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(Hansard)**

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Jeudi
30 novembre 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 novembre 2023

*Report continued from volume A.
The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I am absolutely delighted to introduce some very special people in our gallery today: Dr. Dirk Huyer, chief coroner of Ontario; John Snider from the Office of the Fire Marshal; and Rob Grimwood from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, joined by Andrea DeJong and Shaun Cameron, also from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Welcome to Ontario's Legislature.

Hon. Doug Downey: Along with those front-line service members, I also would like to introduce Mark Baxter, the president of the Police Association of Ontario.

SARDAR LAL ANAND

Mr. Deepak Anand: Four years back today, I unexpectedly lost my father, Sardar Lal Anand. Even though he is gone for a heavenly journey, I still believe he's here every day with me, watching all of us virtually. I want to say thank you for my mom for being so strong and being there for us.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 142, An Act to enact the Consumer Protection Act, 2023, to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and to amend and repeal various other Acts.

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.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: 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 (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Official Plan Adjustments Act, 2023 and to amend the Planning Act with respect to remedies.

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 GOVERNMENT BILLS

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À AMÉLIORER L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Mr. Downey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to the courts and other justice matters / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les tribunaux et d'autres questions relatives à la justice.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Attorney General like to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Doug Downey: Yes, I would, Mr. Speaker. The Enhancing Access to Justice Act, 2023, would, if passed, make it easier for more victims of crime to sue an offender for emotional distress. The proposed legislation would also protect children and youth from cannabis, enhance community safety and make court and government operations more efficient.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GROUP OF SEVEN DAY ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR LE JOUR DU GROUPE DES SEPT

Mr. Riddell moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 158, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day /
Projet de loi 158, Loi proclamant le Jour du Groupe des
Sept.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Cambridge like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Brian Riddell: The bill proclaims July 7 in each year as Group of Seven Day.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm proud to read this petition. It's submitted by teachers from Ryerson public school in my area.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto to Stop the Cuts and Invest in the Schools our Students Deserve.

"Whereas the Ford government cut funding to our schools by \$800 per student during the pandemic period, and plans to cut an additional \$6 billion to our schools over the next six years;

"Whereas these massive cuts have resulted in larger class sizes, reduced special education and mental health supports and resources for our students, and neglected and unsafe buildings;

"Whereas the Financial Accountability Office reported a \$2.1-billion surplus in 2021-22, and surpluses growing to \$8.5 billion in 2027-28, demonstrating there is more than enough money to fund a robust public education system;

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

"—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

"—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

"—provide schools the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students;

"—make the needed investments to provide smaller class sizes, increased levels of staffing to support our students' special education, mental health, English language learner and wraparound supports needs, and safe and healthy buildings and classrooms."

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

AMBULANCE SERVICES

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This petition is entitled "Stop Billing Recipients of OW and ODSP for Ambulance Transportation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ambulance fees for OW, ODSP and GAINS recipients are waived under the Ontario Works Act, Ontario Disability Support Program Act and Family Benefits Act;

"Whereas these recipients are still initially billed every time they are transported to the hospital and must have the fee waived after they receive care;

"Whereas this mechanism causes anxiety for those who are entitled to have their bill covered and additional work for caseworkers and health care workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to:

"—immediately eliminate billing recipients of OW, ODSP and GAINS for their essential use of ambulance transportation to the hospital;

"—implement a program, like the easy-to-use Fair Pass Transit Discount Program, where OW, ODSP and GAINS recipients may upload proof of income and make it subject to renewal annually;

"—to not include hidden fees or mechanisms that take from initiatives or programs that are specifically designed for recipients of OW, ODSP and GAINS who have high health care needs."

I'll be attaching my signature to this petition and returning it to the table with page Elliott.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition here entitled "Stop Ford's Health Care Privatization Plan.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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"Whereas Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Sylvia Jones are trying to privatize parts of health care;

"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 and recruiting, retaining and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs with better pay and 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;

“—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;

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

I support this petition, will sign my name to it and send it to the Clerk with the page.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled “Save Ontario Place.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario Place has been a cherished public space for over 50 years, providing joy, recreation and cultural experiences for Ontarians and tourists alike and holds cultural and historical significance as a landmark that symbolizes Ontario’s commitment to innovation, sustainability and public engagement;

“Whereas redevelopment that includes a private, profit-driven venture by an Austrian spa company prioritizes commercial interests over the needs and desires of the people of Ontario, and it is estimated that the cost to prepare the grounds for redevelopment and build a 2,000 car underground” parking “garage will cost approximately \$650 million;...

“Whereas meaningful public consultations with diverse stakeholders have not been adequately conducted and the Ontario NDP has sent a letter of support for a public request” for an investigation;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt any further development plans for Ontario Place, engage in meaningful and transparent public consultations to gather input and ideas for the future of Ontario Place, develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the revitalization of Ontario Place that prioritizes environmental sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, and ensure that any future development of Ontario Place is carried out in a transparent and accountable manner, with proper oversight, public input and adherence to democratic processes.”

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

CHRONIC PAIN TREATMENT

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This petition is entitled the “National Chronic Pain Society petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas one in four Ontarians over the age of 15 suffer from chronic pain, with 73% reporting that the pain interferes with their daily lives and more than half reporting issues with depression and suicidal thoughts; and

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

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

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

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

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

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and return it to the centre table with page Scarlett.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NEW DEAL FOR TORONTO ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR UN NOUVEL ACCORD POUR TORONTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: It is an honour, an absolute honour, to rise on Bill 154. Ontario and Toronto reached a historic new deal. It’s a new deal that puts Toronto on a path to growth and long-term financial stability and sustainability. Toronto will advance key provincial priorities, including housing and transit—and I’ll talk about that—and Ontario will provide substantial support to help in the operating of a number of matters that will be beneficial to all Torontonians, of which I am one. I’ll talk also about why I think looking into taking over the Gardiner and the DVP is actually great and is something that I’m really excited about.

I want to mention, Madam Speaker—as I have done in the past—a little bit of nostalgia to why Bill 154, the New Deal for Toronto Act, is important. I was a young kid in 1967. Some members across may have been, but we don’t guess each other’s age in this chamber, so I will just say I can speak only for myself. But in 1967—I’ll jog your memory in a minute—there was an inspired signature tune

to commemorate our Ontario expo pavilion, and it was our unofficial anthem. It was written by a person who actually wrote another famous song, the hockey theme that we also remember. It was commissioned by Premier John Robarts, and it was entitled *A Place to Stand, a Place to Grow*.

