my mom. My mom went to, I think, grade 3 education, but she delivered hundreds and hundreds of babies. That’s before we had doctors, before we had nurses in our communities. It was always a way of life for us to do that.

I’m just wondering if the member could further elaborate on how we can improve the services, the midwifery services. There’s so much we can do. The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement, and I think, does this bill do it?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I agree with the member that there’s lots of room to make it better for consumers of midwifery services. The member is right. Midwifery service is something that has existed in First Nations for as long as we can remember. They’re all women. Those women know what they are doing. Those women have learned from the women before them and their mother before them and are very good at providing midwifery care.

Ontario does recognize the training that midwives on First Nations are able to give to one another. There is also a little wee bit of opportunity for funding for those midwives, but a lot more needs to be done in most fly-in communities. Women have to be flown out. They’re all alone in a community, hundreds of kilometres away, to give birth. This is not human. This has to change. The member is right; there is room for better consumer protections right there too.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North brought up an interesting question, to the member for Nickel Belt, around contracts when, say, a family member passes away and how do you then execute that estate? I think it’s important that when we’re talking

about the broader debate today, we also understand there are remedies currently available. It’s not just what’s in the bill that’s before us.

The member from Essex, I thought, brought up a very good point about ways that you are able to help strike that off a record. I would implore all members here in the House to maybe better educate themselves on what is available out there so we are able to help our constituents in the best way possible.

So rather than focus on things that aren’t necessarily in the bill, I would love to see debate get back towards things that are in the bill. I will ask the member opposite whether she does support the provisions that now have a 10-day cooling-off period and an easier out clause for those types of contracts moving forward.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I think I had made it clear that I will and we will support the bill. There are many changes that have been done to the existing Consumer Protection Act, 2002—so 21 years ago. If you think about it, things have changed an awful lot. So there are lots of changes in the bill that are going in the right direction. That, I think, will help people.

I intend to make full use of those for whoever comes to our office in need of consumer protection, but I have been here long enough to know that a revision to a bill is not something incremental. You make changes to a bill, and then you don’t touch it again for two decades.

So if we are going to go through to make it a consumer protection bill, let’s put into it as much of it as we can, so that if we don’t have a chance to look at it for the next 20 years, at least, we would have brought it as far as we can for that 2023 allows us to do.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It’s an honour to rise in the House today and talk to Bill 142, which is a consumer protection bill. It revamps the existing Consumer Protection Act, and there are some good things in here, as my colleagues have said, but there needs to be much more because too many Ontarians are getting ripped off by unscrupulous vendors. This is a bill with an opportunity for the government to rebuild trust. This is a government that does need to rebuild trust in this province.

We’ve seen, with the recent scandals—the greenbelt scandals, the municipal boundaries scandals—the government has started to backtrack on some of those. They’ve backtracked on the greenbelt rezoning. They’ve backtracked on the municipal boundaries. The government House leader has said that he’s investigating MZOs. If there’s one other thing I would ask the government to do, please take a close look at Ontario Place and the deal for Ontario Place and backtrack on that too.

There are fences going up right now at Ontario Place. They’re about to cut down 1,500 mature trees at Ontario Place. We ask the government to pause that, to take a look at that deal and make sure that that deal is not the next scandal that this government is going to be dealing with before those trees are cut down. That’s about building trust, and this consumer act can help to rebuild that trust.

I have just received an email from a senior in my riding. She's an older woman. She lives alone. Her husband has passed away. She's a widow and she's been badly ripped off of all of her savings that she had to pay for her mortgage. It was through a phone call and the call said, "Metropolitan Toronto police" and she believed what the person on the line was saying. They had this elaborate story about what had happened and that she needed to take these things and that this was the police guiding her. And she's lost her savings now.

We absolutely need consumer protections to be strengthened in this province. These predatory companies and these unscrupulous people often target seniors, especially widows, and people with disabilities. They target immigrants and refugees. They find the most vulnerable people and often the people with the least money, and they fleece them of that money.

1640

What we've seen: We've seen people who are sold hot water tanks and they're locked into long-term leases for these hot water tanks. If you go to the Home Depot or another store, you're paying \$1,000 or less for a hot water tank. Some of these long-term leases lock you in for thousands and thousands of dollars over the years. Some of these contracts for new furnaces and things, these high-pressure sales tactics that they use on vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities—they lock them in and then they take a lien out on the person's home. This often happens so that when the person tries to sell their home, they find out that this unscrupulous company has taken a lien out on their home and that they have to pay off the lien. Sometimes it's \$40,000. There's one case where a person had to pay off \$60,000; a senior had to pay off a lien for \$60,000 in order to get out of the contracts that were on that lien. It's absolutely appalling.

The government needs to take action. This consumer act, as it stands, is a step in the right direction, but there needs to be a lot more. One of the things I'd suggest is that we need better protections for new home buyers, particularly pre-sales. There's a recent article by Barbara Captijn in the Toronto Sun, and she talks about how badly new home owners, especially those in pre-sales, get ripped off. She talks about the reasons for it, and the reasons for it have to do with government legislation. She says that if you buy an existing home, then there's a standard contract that the government provides and that everybody follows. It's simple; it's plain language. You don't need a lawyer to analyze it. You can just take a look at it.

