

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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Tuesday  
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Mardi  
26 mars 2024

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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

Tuesday 26 March 2024

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mars 2024

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### LEGISLATIVE REFORM RÉFORME LEGISLATIVE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that the standing orders be amended as follows:

Standing order 24(a) is deleted and the following is substituted:

“Every member desiring to speak must rise in his or her place and address the Speaker, in either English, French or an Indigenous language spoken in Canada. If a member wishes to address the House in an Indigenous language, they shall, prior to taking their seat for the first time, notify the Clerk of the House of the language in which they intend to speak so the Speaker may arrange appropriate interpretation and translation capabilities.”

For 30 days following the adoption of this motion, standing order 24(a) is suspended and the following is substituted:

“Every member desiring to speak must rise in his or her place and address the Speaker, in either English, French or an Indigenous language spoken in Canada. If a member wishes to address the House in an Indigenous language, they shall notify the Clerk of the House of the language in which they intend to speak so the Speaker may arrange appropriate interpretation and translation capabilities.”

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? I'll recognize the government House leader to lead off.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be splitting my time with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, and only very, very briefly, just to thank colleagues for their indulgence, and of course thank the members opposite, including the opposition House leader, the member for Kiiwetinoong for his assistance on this, and of course the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

With that, I'll turn over my time to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Aanii. Boozhoo. Nindizhinikaaz Greg Rickford.

It's a great morning for us here in this place, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for his enduring friendship over the past five years, and the House leader for taking the steps that, in my view, are long overdue.

Of course, French and English are described as the founding languages of this country, but anybody who lives in the vast and beautiful territory of northern Ontario, and especially northwestern Ontario—I'm joined by my neighbour, who lives 550 kilometres away. Like the member from Kiiwetinoong, the three ridings that we represent would easily be almost half the province in size. And there are districts beyond where, it goes without saying, that one of the most, if not the most predominant language spoken, is Ojibway, or a dialect thereof.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the extraordinary opportunity over the course of my adult professional life to live and work in northern Ontario, in northern Manitoba, in northern British Columbia, the territories and the Arctic Circle. I've marvelled at the rich heritage of the languages that are spoken there. They are first languages; English, of course, is second.

It has just been an extraordinary opportunity to, under the leadership of this Premier, take the important steps for reconciliation. We see parts of the Legislature adorned with things that symbolize the importance of First Nations people to our province and, indeed, to our country. There are rooms that give testament to the history—some of it good and some of it we wished had never happened, but it did. The steps of reconciliation compel us each and every day to take one more step forward in the relationship with First Nations people in this province.

There are over 400,000 Indigenous people living within the province of Ontario, and it represents roughly 3% of the population, all of whom have their own history, their unique cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, languages and governance systems that continue to shape our province each and every day. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've created an extraordinary opportunity to meet regularly with First Nations leadership from across this province in the executive chamber, speaking with them nation to nation. Sometimes the conversations can be difficult. There is not always consensus or agreement.

What has evolved over the course of time, and I've really not seen it any other place, is the kind of respect that provides for clear representation, particularly Indigenous representation, in the Legislative Assembly writ large, but now, for the purposes of today, here in this Legislative Assembly.

The idea that the member for Kiiwetinoong could have family and friends and constituents who have come from

afar—indeed, in my own riding of Kenora—Rainy River, Treaty 3 and parts beyond—to have them take their place in the gallery or here on the legislative floor and, with pride and honour, be able to speak their language. I hope one day that we have the opportunity to take our best shot at answering some of those questions, for those of us who neither speak it as a first or second language.

But this is an important step today. In sharing and discussing with the House leader today, who spent seven years with me in the other place, the House of Commons, we similarly watched as some—at least one or two I can think of—First Nations people came from afar—northern Quebec comes to mind—and did not and could not, as a matter of rule, speak their language to put a question or to take an answer.

Today represents that opportunity for us to embrace and celebrate a founding language of this country. I believe that in my heart, as I spent more than a decade living and working in predominantly Ojibway communities, much of it here in northern Ontario. It's not an easy language to understand, but it is beautiful. It's full of joy; it's full of laughter. It deals with pain, but it's spoken freely, and it's a wonderful thing to be around.

Of course, I have some vocabulary in Ojibway—some of the bad words and many of the good words. As a nurse, I learned to understand when people were having certain kinds of aches or pains, and gauge the degree of seriousness. But what never left me was the joy and the comfort that was derived as I would sit with elders and they would speak in their first language, their traditional language, and laugh and share the stories of time immemorial here in North America.