In 1967, how we looked at ourselves as Torontonians, as Ontarians, as people from all over the province, was a period of a milestone in Canadian history. In 1967, Canada was 100 years old. I was—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Yes, some of the members opposite might have remembered that famous song, *A Place to Stand, a Place to Grow*. But let me tell you what it did: It inspired us to look at the unprecedented opportunities we had throughout our province, to look at it with optimism, to look at it with innovation and imagination, and look at it in the eyes of what the next generation of Ontarians would realize. And in 1967 until today, I'm that generation that my parents would have said, "We will look forward to our son—our son Michael and his brothers—to what they will become and what they will do to help build Ontario."

So for me, it is a bit nostalgic, especially when—and we're going to talk about the Gardiner Expressway. The Gardiner Expressway was named after a person that served our province and our city. I remember so many things also about what the Toronto transit was when I was a little kid. Many of us remember—I tell my sons this and my daughter this—you could feel the speed of the subway train by the way it was bouncing on the tracks, and you knew you were going quite fast or quite slow. Our subway transit looked different in the early 1970s and the late 1960s. We had a very short subway line; it didn't go very far.

Through that, we ended up building out more transit, and as part of this government's commitment to Ontario, we're building constantly. I've said this before: We are building for my children's generation and their children's generation. I think it's absolutely, absolutely impressive.

Madame la Présidente, pour moi, c'est l'honneur de servir, l'honneur de prendre et l'honneur d'écouter. Nous vivons une époque sans précédent mais nous avons des opportunités toutes aussi uniques.

It's true: We're living in such unprecedented times. And when you saw Toronto elect a new mayor a number of months ago, in the summer—I think it was June—it brought, again, a look as to how will Ontario and how will Canada work with the new mayor of Toronto? Madam Speaker, I happened to meet the mayor of Toronto at the anniversary of the Christie Pits Riots. It was in summer and it was to commemorate 90 years since the anniversary of the Christie Pits Riots. Mayor Olivia Chow rode her bike to the Christie Pits Riots, and I went up to her and I wanted to give her a welcome as one of her citizens of Toronto to say, "I wish you well."

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Madam Speaker, the Premier talks about it all the time. He talks about how we need to work with different levels of government, wherever they are. When I travelled to Bromont, Quebec, to attend a federal, provincial and terri-

torial meeting, I did so with the expectation that I would sit with my colleagues at different levels of government—with Minister Virani, our Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and Minister LeBlanc, my counterpart, our Minister of Public Safety for Canada—and address issues that were of concern to Ontario and ask the federal government to look at it with a lens that would help all of Canada. I really applaud the Premier for continuously setting a tone that our government can work with anyone. We can sit down, we can agree, we can disagree, but hopefully we'll agree more than not, so that we can work towards making things better for all of Ontario.

As the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore spoke earlier this morning, she reminded us that Toronto is the engine of Ontario. It really is. Toronto became a huge city. I'm standing up today to speak on Bill 154 because I represent a riding in Toronto, and it is called York Centre. And I said, "York Centre, for me, is my home." I put it on my cards, Madam Speaker. I proudly live and represent York Centre. Living in a riding means that we have a sincere appreciation of knowing who our members are, of understanding where the park is. We share memories together of where we took our kids to school, where we played soccer with them, at what hockey arena we put on skates with them. For me, it has always been personal.

And who doesn't want the best for the city that they live in, everywhere in Ontario? One of the greatest privileges of serving here is speaking to members all over this House who live everywhere in Ontario, to understand how passionate they are for the communities they represent. So for me, it has been very, very, very personal.

So how do we go from a place to stand and a place to grow, and why is that relevant again to Bill 154? Because we talk about the need to ensure financial stability and financial sustainability for the city, and this bill aims to ensure that the people in Ontario can cover basic needs, including food, shelter and health care, without constant worry. Stability is crucial for the city of Toronto. This government has always advocated for strong and safe communities, and Madam Speaker, this is no secret. I've said many times what a privilege it is to be responsible as Solicitor General for public safety. It has given me an insight into things that I didn't really appreciate and that I have taken for granted, and I've spoken about it.

Transit safety is so important. When we spoke about this in the spring, we said that the violence on transit is particularly egregious and unacceptable. Bill 154 will talk about providing financial supports to the city of Toronto so that they can have greater security on our public transit. They can have more capital asset replenishments, because subway cars get old and subway cars, buses and other assets need to be replaced.

I can't believe how great it is to see public transit expanding all over the city. I look at the new subway lines that we're building. I look at the LRT lines. Toronto will become that much more accessible for people to come here. When we look at what we're doing to transform Ontario Place—Ontario Place had a vision when it was built, and what we are doing now is renewing that vision.

We are taking a science centre that is located at the outskirts, at the fringe areas of Toronto, and we're making it accessible now to so many people on a subway line that will converge at Ontario Place and be part of a vision.

The Minister of Infrastructure spoke earlier today. She reminded us that when the science centre was built, it was built on lands we did not own. It was built on leased lands. If you did the math, there are not that many more decades left under the present lease. And that building, as many of us have been to see for ourselves recently, has done its time. It was a great building in the late 1960s. I spent many hours at the science centre. I think it's only fair to the next generation and the next generation after that that the science centre be renewed. I look forward to that.

There are not too many of us, even if we're not from a Toronto riding, who have not gone over the Gardiner Expressway or the Don Valley expressway to come to work. It was built at a time when infrastructure was just being planned to take a young city of Toronto through the 1950s and 1960s into something that it would evolve into and become. Almost every one of us, I'm sure, has been on those expressways, but really and truly, they're not much different than Highway 401 or the 427 or the Queen Elizabeth—other roadway systems that connect different places in Ontario.

I really look forward, as part of this bill, to looking at the opportunities to bring this new deal to fruition. There are lands also that could be developed for housing. We all agree that we need to have a plan for our children to leave our homes—not that they'll be so appreciative. I have three children, basically, at home, although one is in fourth year at Queen's. But my sons graduated, and they are still living at home. They want to be able to have a plan of home ownership themselves, and when you live an urban centre riding, it's complicated. Housing is expensive. What we're doing now, as part of Bill 154, is, again, looking for the opportunities to build, and we're going to do it.