But if you buy a condo or a new home in a pre-sale, then the contract is written by a developer. These contracts are often 40, sometimes 60 pages long. It's almost impossible to decipher what the actual meaning is. In that is an addendum; usually buried at the back of those long contracts is an addendum. It's 11 pages, and it's written by Tarion and the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, which are two agencies that are created by the provincial government, ostensibly to protect homebuyers. These addendums are 11 pages long, and they're supposed to provide a warranty that the consumer—when you buy a

new home in a pre-sale, you buy a warranty. You pay for a warranty to Tarion, but Tarion has got a horrific reputation for not actually protecting the consumers who pay for it.

This addendum that's in the back of the contract, one judge said this is a "convoluted and confusingly long and obscure document" and "a trap for the unwary, particularly the unwary layperson." This addendum written by agencies of this government needs to be addressed. If there's one thing that should be changed in this legislation, this consumer protection, and that should be added, it's that there should be a plain-language contract for pre-sale, pre-construction home buying, whether it's a condo or a house.

The other thing is that condo owners—the other suggestion for this legislation: If you buy a new condo in a pre-sale, you have a 10-day cooling-off period. If you sign on the dotted line, and you go home and you think, "You know, maybe I don't have that much money; maybe this isn't such a good deal," you've got 10 days, and you can just walk away from that deal. But new houses do not have that cooling-off period. This is something else that needs to be changed. This is the kind of consumer protection that people need in the province of Ontario.

This government has said—the Premier and the ministers of the Conservative government here have talked about how they don't want weasel clauses in these home contracts where you sign with a developer, you lay down your money, there's a timeline when they're supposed to actually develop the home and build the home and they don't follow that, or they cancel. There are actually what are called weasel clauses in these contracts. The rhetoric from the government is, "Hey, we're going to protect new homebuyers," but the legislation allows these contracts, written by developers, to use weasel clauses to get out of their commitments to the homebuyers.

I will talk about one good thing that's in this: gift cards. I went to a major Canadian retailer, and I had this gift card. I'd had it; I found it in the back of a drawer. It said on it that it was \$20, and I took it to the store, and they said, "No, we're not honouring that anymore. It's expired." And I'm thinking: Well, that's a hell of a scam. There's \$20, and sure, I lost the card for probably a year and a half or two years; I don't know. It was in the back of a drawer. But that \$20 doesn't belong to the retailer. How come the retailer gets to keep my \$20 and they don't have to pay out the \$20? To me, that gift card should be like cash. There is a protection in this to make sure that those gift cards do not expire, so I would give the government credit on that.

But there are other weaknesses in this bill, and I'd say one of the biggest ones—and my colleague was talking about this—I mentioned at the beginning seniors and other vulnerable people who have been ripped off, and they had these liens on their homes by these unscrupulous companies that have ripped them off. They used high-pressure tactics. The liens are often \$40,000. There's nothing in this legislation that's retroactive. So what the government is saying is that, "Well, we're going to provide some protection. We'll see how strong the protection is when the

legislation gets rolled out and when it's implemented." But for those who have already been ripped off, the consumers in Ontario who have already been ripped off, this legislation does nothing. That's absolutely shameful, because if somebody has fallen victim to an unscrupulous vendor, then they should have some recourse. This government's legislation right here is an opportunity to give them recourse and to expunge those bad debts.

I look forward to the questions. Thank you for letting me speak.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you to the member opposite for your presentation. Our government is committed to protecting the rights of Ontarians, especially when it comes to consumer rights. One of these consumer rights is the right to review businesses online honestly. Through you, Speaker, to the member from—

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Spadina–Fort York.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Spadina–Fort York, thank you. I'm wondering if you could tell us—it sounds like you support this bill and the measures. I would like to see if you could speak a little bit about consumers' right to review.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. Thank you to the member—and I don't know your riding.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Newmarket–Aurora.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Newmarket–Aurora—for your question. I think the right to review—and I was actually talking about that in this, and one of the rights to review is that cooling-off period. One of the things that I've asked for in the comments that I made is the cooling-off period. So if you buy a condo, you have 10 days to cancel the contract. You sign, you go home, you think, "No, that wasn't right," you've got 10 days. As far as the review goes, that should also apply to new houses, and that's something else that should be in this legislation so that people have a cooling-off period when they buy a house.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The member opened up his statement talking about the fence going up at Ontario Place and the 1,500 trees that are scheduled to be cut down. I was just wondering if he could share with us: Has he heard anything from the people of his riding about Ontario Place? I live in northern Ontario, and I can tell you that for the people of northern Ontario, Ontario Place is a place that we all know is there. We've all brought our children to come and take in this phenomenal place in southern Ontario that has been very welcoming for generations to people of the north who come and visit the big city in the summer.