**0910**

We've taken important steps towards reconciliation. The province of Ontario has led the country in no uncertain terms when it comes to things like responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, particularly when it comes to Indian residential schools. It isn't just about the financial resources; in fact, it's the support we've provided for programs and services that, every step of the way, endeavour to ensure that the darkest chapter in the history of this country, and, in so saying, in this province—that the Indian residential school legacy must be led by Indigenous people, First Nations people, in this province, with the support of their government, as they work through the painful process of reconciling that experience in their own culture and history.

Today's message is that we are here for them, and that, beyond the symbolism, there is an effort each and every day by this government to ensure that First Nations people, who may take their place one day in greater numbers in this Legislature, have the opportunity to speak their language. Much of what we do in the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, in fact, advances that meaningful reconciliation.

I've spoken a little bit about the painful legacy of Indian residential schools, but as we try each and every day to pivot to some of the more opportunity-based policies, I marvel at some of the First Nations people who work in our ministry, who are showing leadership in other minis-

tries. It's extraordinary to see and know that there are at least two First Nations people who lead ministries as deputy ministers in our government. I'm proud to call them friends. I've known them for a very long time. I appreciate the opportunity to celebrate their knowledge and their understanding as we make decisions to move forward respectfully in a true partnership with First Nations people, and now to have their voices and their languages, as it would be, across northern Ontario and, in fact, all along the Haldimand tract in southern Ontario, from Windsor to Hawkesbury.

It makes it so important to discuss this morning the fact that people will be able to rise in their first spoken Indigenous language. Because if you've ever tried to speak in your second language—and I've heard you make great efforts, Mr. Speaker, to work through French interventions—we spend a lot of time translating. I remember my friend in the House of Commons talking about this. They refer to themselves as interpreters because they like to spend and make great efforts to try to interpret the spirit and the intent of a language, but if you were born with it and if it was the first thing that you heard coming from your parents or your extended family, in your school, well, it just comes naturally to it.

I had the opportunity in my late twenties to take up French. I'd never studied it in grade school, but I found myself at a point in time in my career where I just needed a little break and thought I would do something fun, like move to Quebec City and learn how to speak French. You can read it from a book and you can take it from a teacher, but the best way to learn a language is to be able to be exposed to it, to hear it and to understand its important ties to its culture and heritage from where it has come.

I have no doubt that we will find interpreters to work in the booth in back of me here and provide an extraordinary opportunity for us to hear the beauty of the spoken languages of First Nations people from across this province. And with the hope that some day we may have a broader representation in this Legislature of First Nations people, we've got to start somewhere. I believe that, under the leadership of Premier Ford, our House leader here today and my colleagues in the government, this was an obvious and important step that we could and should take.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about policies that we can support and introduce into our school system. As I've always said, for many of us, there is a clear lack of understanding of the importance of the history of First Nations people in the province of Ontario and its culture. I believe now, particularly over the past decade, we are beginning to see more and more of that celebration.

When I decide to go to Mississauga for as compelling an Indigenous First Nations celebration as could be there—as I might see them far more regularly in my own riding—I know that we are elevating the prominence, the importance of First Nations culture, heritage and language. I often see some of my friends, who I consider family, from the communities that I lived and worked in in northern Ontario down here doing their important work. In my own

family, we have important ties to Six Nations of the Grand River. So perhaps, as I take my place and speak to this today, it's maybe a bit easier for me to understand and appreciate the importance of what we're doing here today.

This is no ordinary change in the standing orders. As we look and canvass across Legislatures in this country, the House of Commons, provinces and territories—of course, the territories, with a different format and forum for their Legislature, have adapted to the languages spoken in their places. But as Legislatures go, I appreciate that the House leader took a good hard look at the opportunity we could do to once again lead, to simplify the process, to not have to ask permission to speak your language, but just to simply give notice. In my mind, that a member of a First Nations community from this province would have the ability to speak their language and hopefully, in the presence of their family, in the presence of their friends, in the presence of their constituents, who have been here as long as anybody in the jurisdiction or boundary of Ontario, it would feel and celebrate the same thing that I think many of us take for granted when we rise from our chair and make our intervention, when we send out our message during question period or when we engage in lively and spirited debate; that at least one member of this Legislature—and as I have said before, hopefully more, can come in here, take their seat and rise with the knowledge that there's no more asking for permission to speak your language. There are no more barriers here in this place for you to celebrate the long-standing history and culture that is, in fact, attached to languages.