I want to compliment the Minister of Finance and all the others who worked so diligently for 10 weeks on productive collaboration with the city to help make these discussions come into reality. Big cities often serve as economic engines, generating substantial portions of GDP. With Toronto, this is particularly the case. Toronto's success drives national and regional economic growth through various industries and innovation hubs. We have an innovation hub just down the street. It's called MaRS. And we have others. I'm looking at what could happen at the former Downsview lands in my own riding, where one day we could have 30,000 new residents living. There are unprecedented opportunities to build Toronto, and we need to do so in a collaborative way.

I think the fact that the province and the city have agreed on a new deal—"new deal" is an expression that we heard a long time ago in the history books, but it is a new deal because it gives actionable steps that will help move the engine of Ontario forward: up to \$1.2 billion in provincial operating supports over three years to address critical priorities, to address the shortage of affordable

housing, to address the rising housing costs, to address economic hardships from the federal government, job losses and lack of access to resources for homelessness.

Wherever we go in Toronto, we're not immune to this. I congratulate the fact that the Premier leads by example. How enthusiastic was our Premier and our Minister of Finance and our Minister of Infrastructure that we can sit down with anybody. Mayor Olivia Chow is a person that was able to realize the benefit of working with the government of Ontario, led by Premier Ford, to move Toronto and Ontario forward. There are so many great features that this bill offers us, with hope and anticipation.

1330

I have to tell you, when you look at Toronto today, it looks so much different than it did under Premier John Robarts, who commissioned that song, A Place to Stand, a Place to Grow. We look at Toronto now through difference lenses of where we are technologically with innovation, and what we wanted Toronto to be. Toronto is a diverse city and nobody foresaw the way it unfolded.

Madame la Présidente, comme je l'ai déjà dit, notre diversité est notre plus grande réussite.

We can't minimize the impact of our diversity in our city. There is no other parallel to what we have become with our diversity. Through diversity, we have innovation and we have opportunity. And that's exactly why, when we look at Bill 154, we look at the significant opportunity, working together, that we can accomplish. It's about what we can accomplish working together. It's about what we can accomplish working collaboratively.

And whether it's Ontario Place being completed to attract millions of Torontonians to go and visit and make it a destination point that they can enjoy 365 days a year; whether it's looking at the opportunity of seeing a science centre be what it should be today, in 2023, a place of science and innovation for another generation, to last another 50 years; or whether it be looking at how Toronto can meet or exceed its housing targets and to identify and make available surplus city lands for building homes—this is important, and we can't stress this enough. Our government and Toronto will always continue to call on the federal government to step up as a full partner with funding in critical areas such as shelter support. When Toronto succeeds, Ontario succeeds, and we know this: When Ontario succeeds, Canada succeeds.

I really think it is a great honour for all of us to take pride in our city of Toronto. For me, Madam Speaker, there is no place like home. But I want to also acknowledge, as I do every time I rise, how lucky are we, how fortunate are we to sit in this Legislature—less than 2,000 people since our country was founded—with an opportunity to make change, with an opportunity to make things better, with an opportunity to leave a legacy for others, and to do so with good intentions. And every time I've stood up here, my heart is always driven—not for me. This is not about me. This is about our families and our children and their children, and what we can accomplish together.

I will be supporting this bill. I encourage everybody to support it, and I just want to say, it is a great honour, not

only to serve here, but to have an opportunity to stand and to be so passionate about a city I call home.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre and to speak to this particular—

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Oh, I'm sorry, Speaker. My apologies.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Spadina—

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Actually, sure. Why not?

Thank you to our presenter for his comments and presentation. I'm just curious because in the bill, although entitled "a new deal for Toronto," schedule 1 actually says nothing about the details that you've just described and I've heard other members of the government describe. So any reference to specific funding criteria or perhaps more support for to the city—there are no specifics in there. The only thing schedule 1 does is actually speak to the fact that the mayor and the Premier will be sitting down to have further discussions.

So what exactly will be the new deal when that new deal is finally tabled?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Well, I want to thank my colleague for the question. She served many years in Toronto city hall. It must be—as my seatmate does, Minister Cho—to look at lenses when you served at another place, and we're talking about the city of Toronto.

But Madam Speaker, we're talking about \$300 million in one-time funding for subway cars and transit. We're talking about \$750 million to support 55 new subway cars also for TTC Line 2 that we encourage and will need the federal government to support. So there are a number of things that we're doing as part of the new deal. The new deal took 10 weeks to bring together to make it possible, and we're delighted that Mayor Chow and Premier Ford were able to do it.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the minister for the interesting stories of Toronto he cited to us. As a resident of Toronto for 43 years, Toronto is changing, and we need to keep in step with the changes happening in our city.

I remember when I was a Boy Scout leader and Cub leader, I used to take the kids to Ontario Science Centre, and the kids were very excited because it was a completely different, new place—lots of activities. From what I hear now from my community leaders who are involved in the Boy Scout movement, they say that the kids don't want to go to the Ontario Science Centre because they tell us it is boring—nothing interesting. The building is getting dilapidated.

Can the minister explain to us how this new bill will support the city of Toronto?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my friend opposite. Everything is not only about an engine from a

business standpoint; it is also for what we have in Toronto. We have parks. We have places to go. We're a destination place. We're a hub of tourism.

When we look at an Ontario Science Centre that has had such an illustrious lifespan, to renew it and to relocate and to reinvest in it and to reimagine it is something that will be that place of excellence for tourism, and to consolidate it in a site right on the lake, I think, will be a showpiece for the entire world. So Ontario Place and the Ontario Science Centre go hand in hand. I think they belong together, and they're going to be great together.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for your comments today. In this legislation, it actually states that this government is giving itself the ability to protect itself from legal action if a minister or another member of government has or will commit a breach of trust, breach of contract, misfeasance. Misfeasance is the wrongful use of lawful authority. So my question is, what wrongful use of lawful authority has this government or its ministers used or planned to use that they need this legal protection for?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: You know, I believe—and I said it when I started: The engine of Toronto drives the engine of Ontario which drives the engine of Canada. We have a can-do mentality. We are positive. We believe in working together with other levels of government, and that's why the Premier met with Mayor Olivia Chow and was able to get this historic agreement moving forward. It was 10 weeks of hard work.