1650

What has he heard from the people in his riding about the cutting of 1,500 trees at Ontario Place?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I thank the member from Nickel Belt for the question about Ontario Place. It is really a vital place. It was designed to celebrate this province.

I will say one thing about those 1,500 trees that imminently could be cut down by this government: They

came from every provincial park in this province, so some of them came from Nickel Belt. The idea was that for everybody coming from any part of Ontario, this was a place to celebrate this province, and you would recognize the trees at Ontario Place.

These trees have matured over the last 50 years that Ontario Place has been in existence, and so you've got a mature forest. You've got 125 bird species. You've actually got mink and beaver living at Ontario Place—and this is not Nickel Belt; this is downtown Toronto waterfront. This forest, this mature beautiful forest, has to be kept for future generations. That's why we're asking the government, don't cut down those trees. Investigate the deal with Therme, because it seems to be as dirty as some of the deals with the greenbelt.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I'm reading subsection 95(3) of this act, and it says, "The amount of an administrative penalty shall reflect the purposes of the penalty and shall be the amount prescribed by the minister, which amount shall not exceed \$50,000." Now, of course, that's \$50,000 per infraction, so if you have multiple infractions, your fines could go into the millions of dollars.

My question to the member from Spadina–Fort York is, does he think that millions of dollars in fines and penalties is too severe a penalty, too small of a penalty, or somewhere in-between?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I think the penalties should be commensurate with the crime and the pain and the suffering that have been caused by these unscrupulous vendors, but the penalties have no impact if they're not actually applied. I'll give one example: This government boasted about doubling the fines for landlords that renovict or demovict, illegally, their tenants, but I heard my colleague talk about how there's only been, in the last five years, 11 such fines applied.

In my own riding, there have been people demovicted, people illegally renovicted. Thousands and thousands across this province are being renovicted and demovicted. The doubling of the fines—it may be a good talking point, but if they're never applied, if they're not actually a deterrent, then they're not actually protecting consumers.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank my colleague the member from Spadina–Fort York for his remarks.

One of the issues that has been raised by the official opposition during the debate on this bill is the government's decision to move many of the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to regulations and also expand with new regulations under this updated act. I wondered if the member has concerns about that shift from legislation to regulation and what that might mean for the effectiveness of this bill and the timelines for implementation of this bill.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I thank the member from London West for the question.

This is a real concern. Most people—and people watching—probably don't know the difference between

legislation and regulation and even a memo, right? But legislation is a bill, and it becomes law. It's debated in this Legislature. We have a democratic right to analyze it, to debate it, and then we vote on it here in the Legislature. That's the democratic process.

A regulation is something that the minister just does. He can make a regulation to implement—and the idea is that this is to actually develop the implementation plan for the bill, for the legislation. But what has been happening over the last—and it's not just this Conservative government; it's the previous Liberal government, as well. They keep moving more and more powers into regulation.

This government has taken out sections of the Consumer Protection Act from the act and they've put them into regulation, so that the people will never have an opportunity to listen to a debate about those consumer protections and whether they're good or bad.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** If you really, really want to put everything into the legislation, then that's going to be a very long piece of legislation. But if you want to be able to put things in easily, you could do that by regulation. Putting things in by regulation is very, very easy. The member just said it himself—the minister could just put it in. Wouldn't the member from Spadina–Fort York rather see it done through regulation, so that he could make a suggestion and just get the minister to put it in?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The idea is that the legislation is supposed to guide the regulations, and the danger of putting too much power into the regulations is that it takes away the transparency of the debate in this Legislature. Every time a bill is announced, it's put on the website and it's announced here in the Legislature; people who are following here can understand what bills are being considered. Regulations appear on a website, but that's it. Unless you're watching those regulations all the time, you probably will miss what you may be looking at and what you may be concerned about, so it minimizes transparency. And I can say, with this government and their recent record, transparency should be an utmost concern and this government should be far more transparent.

Taking pieces of the Consumer Protection Act out of legislation and putting it in regulation actually is a concern to us on this side of the House, and it should be a concern for all consumers in Ontario.

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

Further debate?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today in this fine House. I stand here and I represent the fine people of St. Catharines and of Niagara. It is my duty to ensure that the voices of the residents of St. Catharines are heard.

We are here today and we are discussing Bill 142, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, which is a piece of legislation that promises to enhance consumer protection in Ontario. While there are aspects of this bill that are commendable, there are also areas that require

careful scrutiny and potential amendments. Consumer protection and the need for clarity are paramount, especially in these challenging times when many of our constituents are facing financial hardships. Everything is going up in cost, and our residents across the province are definitely facing financial hardships.

The bill aims to repeal the Consumer Protection Act of 2002, consolidating provisions and moving others to regulations. But let's definitely be clear: The people of Ontario deserve transparency. Shifting provisions to regulations raises questions about accountability and about accessibility. We need to ensure that the regulations are crystal clear, concise and easily accessible to all Ontarians, not buried within bureaucratic language—which often they become.