There are a lot of things that will come forward as part of the continued and ongoing discussion with the city, but this is a place to start. This is a place to grow.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member very much for his remarks on the bill. I was around—I'm not going to say how old I was in 1967, but I was able to recall those great words.

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I was very interested in the member's thoughts on transit—and particularly relevant for Toronto residents in two perspectives. Firstly, you mention the safety, which is such a big factor. I'm a regular transit rider and happily haven't encountered things first-hand, but it's a different environment than it used to be. And also, on the investment part of this, arrangement for new vehicles on the system, so it's important to make sure transit—not only building future tunnels and whatnot but making sure the cars are ready. Are those elements, as a Toronto—you know, representing a Toronto community, they must be important to your constituents as you look at this transaction.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague and friend. The roadways in Toronto had never and could never have imagined the growth of Toronto. My children would ask me why for so many years we had a very limited way of moving around Toronto. We had an

east-west route, then we had a north-south route, and then we had a tiny little route on Sheppard, but there was not a lot of opportunities to take public transit until we dreamed big, until we realized that we could do more. We could get cars off the road by building transit that people will be able to take more efficiently to get to work.

There's so much lost time when we spend hours in gridlock, and the investments that we're making, the historic investments—the member is absolutely correct—will help us for generations to come. I think it's absolutely essential that we continue on with our plan.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question to the Solicitor General, and he should be able to answer this, but my colleague from Spadina–Fort York asked the question and the Solicitor General kind of skirted the response, saying Ontario is a great place to grow—and it absolutely is for the Conservative government. It's a great place to grow the bank accounts of lawyers because of the number of legal proceedings they've found themselves in. So I think it's really relevant.

First, I want to say, this bill only talks about conversations happening. It doesn't actually make the government upload the DVP or the Gardiner or any of the other things that they're talking about in here. Literally, they're legislating themselves to have a conversation about a conversation. So we've seen through 6,000 people dying in long-term care how this government brought in legislation to protect themselves from being sued for negligence and those for-profit long-term-care homes.

So I'm going to ask the Solicitor General again what my colleague from Spadina–Fort York asked, and hopefully he will actually address it this time. Why are you giving yourself the power to make misrepresentations and commit misconduct when it comes to Ontario Place, and why are you giving yourself legal protection from acts of misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust and breach of your sharing obligation with the community? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: We're going to examine—well, the member opposite raised the DVP and the Gardiner. You know, the concept of a new deal is that you have to have a place to start. Our place to start is at the beginning, and what we're doing now is we're going to look at every opportunity to look at the feasibility of uploading the responsibilities for two major arteries to the provincial highway system—just like we have the 401 and the 427—and people will be able to go all around Toronto on a provincial road. That is very important so that there is consistency, and it will help the city reallocate monies that it otherwise might need for other places.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The House will come to order. I recognize the member from Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This is for additional speakers, right? Thank you very much.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to rise to speak in this House. It's always an honour to do so on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre, and in particular to speak about the city that I love, absolutely love. My family and I chose Toronto in 1975, and I would describe Toronto as my first love. This is the city that I know; this is the city that I call home. So any time that I can stand up in this House and speak well of Toronto and all the things that happen in Toronto, I would love to do, and that's what I intend to do today, especially when there's a bill before us entitled "a new deal for Toronto." Can you imagine someone like myself, who spent 12 years at city council advocating for a new deal for Toronto, trying so hard to get the province's attention to make sure that the investments in Toronto flow freely, where we were treated like equal partners?

Interestingly enough, this bill, although entitled a New Deal for Toronto, actually says very little about a new deal for the city of Toronto. It is mistitled, and egregiously so, because in schedule 1, any reference to the new deal is only aspirational. What we have is comments from various ministers and the Premier in the press talking about all the wonderful things that they would like to do for the city of Toronto, which I absolutely welcome. But it's not contained in bill 1.

We will get to bill 2 shortly, but in bill 1, what we have is a very odd piece of legislation. It's so peculiar that you've identified that you'd like to do things by talking to the city of Toronto, that you've enshrined it and codified as legislation. All it does is empower the government to have conversations with the city, which they can do at any given time, to talk about various things and that, if they draw an amicable conclusion where everyone can agree, they can come back later on and then, I guess, codify those actual benefits, the actual specific terms.

Despite all the suggestions and the proclamations by the members of government that there is all this new funding coming to the city of Toronto, it's not here yet. I will stand in this House to applaud every single member of this government when the specifics of that new deal, with all the funding criteria, are made sustainable, ongoing, not a one-time grant or proposal. I will be the first to shake your hand. So that is very, very peculiar.

Because we don't see any single new funding commitment in this bill, and we're not seeing actually a new deal yet, I think it's important that we sort of talk about what the government has been spending less time talking about. It's not about the potential redevelopment of Ontario Place, because we know that has been ongoing—things that the government would like to do. But again, we have to draw examples from specifically the bill on what's in here and what is not.

We know that a new deal for Toronto does not exist in this legislation. That new deal may be coming with the particulars that we're looking for. But what we do have is a schedule 2, which is really the substance of the bill. Schedule 2 is an entirely different piece of legislation. Already noted by many speakers here is that it entirely exempts the redevelopment of Ontario Place from a

number of key laws. These laws include the protection of provincial heritage, environmental regulations and laws as well as planning rules.

Schedule 2 of this so-called new deal for Toronto allows the Minister of Infrastructure to rezone Ontario Place by fiat, so an unlimited power to issue more MZOs. If passed, it will immunize the government from all sorts of potential challenges, including deeds of bad faith with respect to misrepresentations. It allows the government to avoid breach of trust or breach of fiduciary duties. It allows them to act with impunity and, of course, misfeasance.

Interestingly enough, what we have is a bill that actually is not a great deal for the city of Toronto at all. It actually undermines what the residents of Toronto want. It actually undermines what Mayor Chow wants. I think it's important for us to recognize that Mayor Chow has specifically said, and she has said on many occasions, that she does not want a mega-spa at Ontario Place.

I challenge any member of this House to find me the clip where Mayor Chow says that she wants a mega-spa at Ontario Place. I challenge any member of this House, especially on the government side, to tell me when she said she never wanted a public park and the preservation of natural heritage on this site. I challenge anyone in this House to tell me that Mayor Chow actually sacrificed Toronto's waterfront in exchange for a mega-spa. She has never spoken in favour of the mega-spa. She has never spoken in favour of anything, other than the public park and the restoration of the public park, and making sure that that land is going to be publically accessible in perpetuity. I know her heart on this.

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I think it's important for us to recognize that this bill has now created a legal option for the government to undermine democratic processes and actions, including a legal action by the group Ontario Place for All, a grassroots non-profit organization and advocacy group that has 30,000 members across Ontario. What they are advocating for is that the government take a pause to undertake a full environmental assessment to ensure that any revitalization of Ontario Place and any redevelopment of those assets are done in the most responsible fashion.

It has been shocking to have government members stand up and proclaim that an environmental assessment has been done for Ontario Place when we all know, and every single person in this House knows, that that has not taken place. There has never been a full environmental assessment, especially over the west island, which is exactly the territory that will be entirely eradicated when that massive Austrian luxury spa lands in that natural habitat.

So the question that many of us have is, what's the rush? Because now we have a piece of legislation before us. The government is definitely going to rush—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from Toronto Centre.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have

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.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order, Speaker.

Speaker, if you seek, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. Jones has requested to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CLEANING UP CORRUPTION ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 CONCERNANT LA LUTTE CONTRE LA CORRUPTION

Mr. Glover moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act and Members' Integrity Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur général et la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This bill, Bill 148, is called the Cleaning Up Corruption Act, and it actually comes from requests from the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner. I'm really curious around to see, at the end of this debate, whether the Conservative government will be voting against cleaning up corruption. That is what we are going to be waiting for. I'm waiting with bated breath to see whether they will vote for this.

I am the Ontario NDP critic for democratic reform. The goal of this bill is to clean up corruption and also, by doing so, to help restore faith in our democracy, because one of the things that I learned when I got here was from the former MPP from Timmins, Gilles Bisson. He told me he had been in the House since 1990. One of the lessons that he taught—he said that the thing that we should do, all of us, all 124 elected members in this House, is that we should leave our democracy stronger than we found it when we leave this House, after our time here.

I think that is the most vital job that we all have and the biggest responsibility, because whatever we pass on to the next generation of legislators, and also to the people of Ontario, that's our legacy. Our legacy should be to actually strengthen our democracy, and I'm deeply, deeply concerned that our democracy is being weakened and undermined because of all the scandals.

The scandals are in the news all the time. We've got the greenbelt scandal. The Auditor General report came out last summer. It showed that developers, many of whom were wedding guests at the Premier's daughter's wedding, bought property a month after the wedding, farmland that was protected by the greenbelt. Then a month after that the government introduced legislation to remove that property from greenbelt protections. They stood to profit \$8 billion from that transaction, from that piece of legislation.

The government has backtracked on that but they haven't backtracked all the way, because not all of that greenbelt property is being removed. There is a bill now before the House to remove those greenbelt properties, but not all of the greenbelt properties are part of that act.

The other thing that the government has done: The Toronto Star says that the government has found a backdoor way to continue the greenbelt scandal by getting municipalities to do their dirty work. So the municipalities are now paving over greenbelt properties. A lot of the same developers bought these properties on the outskirts of cities and the municipalities are expanding their boundaries to include that farmland, even though we know from the government's own report that we don't need to pave over farmland in order to build the housing that we need, the 1.5 million homes over 10 years.

The Conservative scandals are on top of a decade of Liberal scandals. Under the Liberal government we had the gas plants, the Ornge, the eHealth and the cash-for-access scandals, where people—developers, business people—would pay large amounts of money to have dinner or to sit at a table with a Liberal minister in order to influence policy. We can see just how dangerous that can be with the current Premier. You know, the Premier, at his daughter's wedding, and all those developers sitting there, did they discuss the properties that they were buying or ways to make \$8 billion on farmland? This kind of cash-for-access scandal hasn't stopped.

This week in the news, the former Minister of Health Christine Elliott: She is now a lobbyist for six corporations, including Clearpoint. Clearpoint is a for-profit health corporation that performs surgeries, and they charge the government—they charge us, not the government; it's us, the taxpayers, that are paying for this—up to four times the amount for the same surgery than if it was conducted in a public, not-for-profit hospital. Christine Elliott, the former Minister of Health, is now lobbying for this corporation so that they can get more government contracts and make more money on the backs of taxpayers.

At the same time, our hospital system is crumbling because this government is deliberately creating a crisis in our public health care system in order to privatize it. It's absolutely shameful.

I'll just give you one small example. My brother has been in the hospital for the last two and a half weeks. Of those two and a half weeks, all but three days he has been in a hallway. And not just him; he's one of dozens of patients lined up and down the hallways in the hospital. They've actually got little cards so they number the beds in the hallways, because this is not some temporary situa-

tion; this is an ongoing situation. Thousands—tens of thousands—of Ontarians, when they go to the hospital, are getting stuck in hallways because this government refuses to finance our public hospitals and instead is diverting our tax dollars to private, for-profit hospitals.

The scandals undermine people's confidence in our democracy. We also know that our economy is not working for the people of this province. Many workers with full-time jobs cannot afford housing and food. The Daily Bread Food Bank report came out this week and it showed that the largest growth in food bank users was people with full-time jobs, because they are paying so much for housing that they can't afford food.

At the same time, this government keeps talking about the carbon tax. Yes, the carbon tax is a bit of a nuisance. But if you remove the carbon tax, that's not going to bring the price of gas down to an affordable level. It's not going to bring the price of housing or food down to an affordable level, because the oil corporations are gouging us. Their profits are through the roof. They are making record profits. It's the same with the five grocery store chains that supply almost all of the food in this country; they are making record profits as well.

1400

So the economy is not working well, and the reason it's not working well is due to government policy, the policies that have been pursued over the last 25 years by Liberal and Conservative governments. It's gotten to the point where you can have a full-time job and not be able to afford food, shelter and clothing, and that's absolutely unacceptable.