Our seniors across our province, many of whom reside in Niagara—I believe we are one of the most populated ridings with seniors in St. Catharines—are particularly vulnerable to scams and predatory practices, which is a shame. We have seen incidents where elderly individuals are pressured into contracts for goods and services they don't need at a price they cannot afford.

**1700**

A few years ago, my neighbour was leaving to go to work. He was rushing out of his door, ran out into his carport and was confronted by a very nice young fellow who explained to him about how he was selling air conditioners and furnaces. He was explaining the whole practice of what would happen and what a great deal it could be. Of course, the great fellow that my neighbour is asked the young individual, "Listen, I'm on my way to work. For this contract, do you get paid by the amount of contracts you get signed today or the amount of people you talked to?" And the young fellow said to him, "Well, yes, of course. If you sign here, then I can say to my boss that you have agreed to talk to me today." So, okay, sure enough my neighbour, like I said, being the good fellow he is, signed the contract and away he went to work.

A couple of hours later, his wife was in the kitchen and she heard the ruckus of the removal of her two-year-old air conditioner and she went out—"What are you doing?" "Oh, your husband signed here"—and they were put into a very, very hefty contract that they didn't agree with. You can imagine the complete panic that they went into because they had to pay this company that was basically ripping out their two-year-old air conditioner and there was no buyer's remorse that they could go to.

The bill addresses misleading practices and unconscionable acts, but we must ensure that these provisions are strong enough to truly protect our seniors, like my neighbour. We need legislation that stands up for our elderly, ensuring they are not taken advantage of and that their rights are protected.

I could tell you several stories about individuals—seniors—that have come into my office that have liens on their houses because they've been taken advantage of by predators—not one water filter did they have, they had three. They were told, "This will be better," and "This will be better," and "You need it for the water."

Madam Speaker, St. Catharines is a vibrant community of small businesses that are the lifeblood of our local economy. These businesses definitely need support and protections to thrive, especially in the face of the larger corporations.

Additionally, our region has seen a significant increase in housing prices that has put a strain on many families and individuals, and we need to ensure that the legislation addresses these local issues as well, providing protections and support where it is most needed.

Madam Speaker—wow, the time went by fast. I didn't think 10 minutes would go by so fast—the bill introduces new provisions related to the purchase of cost-plus lease to door-to-door sales as I spoke about, areas that have been problematic in the past. While these provisions are a step in the right direction, we definitely have to get it right, right now. We must ensure that they are enforced effectively and that consumers are aware of their rights.

The increased fines for violations are a very welcome change, but again enforcement is key. We need to make sure the enforcement is there. We need to make sure the enforcement is there. We need a system in place that holds businesses accountable for their actions and ensures that consumers are treated fairly and with respect. I've got to repeat that because it's so important: that businesses are accountable for their actions and ensures that consumers are treated fairly and with respect.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to conclude, and in my conclusion, while Bill 142 has the potential to—

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Keep going.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Pardon?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Two more minutes.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Okay.

In conclusion, while Bill 142 has the potential to enhance consumer protection in Ontario, there are areas that require further examination and potential amendments. As representatives of the people, here in this House, it is all of our duty to ensure that this legislation truly serves the best interests of Ontarians, protecting them from unfair practices, and ensuring that their rights are upheld. So I do, Madam Speaker.

At this time, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to carefully consider the implications of this bill and to work together to strengthen its provisions. Good things happen when both sides of the House work together. And we can protect our seniors, the most vulnerable in our communities. Make sure that these predators are not driving them out of their homes because they have put in, as I said, air conditioners that were not needed and made them get liens on their house, water filters that—again, thousands and thousands of dollars in liens. They can't go to the bank and get a loan on their house because they've got liens on it from these predators.

So again, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to carefully consider the implications of this bill, and let's work together to strengthen its provisions. The bill aims to tackle unfair business practices, but we must ensure that it also provides a level playing field for our small businesses, for our seniors and for the communities that we live in.

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

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** To the member for Ottawa West–Nepean: Is the member aware that in addition to section 60 of this act, which is the first attempt by way of legislation to deal with notices of security interest and having a period of 15 days proposed to have them discharged when a consumer withdraws from a contract or cancels a contract, parallel to that as we debate here today, there's a window for consultation specifically on what we can do in the here and the now to tackle the bad actors on notices of security interest between now and December 1?

Is she aware of that, and will she participate, to her point of co-operation, in assisting us and finding immediate solutions in the here and the now?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** To the member, I'm from the riding of St. Catharines, not Ottawa West–Nepean. That's my colleague behind me. But thank you. I've travelled there many times and I'm sure she has the same concerns as I have.

The problem is that the protection is not retroactive. We can work together to make sure that guidelines are put in place so that seniors are protected for the retroactive part that the predators have already taken advantage of and basically robbed the seniors and residents. Like I said, my good neighbour who works for a living and now has thousands of dollars can't go retroactive on what this predator has taken from him, from his life savings, actually. So you can imagine the anxiety of these residents in your riding as well. We can work together to make sure all our ridings across Ontario—

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

1710

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to my friend and colleague from St. Catharines for her thoughtful presentation. I am just wondering, I know that her office—because we're in the same region and we talk a lot—deals with a lot of folks that are victims to these kinds of scams, especially door to door.