In order to restore faith, we need to make some changes. When you look at what the government has done, what has happened is people have lost their faith in our democracy. In the last provincial election, only 43% of voters turned up at the polls. That's the lowest on record. And why would they turn up when they know that, no matter how they vote—unless they did vote for the NDP, and I hope that we do get in government, because we've got to clean up some of this. But they keep voting, and when they're voting they're not getting the change that they need. They're not getting to the point where a full-time job will allow them to afford housing and food and shelter, and we need to make those changes. At the same time, they see government—the last Liberal government, this Conservative government—embroiled in scandals where they're diverting our tax dollars not to the services that we need, not to the health care or the education services that we need; they're diverting our tax dollars to projects like the mega-spa at Ontario Place, and they're diverting our tax dollars to for-profit privatized health care.

So this legislation, the Cleaning Up Corruption Act: It's a fairly simple bill. There are a couple of things it does. One is that it brings an end to preferential treatment. The government signs contracts with many different companies. I'll give you the example of Ontario Place. The government put out an RFP, request for proposals. They were asking companies to bid with their ideas for Ontario Place. They were expecting a fair process, because they

spent tens of thousands of dollars preparing those proposals. Therme was given a better deal than everybody else, so far as we can tell. The government extended the deadline for the proposals; one of the late proposals was Therme. My colleague from Oshawa has asked whether there was a fairness monitor overseeing this contract; there was no fairness monitor. She asked what the scoring criteria was for the different contracts; there was none, or the government hasn't been willing to produce the scoring criteria. The government also refuses to release the lease that they signed, the 95-year lease with Therme. So how can people have confidence in the government if companies that are applying for government contracts are being given preferential treatment? One of things that this does is it brings an end to preferential treatment.

It also brings an end to conflicts of interest. I'll give you an example. I used to be a school board trustee. There were two trustees on the school board who had children who were teachers in the system. Whenever there was a vote or a discussion about teacher pay, they had to recuse themselves from that discussion and from that vote, because they had a perceived conflict of interest. That same rule about declaring a perceived conflict of interest, that doesn't apply to MPPs. So the Premier, for example, could be sitting at a wedding with his developer friends, talking about his developer friends, or another minister could be going on a trip to Las Vegas and having a massage with the developer who has business before the House, and that minister or that Premier is not in violation of the integrity act.

One of the things that this legislation does is it tightens up the integrity act so that, if a minister has a friend or a family member or an adult child with business before the House or who stands to benefit from a government decision, they would have to declare a conflict of interest.

That's one of the things that needs to happen, because right now—we saw the Premier had a wedding, his daughter's wedding. There were developers that were invited. It was \$1,500 a ticket. They were asked to make donations, and they made donations, sometimes tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Premier's daughter. That wasn't a violation of the integrity act because it was given to an adult child. So the other thing that this legislation does is it redefines "family" to include adult children so that that kind of violation or that kind of perceived conflict of interest would actually be a conflict of interest and the Premier would have to declare that conflict of interest and wouldn't be able to take part in those discussions.

The main two things this Cleaning Up Corruption Act does is it ends preferential treatment and it brings an end to conflicts of interest, or it makes the members declare conflicts of interest when they are making a decision. This will help to bring an end to the scandals that are undermining the people's confidence in our democracy.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm surprised that the government is not putting up any speakers to speak to this

particular issue: one that actually strikes at the very heart of their government.

I'm very proud to stand here today to speak on this particular bill, a bill that will clean up corruption in the provincial government. I want to thank the member from Spadina–Fort York for tabling this important piece of legislation, which essentially fills in the loopholes that exist in the Auditor General's Act. We know, Speaker, that the Auditor General has faced barriers in trying to do her job and their job. She's been blocked from accessing crucial information as it relates to financial investigations that she needs to have access to in order for there to be determined value-for-money audits, which is exactly the job the Auditor General does. It also prohibits anyone from using legislative privilege or solicitor privilege to hide documents from the Auditor General. It seems pretty straightforward on why such a piece of legislation would be important.

Speaker, I also want to note the fact that this matter strikes to the very heart of our democratic values. There's been a disturbing pattern of preferential treatment and the troubling allegations that never seem to stop around the corruption regarding key appointments made by the Premier. I want to be able to shed some light on these issues because I think it really has profound implications on good governance and the democratic fabric of our province.

In a democracy, the trust between the government and those that they govern is absolutely sacred. We entrust our leaders with the responsibility to lead with transparency, with fairness and the highest ethical standards. Recently, appointments made under this government have raised some very serious questions about the erosion of those fundamental principles. And now, it poses an exact threat to the essence of our democratic institutions.

Speaker, I want to bring your attention to a statement that was released by Tribunal Watch Ontario, which is the tribunal watchdog of Ontario. The title of the statement is, "Oversight of Ontario Government Appointments to Tribunals Has Become Farce." What they is that "public confidence in the" tribunal "system requires that the people appointed to adjudicative tribunals be" seen as "independent and fully competent to make decisions that can have profound effects on the people appearing before them." Prospective appointees now no longer have to appear before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. This has been an ongoing tradition and a practice of this House that has now evaporated ever since the government was elected in 2018.

Another example of preferential treatment is the appointment of Mr. Ron Taverner, where the Premier tried to have him positioned in a way that he was going to become the OPP commissioner. The influence of personal relationships in such crucial roles raises legitimate questions about the independence of our law enforcement. We've heard on numerous occasions where the Premier has stood up and said, "I don't direct the police," but yet he tries and does so. When the head of our police force is appointed based on personal connections rather than merit, we jeopardize the public's trust in the impartiality and the

fairness of our law enforcement, an institution fundamental to maintaining the rule of law.

Equally disconcerting is the appointment of Charles McVety to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. Mr. McVety, as we all know, is a vocal supporter of the Premier, which then prompts us the question of criteria being used in these appointments. Should political affiliations and personal connections take precedence over qualifications and expertise, we risk compromising the quality and the integrity of our education system—the cornerstone of our society and the foundation on which future generations build their dream.

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The case of Mr. Saunders, appointed to the Ontario Place board of directors, layered another area of concern. Mr. Saunders—of course, Mark Saunders—brings valuable experience to the table, but there was a lack of transparency regarding his appointment which then fueled speculation, and what we know is that he produced no outcome. There was no report attached to his work. This undermines public confidence in the fairness and accountability of our institutions and it further clouds the principles that guide our democracy.

When personal connections and political alliances take precedence over merit and qualifications, we risk eroding the very foundations of our democratic values. It erodes the public's trust in our elected leaders, and I think, Speaker, that we can all agree that that is exactly what we are here to do in this House: maintain public trust and ensure that we provide good government.