What are some of the most serious issues that her office deals with that this bill could have helped with?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you to my colleague. Yes, we've been partners in crime, I guess, in politics for a few years. I thank you for that question, from the member from Niagara Centre.

It's very concerning when we have and I can just—I won't use his name, but he came into my office in tears. He was disabled and he lived in his home. He had been taken advantage of by this predator that actually put in a lien against his home for, like I said, three to four water filters, a furnace and an air conditioner. The lien was against his home. He couldn't get a new scooter that he needed because he couldn't get the loan from the bank because of the money that he owed these predators that kept taking advantage of him and kept going back to this elderly gentleman's home and saying—and may I say that it's unfortunate—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you to the member from St. Catharines.



Further questions?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I am looking at the act itself and section 102 describes offences and the penalty for those offences. One of the penalties reads as follows: “An individual who is convicted of an offence mentioned in subsection (1) is liable to a fine of not more than \$100,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years less a day.”

My question to the member is this: Does she think that sending somebody to jail for “two years less a day” is too severe a penalty for contravening this act?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for that question, because I really think that any person that takes advantage of any resident—if it’s a senior, if it was my neighbour, as I have expressed, if it was anyone in your riding that they’re getting taken advantage of by any predator, I think that we should make sure that these bad actors, may I say, definitely have to pay some kind of a price.

I think that it should be retroactive. If they’ve already taken advantage of an individual of anyone’s riding in this House, any senior or any individual, they should have to—

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. They should have to do retroactive and make sure that these liens are taken care of.

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

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I would like to thank the member from St. Catharines for her presentation and for truly listening to the seniors in her riding who have truly been exploited by this industry. They have engaged in hideous tactics, whereby selling a \$500 water heater for upwards of \$400,000 is completely unconscionable. Here on this side of the House, we would call that unjust enrichment.

This government has talked about extending a cooling-off period, but does that cover those individuals who don’t find out about the lien until many months later, that they were never actually provided with a notice of security interest? Is that actually going to cover them, or is this government simply not standing up for seniors?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you to my colleague for that great question. When it comes to seniors and standing up for seniors, I know for myself I advocate for the seniors within my riding. When they get themselves into these contracts and they’re vulnerable to these predators that come door to door or over the phone—and then they come and they get them to sign. The seniors think, may I say, that they’re doing the right thing.

There is never enough protection for our seniors when it comes to their life-savings and when it comes to a lien on their home and when it comes to what they have in the community. As we see in other bills and legislation, they want to stay in their homes and they feel, where their memories are, that they’re protected and they’re safe and there are safeguards. But when it comes to the bad actors or, may I say, the predators that come and make them sign—

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

Further questions?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** So let’s just be very clear here. What the member from London North Centre was talking about are two very separate items. You’re talking about a notice of security interest, which is, quite frankly, an unscrupulous way of taking advantage of vulnerable people in our society and, absolutely, we’ll agree that there’s a lot of work that needs to be done there. But when we’re talking about legitimate contracts, which is what that 10-day cooling-off period and the ability to exit out of those contracts quicker—these are two very separate things, so let’s just be very clear about that.

I do want to ask the member from St. Catharines a little bit about notices of security interest. We’ve heard about it today and she did mention some folks in her riding that have had these types of things perpetrated against them. I’m certainly of the mindset that we absolutely need to close these loopholes and we absolutely need to do something about this issue. And whether or not she thinks that we should just be going ahead and doing this, or whether we should have a full consultation with other legitimate businesses, might I add—there are legitimate businesses that take part in this as well—to make sure that they have an opportunity to recoup costs if someone doesn’t pay their bills, whether or not she thinks that the consultation is something she thinks we should be doing or whether she thinks we should just go ahead and unilaterally—

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

The member from St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you to my colleague across the aisle for the great question. As I said in my speaking notes, in Niagara—and in St. Catharines, my home riding—we have a vibrant community of small businesses, and those small businesses are the lifeline of our local economy. I mentioned that at the beginning and these businesses, yes, definitely, they need support and protection to thrive, especially when they face larger corporations, may I say.

The bill aims to tackle unfair business practices, but I guess we must ensure that it also provides a level playing field for small businesses at the same time. So, yes, we have to make sure small businesses are protected.

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

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I am rising today to speak to Bill 142, Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, and I have to say there are certainly things in this act that I really applaud and find interesting.

For example, it adds language barriers as a reason a person may not be able to understand a consumer contract and therefore could get out of that contract. I think that’s a very important provision. Also, it’s an unconscionable act to enter into a contract with a consumer “if the person doing so knows or ought to know that there is no reasonable probability that the consumer will be able to

pay the total amount owing under the contract.” That really stands out to me as an important change.

But what is interesting for me—now, I spend a lot of time in a particular seniors residence, a commercially owned seniors residence—I went through the bill, just doing a search looking for the word “seniors” and it actually doesn’t appear anywhere in the bill. Now, maybe that’s fine. We refer to vulnerable people getting taken in by unscrupulous actors, so perhaps it’s fine that it doesn’t mention seniors, but I really worry about seniors.

For example, I’ve seen, in this particular commercial residence, that the contract is not being met in terms of the food service that’s offered and promised. There are supposed to be three highly nutritious meals a day and yet often they are being served hot dogs and wieners, frozen hamburgers—a lot of things that really don’t qualify as nutritious food. So what does a senior do in that circumstance? Who do they go to? They can complain to the home, but things just don’t change. That is something I worry about.

1720

Also, what I’ve seen are increases in rent by 7.5%. Over a couple of years, two rent increases, the cost has gone from \$5,000 to \$6,000. That’s a very significant increase and, again, I worry: Where does a senior go to complain? There is the seniors’ bill of rights; there’s a phone number you can call, but you will sit on hold forever and you’ll wait forever for somebody to call you back.

In this instance, I’m actually thinking back to the idea of having a seniors’ advocate. I also know that when people reach a certain age, they’re no longer confident about picking up the phone and making a lot of different phone calls to try and figure out who on earth is available to advocate on their behalf. This also brings me back to the idea of the consumer watchdog, so that people are not flipping through their phone books or going to their friends and saying, “Do you have any idea how to address this problem?” If there’s one place they can go and know that they can get good advice, I think that’s very valuable. Knowing that there are all kinds of particulars in the bill, these clauses and so on that might be get-out-of-jail-free clauses—they’re not accessible. They’re not easily accessible to people, so there needs to be a central place.

I want to add to that a comment that, again, when we’re thinking about seniors, what we have seen is the transition of almost every single government service into an online platform. Again, I know many seniors, including my mother who is 96, who is fluent on the computer—

*Interjections.*

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Yes—but still gets overwhelmed by these long forms and all these things that you have to fill out. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you called and a human answered the phone, and it was for a government service, and you actually could speak to someone?

That is something I’ve put out there as something for the government to think about, that when we’re actually implementing things, to be thinking about the human side: How do people find solutions? What’s the easiest for them without people feeling overwhelmed? Because the other

thing I’ve seen in this particular home is that people often just kind of shrug their hands and say, “Oh, well. I can’t do anything about it,” when, in fact, there probably is something they could do but they don’t know where to reach out for that.

I do have concerns about shifting everything into regulations, and my example for that is ODSP, where there are 800 regulations. There’s a regulation in there that says if you live with somebody else, your money will be clawed back. In other words, the money that is there is not to support you with your disability. As soon as you live with somebody else, you start to lose that support.

Now, I think if the people of Ontario actually knew that that was in the regulations, they would reject it, because I think it’s a human rights violation. The problem is, you put so many things into regulations, there’s not the kind of scrutiny that needs to be there, and it does put an enormous amount of power into the minister and the ministry. Again, it doesn’t have that level of scrutiny.

Again, to mention the ODSP situation, no other person is denied the ability to pool their resources with someone else, but if you’re poor and you’re disabled, you are not allowed to pool your resources with somebody else. That just shouldn’t be. So that’s fair warning that things happen in regulations that don’t come under scrutiny but have a very, very serious impact on people’s lives.

I’m quite interested and, frankly, very happy to see changes to time-share contracts. I’m of an age when people were really excited about time-shares. It seemed like this great deal, and you were going to be able to go and visit these places. Of course, much later, in the fine print, it said you’re obliged to keep them for 50 years and your children will inherit the debt—you’re going to have to keep paying and paying forever.

I see that there are some ways of ending those contracts, but I also see that there’s a termination fee and other requirements, and I’m just hoping that when this gets to committee, that could be looked at more closely, to look at the specifics. I have been looking at time-share contracts, and it seems to me that, first of all, they’re hard to get out of, but that the termination fees could be very, very high and disproportionate to what actually should be there. So it’s my hope that that comes up in committee.

The thing—and it has been mentioned before—that does worry me is that there are no provisions in here for price gouging, where collusion is taking place in industries. We know that in the grocery industry there are very few players, and they have made a practice of colluding with each other, and they’ve been caught once or twice. I remember when we got these little \$25 gift certificates to make up for everything that we’d overpaid in bread. I also remember when people on ODSP and people in food banks were saying, “Would you mind donating those \$25 vouchers, because people really need help.” It’s another reminder of how many people are struggling—that was quite a few years ago, as well—but it’s also a reminder of how common it is for collusion to take place when there’s really minimal competition amongst those industries.

Finally, the concern about new homes and the lack of proper oversight by Tarion—and I think we’ve been

hearing these concerns for quite a few years. We've all been hearing horror stories about people losing buckets and buckets of money and never actually getting the home that they'd been promised—or they get the home and it's so poorly built that they can't live in it. So I do think that Tarion needs to be looked at very critically, to make sure that it's not industry insiders who are populating that organization. It needs to be people who don't have any kind of vested interest—they're not friends here, friends there. It needs to be a group of people who can think like consumers, who can think like first-time homebuyers, and can protect people from some pretty awful things that we've seen going on over the last few years.