With that, Speaker, I submit my comments to this House.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to join this debate as the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of the Attorney General. While we don't agree on a lot of what goes on across the floor, we certainly agree that the issues of transparency and accountability are absolutely paramount, and they are issues which are ongoing and will always be ongoing. There is no finish line in this type of endeavor. There is always room for improvement.

Ontario has an extensive ethical framework for members of the executive council, members of provincial Parliament and for public servants. The Members' Integrity Act of 1994 governs the conduct of all elected individuals. In the proposed bill before us today, Bill 148, it proposes two amendments to the Members' Integrity Act as well as to the powers of the Auditor General.

But I'd like to speak to the Members' Integrity Act. For clarity, it's a long-standing act that has been in place for many years under an NDP government, under a Liberal government and under a Conservative government. It's designed to provide greater certainty in the reconciliation of the private interests and public duties of members of the Legislative Assembly. It includes topics like financial investments, financial disclosure, conflicts of interest and use of social media and behaviour.

Madam Speaker, we go through an annual review with the Integrity Commissioner, Mr. David Wake. It was a week ago today that I met with Mr. Wake to go over my financial disclosure for last year. As a new MPP, that was my second time in my second year of office going in to have that very discussion with Mr. Wake, as we all do on an annual basis.

The act also provides for the appointment of an Integrity Commissioner—Mr. Wake—who is an officer of the Legislative Assembly and independent of this government. Among the commissioner's responsibilities is providing MPPs with opinions and recommendations on any matter respecting the members' obligations under the act and under Ontario parliamentary convention. The act also provides that an MPP may request the commissioner's opinion on whether the conduct of another MPP contravened the act, and in turn, the commissioner may decide to conduct an inquiry. We've seen that happen in this House, and that process has worked, and the Integrity Commissioner has made findings.

The Integrity Commissioner, in May of this year, issued his 2022-23 annual report, and he outlined suggestions for legislative amendments to three pieces of legislation, including the Members' Integrity Act. The four possible legislative amendments that the Integrity Commissioner canvassed to the Members' Integrity Act related to appearance of a conflict, gifts, the commissioner's initiative to launch an investigation, and restrictions on former cabinet ministers. These are all extremely important topics which affect all MPPs and warrant a careful eye and review by this Legislature, and those are aspects that our Integrity Commissioner, who is independent of the Legislature, has identified for review by this House.

I can tell this House that our Attorney General, my boss, has indicated that he will be looking into these and that he is, in fact, putting together a committee to review the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner to deal with these very issues that we're discussing today. And so, it's going to be the position of this side of the House that we will await the findings of that review and we will move forward in an intentional, thought-out and preplanned way to address any shortcomings and changes that may be necessary. And we heard, earlier this afternoon, the Attorney General introduce a bill for first reading that is going to improve the delivery of justice and access to justice in this province, and this is very much part of that agenda. Justice also applies to how we run and operate in this House and how we serve our residents.

At the end of the day, transparency and integrity is building a fence around the conduct of the members of this House. Yes, it is affecting our ongoing activities, but the real rationale behind the ruling is to ensure that the taxpayer can be confident that decisions that are being made in this House are being made in the best interests of this province. We have a budget this year of over \$200 billion, and we touch every aspect of our residents' lives across this province, from housing, health care, education, justice—all of these critical services. And the residents of this province, the taxpayer and the voter—they're all one

and the same—need to have confidence that the business of this House is being conducted in a way that is transparent, accountable, and for which there is accountability on behalf of the members.

So the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner in his report this spring will be critical in guiding the process for the legislative review of the Members' Integrity Act and will impact upon the very topics that Bill 148 is proposing. However, it is the position of this side of the House that that is premature at this time until a more fulsome investigation and review of the legislation has been done by a properly constituted group, as per the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner.

This government is absolutely committed to following the advice and recommendations of our Integrity Commissioner. Mr. Wake has served this House effectively and the taxpayers of the province effectively during his tenure. He has front-line expertise as a former justice of the Federal Court of Canada. He has expertise in this area, and that is why he's in his role. He's independent of this House, he's independent of the government, and he has encouraged us to review four aspects of the Members' Integrity Act, which we are undertaking to do.

Right now, any commitment to Bill 148, in our submission, on this side of the House, is premature, because it will presuppose the findings of a more fulsome investigation that will look at all aspects of the Members' Integrity Act, not just the ones put forward in Bill 148.

And Madam Speaker, I can tell you that as a former representative in the municipal sector—I come from Collingwood. We had a judicial inquiry in Collingwood that looked into two major transactions that forever scarred the residents of Collingwood. It was over \$8 million to go through an investigation by Justice Marrocco, the associate chief justice at the Superior Court of Ontario. He's now retired. Over an eight-month hearing, he produced 306 recommendations dealing with how we can improve transparency in governance.

This is a topic that affects every level of government. Every single cent of public money, whether it be property taxes or income taxes or sales tax, that come through any level of government—those taxpayers deserve the benefit of knowing that those monies are being spent in a way that is accountable and transparent. And it affects all levels of government. We heard from Madam Justice Bellamy in the two Toronto inquiries, we heard from Justice Cunningham in the Mississauga inquiry, and the conflicts of interest and lobbyist registries are always hot topics.

Lobbying in itself is not a bad activity, provided it's done in an open and transparent way. And if you are in a conflict of interest—being in a conflict of interest is not a problem; it's how you deal with the conflict of interest. Do you disclose the conflict of interest and recuse yourself? These are the topics that scar governments and keep taxpayers up at night, and we've seen it across the board.

Yesterday, Justice Siegel from the Hamilton inquiry came out with his report finding that key evidence about the status of the highway was kept from the public, buried and kept from council, and led to accidents, injuries and,

unfortunately, deaths. And these are the types of processes that we need to know are in place so that we can hold governments accountable. The framework that goes into producing these accountability processes, like the Members' Integrity Act, are essential for our taxpayers to know that the conduct of the business of the province is being done in an open and transparent way. As I said at the outset, this is a government that's committed to doing that. We stand behind those principles. We are a government of action.

1420

We heard the Attorney General this morning indicate that we're bringing forward legislation to change access to justice in this province. And we also, I can advise the House—I can confirm again that the Attorney General is undertaking to follow the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner to look into those aspects of the legislation, including the Members' Integrity Act. We will do that. We will do that in a thorough way. We will do it in a public and transparent way. We will come back to the House with thorough revisions to the act, if required, and we will deal with them at that time. That is our commitment.