I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'm happy to take any questions.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It's great that the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North talked a little bit about some of the contracting that goes on within this legislation, which, of course, is looking to establish a 10-day cooling-off period and also trying to help people get out of bad contracts earlier; a lot of these revolve around HVAC systems or hot water heaters that are powered by natural gas and oil.

My question to the member opposite is, will she stand up for the people of Ontario? Will she call her federal counterparts in Ottawa and ask them to scrap the carbon tax?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Well, I do consider that a fairly amusing question, because so much of the carbon tax is actually done by the provincial government, and we have a carbon tax because the provincial government was unwilling to implement their own system for—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Because the people of Ontario don't want a carbon tax.

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Excuse me; it's my turn to answer—helping the environment. Instead, we got the carbon tax, and the province makes millions off of it.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's a great answer.

I'm going to go back to, actually, the bill, just to be refreshing. You referenced a really important issue that this piece of legislation misses entirely, and that is around price gouging.

We all remember the Premier of this province vowing to crack down on price gouging during the pandemic when it was \$29 for a box of Lysol wipes. I think we remember this.

1730

And then you quite rightly referenced the price-fixing of bread between the large grocery stores—and offering \$25 vouchers to people, as punishment.

Madam Speaker, this bill is not going to address price gouging. Price gouging is happening right now in the province of Ontario. We all understand that there is an affordability, cost-of-living crisis right here, right now. The bill is before us right now. Why do you think this

government missed such an opportune moment to address price gouging?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Thank you for the question. I can't really answer why. I wish that the government had addressed price gouging, because it really is such a central area where people are being ripped off. I don't think that it's an easy thing to fix, because those corporations are extremely powerful, but it is the place of government to be protecting all of the people of Ontario from that kind of price-fixing.

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

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you for your input and thank you for bringing the story. I know the St. Catharines MPP also brought her story from her constituent's perspective, and the MPP from Waterloo also brought stories. Thank you for bringing those stories. There are similar stories in my riding as well—how we can protect vulnerable and marginalized people in our community and in our riding.

Could you elaborate—I know, as the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery said, stepping in the right direction allows our government to give even more protection to the consumers and our residents. Could you tell me what else we should be doing to protect our consumers in Ontario?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Well, we're looking at what else the government could be doing to protect consumers in Ontario. I do think that setting up a consumer watchdog would be very helpful for many people. I also think that doing something about collusion and price gouging would really make a difference for people. Again, I think for seniors it would be so valuable to have a central place that seniors could reach out to, to get advice and support but also, hopefully, human-to-human support as opposed to going through a long telephone messaging system to actually reach somebody.

Thank you very much for your question.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** It is my great honour to rise and speak to this bill, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023. I would like to extend my thanks to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery for bringing this bill forward.

Speaker, this government and this Premier strongly believe that Ontarians deserve to feel protected when spending their hard-earned money, and this legislation, if passed, is a testament to our government's promise to always listen to the needs of Ontarians. The new act is the first update of Ontario's consumer protection legislation in nearly 20 years. After years of insufficient attention by the Liberal Party, in 2019 our ministry embarked on a long and extensive consultation journey, conducting a comprehensive review of existing legislation by gathering feedback from stakeholders, consumer groups and advocates, the legal community and everyday Ontarians.

The new act is the first update of Ontario's consumer protection legislation since 2005. The Consumer Protec-

tion Act, 2002, in its current form defines the rights and requirements for most personal and household transactions between consumers and businesses in Ontario, and its regulations establish and protect basic consumer rights, prohibit unfair business practices and set out contract regulations. Our government is now proposing measures that will ensure a fair and competitive economy based on insights discovered from the process. With this legislation, we're building a safer, more fair and stronger economy.

In 2002, not every home had a computer. Contracts were pieces of physical paper that were signed in-person. There were very basic avenues for doing business, and therefore fewer avenues for scammers. Today, the opportunities for bad business practices are overwhelmingly numerous, and consumers need updated protections that reflect the realities of an online world and dynamic marketplace. They need protections that address high-impact consumer harms.

I'm sure everyone in this chamber would agree that when consumers feel confident and protected, everyone in our economy thrives. This bill, if passed, will create those protections. The proposed bill would strengthen consumer rights, empower consumers, and give the ministry stronger enforcement powers to crack down on bad actors—keeping in mind that most business people are honest and hard-working, and as a government, we strive for the protection of the people of Ontario, including the businesses. It would also address the concerns and harms of our most vulnerable citizens, especially seniors, when facing contract amendments, subscription traps, high termination costs in long-term leases and unfair business practices used by door-to-door sellers. It is our government's goal to protect Ontarians with common-sense policies that reduce red tape and make it easier for consumers and businesses alike.

Let's look, specifically, at what this legislation will do. Firstly, if passed, this bill will create consumer protections by targeting unfair business practices. In law, to have a contract, there's something called consideration, and each contracting party must exchange something of value, in the sense that the act or the promise of one party must be bought or bargained for for the act or promise of the other; basically, one party gets something in consideration for someone else's in this situation. This bill closes the inequity that can sometimes exist between parties in an unfair agreement.

The bill will also clarify and strengthen prohibitions against unconscionable conduct by explicitly prohibiting specific unfair business practices, such as price gouging and profiting off of a consumer's inability to understand a language in a contract. This is important on a few fronts. Firstly, Ontario is a medley of multiculturalism, and there are many people for whom English is not their first language.

Recently, a constituent came into my office, a lovely gentleman; I met him at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in my riding. He told me his English was not so good and that he was worried about installing a new accessible tub in his house. He couldn't understand what the company he was

speaking with wanted from him, and he was worried that he was going to get scammed. All he was trying to do was make his home safer for his wife of 50 years. This gentleman will be one of the many people who will benefit from this new legislation.

Speaker, many homeowners in Ontario lease or rent water heaters and furnaces. This bill would establish specific rules for a new category of long-term leases for heating, ventilation and air conditioning called purchase-cost-plus leases. A purchase-cost-plus lease would be a lease under which the total amount payable exceeds 90% of the estimated retail value of the leased goods. It would establish a 10-day cooling-off period and would set limits on termination costs for purchase-cost-plus leases if a consumer wishes to end a contract early.

Consumers should feel safe when making purchases. Unfortunately, we've seen a rise in suppliers who create contracts that are difficult for consumers to exit, and that's not okay. This bill will protect Ontarians.

This bill proposes regulations that would, once approved and implemented, also prohibit businesses from creating unnecessary barriers when consumers are trying to cancel a contract, particularly a subscription or a membership-based contract; for example, a gym membership.

Over the last few years, many constituents have described how difficult the process was for cancelling their gym membership. Some of my constituents were forced to pay the monthly fees until the end of their contract agreement. Some received notification of unpaid dues even after their memberships had been cancelled. One told me she had to physically mail a cancellation form to a gym's head office in order to cancel their membership. In this day and age, with phones and Internet, that's simply not acceptable. Under the former rules, that individual would be in a position where they would have to pay for that benefit that they were not receiving and, sadly, they would not be able to rebut this continual payment that would be tested against their credit card. This improved legislation would prohibit businesses from creating unnecessary barriers when Ontarians are trying to cancel their contract, reinforcing consumer rights and choice.

This legislation would also provide more fair exit options for time-shares and long-term leases of work-related equipment.

On the discussion of time-shares, it's a common story—people who have purchased time-shares, sometimes older and vulnerable, in a property many years ago, and they're no longer able to use their property. I'll give you an example. It has been several years since Corinne, 83, from my riding last visited a time-share her late husband purchased many years ago. At more than \$600, the annual maintenance fee was unnecessary, and Corinne, a grandmother, worried about burdening her adult children with a property they didn't want to inherit. She became very concerned.

If the new amendment is passed, it would provide time-share owners with the option to terminate that contract after 25 years. It would also provide authority, including

regulation-making authority, to provide certain persons with a right to terminate a time-share upon that time-share owner's death. It would also limit the cost that a consumer or other specified person may be charged for exercising an option to terminate a time-share contract, with specific limits to be set out in regulation. This legislation would make the proposed new termination option apply to both existing and new time-share contracts. As part of the regulatory development, the new CPA would further improve disclosure requirements for time-share contracts, to help ensure consumers are better informed about the long-term implications of these contracts.

This bill would also clarify the obligations for businesses to discharge the NOSIs—those are the notices of security interest—for consumer goods registered in the land registry system when a contract is cancelled or rescinded in accordance with the new CPA or when a purchase-cost-plus lease is terminated. It would authorize the director to issue a document that the consumer can register on the land registry system to facilitate the discharge of the NOSI. And the new CPA would provide authority to develop regulations that would, if necessary, extend the new rules relating to NOSIs to other prescribed registrations, notices or instruments in the land registry system or other registration systems, like the personal property security registration system.

This bill additionally addresses the Consumer Reporting Act, the CRA, which regulates consumer agencies such as Equifax and TransUnion, and sets out the rights of consumers and obligations of businesses to address the transparency and accuracy of consumer reports. Now more than ever, consumers recognize the importance of

being able to access credit to participate in the market and monitor their overall financial well-being. The amendments to the CRA would improve outcomes for consumers while minimizing impacts to industry.

This bill, if passed, would have a substantial regulatory development phase that would include opportunities for further consultation with stakeholders and the public, with more detailed requirements to be set out.

This bill, ultimately, is a solid bill. I support it, and I move to adjourn this debate. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Ms. Smith has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1743 to 1813.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Members will return to their seats. We're waiting to begin. Thank you so much.

Ms. Smith has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerk.

**The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim):** The ayes are 41; the nays are 0.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading debate adjourned.*

*Report continues in volume B.*









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<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
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Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
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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	
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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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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
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<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
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
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Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
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	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	