For the purposes of today, we will not be supporting Bill 148.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise to speak to this, I think, very pertinent legislation that my colleague from Spadina-Fort York has brought forward. It is so essential for us to really highlight the need for us to have a government that is accountable and transparent to Ontarians. There are inscriptions that are written in this House, and one of them actually says, "Good government bears fruit." It's written right over there in Latin. I think today's legislation really highlights that.

It talks about really cleaning up corruption, so I'm really honoured to be able to speak on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest, to speak to the Cleaning Up Corruption Act, 2023, which really allows for two things. One is for the Integrity Commissioner to launch and expand their ability to do a lot of work that they need to do for them to be able to get information—we've heard a lot about deleted emails, for example, so for them to have access to information that allows them to really investigate further in the issues that come forward to the Integrity Commissioner, as well as to expand and really allow for the Auditor General to have the power to get information. We know that has been an issue, especially for this government, so this act will allow for the Auditor General to also get the information they really need for them to investigate as well and serve the people of this province.

Speaker, in the little time that I have, I want to be able to highlight a few things. As a former member of the committee for government agencies, I think it's also important that I share my experience, because I think it really highlights what took place. This act would allow us to have that accountability for the province and highlight some of the wrongdoings, I would say, when it comes to the way this government has operated. It would really

make sure that we don't have a culture of preferential treatment, of backroom dealings that we have seen from this government.

This really is a matter that strikes at the very core of our democratic institutions and our democratic principles and the urgent need for stronger integrity laws and the impact they have. When I talk about being a member of the government agencies committee, we're talking about appointments. We make appointments to tribunals—for example, the Landlord and Tenant Board tribunal. We need to have qualified appointments. We need to have qualified candidates who are put into different agencies. I know members opposite sit on that committee, and they know how important it is. I have highlighted that as well. We need to have qualified candidates who can really uphold those positions in those agencies and those boards and those commissions.

Specifically, when I talk about the LTB, where an overwhelming backlog has taken place, there is an overwhelming amount of backlog in cases leaving Ontarians without justice when it comes to the LTB. It is undeniable that there have been glaring and obvious loopholes in our integrity laws. We really need to have higher standards. Every time we have had any agency appointments, one of the most difficult parts of it is the government members will vote down any hearings, for example. We cannot get people to have those hearings. It has been extremely difficult to get really qualified people. So I think it's really important that we have to have people who are qualified. And we have to have integrity and transparency in this government and in our province.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have to say, it's very interesting joining this debate today. It's also really disappointing to see this government frankly tying themselves in knots, trying to find excuses to not vote for legislation that is called "cleaning up corruption." I mean, the Cleaning Up Corruption Act, it would seem to me, would be something that this government would be fully supportive of, given where we are in this province today and given the perception of this government, with the preferential treatment that they've given to developers when it came to the greenbelt, when it came to MZOs and when it came to the urban boundary expansions. People across this province have lost trust and have lost faith in this government, and I don't understand in any way how it would harm this government to try and restore that confidence and that faith by saying that you would actually support a bill entitled Cleaning Up Corruption Act, because certainly this government has a lot of work to clean up their act in this province.

It also falls on the heels of this government also voting against our opposition day motion to strengthen the Members' Integrity Act. It was a simple, simple request that we had that would include a conflict-of-interest provision in the Members' Integrity Act. They also voted that down.

So my question is, what does this government have against being accountable and being transparent? Saying

the words "we are accountable and transparent" is not cutting it. Your words need to be followed by actions. Your actions show, by voting down these bills, that you do not want to be held accountable.

It's interesting, Madam Speaker, that I'm joining this debate right after coming out of committee hearings for Bill 136, which was to restore the Greenbelt Act, and that in an extraordinary way, the minister himself only allowed himself to depute and blocked anybody from the province to talk about how upset they were with your actions on the greenbelt. But despite the fact that they weren't allowed to depute, the committee room was filled, overflowing with people who still wanted to come and show this government that they're upset with you and they don't trust you.

They don't trust you with the greenbelt, and they certainly don't trust you when it comes to an RCMP investigation that is ongoing in this province, and they don't trust you when you put before the House legislation that gives extraordinary powers to the Minister of Infrastructure to issue MZOs and to override environmental protections and environmental assessments when it comes to Ontario Place. This is a bill that will give this government immunity from anything, including government misrepresentation, misconduct, misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or breach of fiduciary obligation.

So this government wants to give themselves protection from these actions, but they won't vote in favour of this bill. I find that shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Spadina–Fort York has two minutes for rebuttal.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the members from Toronto Centre, Scarborough Southwest, Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and Simcoe–Grey for your comments today. Bill 148, Cleaning Up Corruption Act—this Conservative government is the most corrupt government in the history of this province. The first thing that this government tried to do, the first thing this Premier tried to do was he tried to appoint his friend Ron Taverner to be the chief of police of the Ontario Provincial Police. That is frightening, because right now this government is under investigation by the RCMP.

This government's \$8-billion greenbelt scandal, the Ontario Place scandal—I appreciate the member from Simcoe–Grey's comments and that the government is committed to upholding democratic principles, but this government is clearly not committed to upholding democratic principles.

There's another bill before the House right now, called—well, it should be called the "covering up corruption act." It actually gives the government—this Conservative government is giving itself the power to not be held accountable in the courts for acts of misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary obligation with impunity. This government is actually legalizing corruption in their other bill, and here we are, before the House—I've made a few simple suggestions here in this bill, cleaning up corruption. It's just to increase the powers of the Integrity Commissioner so that the Integrity Commissioner can launch and expand investigations, because one of the challenges the Integrity Commissioner

had is when they came across the example of the minister having a massage in Las Vegas with a developer who had business before the Legislature. He couldn't actually investigate that until another member requested the investigation, so the Integrity Commissioner has asked for the power to expand ongoing investigations.

It also changes the definition of "family," so that if the Premier is at his daughter's wedding and he has invited his developer friends to the stag and doe and they're asked to donate thousands—tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands—of dollars, he cannot participate in any decisions that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MPP Glover has moved second reading of Bill 148, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act and Members' Integrity Act, 1994. 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 to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, December 4, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1431.

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