**0920**

I encourage all members of this Legislature, for those of you, and there should be many, who have First Nations communities in your ridings, to go back and tell those folks and celebrate. Encourage young people, as some of us do, to come in here as pages or to engage them in their political activity. Let them know that if they aspire to come to this place—sometimes we ask ourselves why we might do that, but in telling them and explaining to them, we would be able to say, “Oh, and by the way, it's going to be extraordinary to think that you would be able to go to the Legislature, take your seat and rise and speak in your language.”

I'll close with these final remarks, as this debate is uncommon—I don't think that there are many times that we debate the kind of standing order that should and would bring the kind of unanimity amongst colleagues: that we have refreshed this place, that we are now enlightened that the languages spoken in this place, on this floor, are not vertical. They simply reflect the fact that, whether it's French or English or a First Nations language, it can be spoken fluently here.

For that, I'm tremendously grateful for the urgings of the member for Kiiwetinoong; the leadership of our Premier; the work that we're doing with First Nations communities

across this province; the House leader in particular, who showed real initiative on this request; and humbly, as the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, to have the opportunity to speak on this important matter too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Meegwetch.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Speaker, I don't know what to feel. I don't know what to say. But I am very honoured to be able to speak today on behalf of the people of Kiiwetinoong, on behalf of the people that were never allowed to speak their language in colonial institutions. I am proud to support this motion that will allow me to speak my language, Anishiniimowin, in this chamber whenever I choose.

Language is fundamental to our ways of life. It helps us to understand everything. But English is not my first language; it is Anishiniimowin. Anishiniimowin is the language of my people, and I am of my people. Anishiniimowin means “language of the people.” It literally means “human talk.” The English language serves all communication needs and purposes of the English-speaking society; our language, Anishiniimowin, does the same for our people.

Our language, Anishiniimowin, defines and informs who we are. In an engaging relationship with our environment, with our spirituality and physical, what it does is, it establishes our identities as people of the land. Our language, Anishiniimowin, enables us to express our values, our ways of life, our culture, our histories, our geography, our philosophy and our world view.

How important is our language? Our history has directly connected us to the land through place names; for example, where I come from, Mishamikoweesh, Mando Powitic, Aguskoshagahiigun and many others that I grew up learning. These names tell us the historic events that occurred in each of these places. If we lose our language, we lose all of our histories. Our people, the identities are directly connected to the land through place names, as I said: Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, the people of Big Trout Lake; Wahjushkonomiiwihniwuk, the people of Muskrat Dam. Again, if we lose our language, we lose our people's identities.

Through our language, we pass on our culture and our traditions to our children. Hunting moose, hunting duck and geese all have their set of specialized words and phrases. One has to engage in all these activities in order to express and in order to share experiences with others.

Our language connects a person to our culture and traditions, and it is our culture and traditions that shape and define who we are as people of the land. For the individual First Nations person, it develops a sense of identity, cultural stability and cultural strength needed to meet today's language.

I think it's important to share some words—when the government devised and implemented its assimilation policy regarding First Nations people, regarding Indians,

it recognized how important our language was in maintaining our identities. The government decided to remove the children from their language source and move them to far away places, to the Indian residential schools. There, they forbade the speaking of our languages, a method of taking the Indian out of the Indian.

**0930**

The Ontario Ministry of Education recognized the importance of children learning in their first language. It has developed curriculum resource material for teaching our languages in classrooms. Our people are reclaiming ownership of our language. We have developed and implemented full immersion education in our community schools. We also have developed and established bilingual-bicultural education in our schools.

Again, language builds our sense of identity and self-esteem, learning and not knowing what it means to be Indigenous, or for me, to be Anishinew. It helps us to understand ceremony and traditional stories, and it supports our communities' nationhood, safety and ability to govern. It is very powerful, and the language Anishiniimowin is very powerful.

As First Nations people, as Indigenous people, we not only hold language rights, but the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says, "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture."

Speaker, I've been here serving the people of Kiiwetinoong in this House for almost six years. Here, in this building, the standing orders, up until today, have said, "Every member desiring to speak must rise in his or her place and address the Speaker, in either English or French." If I did differently and spoke in my language, beyond a few words at the beginning or end, the Speaker would have to enforce this standing order. This has been a form of forced assimilation right here in this Legislature. So this is very monumental for me.

This is for the people that are not allowed to speak their language. This is for the people that have lost their language. I think there are always people—our ancestors are watching; our parents are watching. I see this very momentous change.

I want to say as well that this violence of trying to erase our languages should never have been done to us. In the summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission they talked about the banning of languages as one of the ways states engage in cultural genocide. In Canada, governments actively tried to deny First Nations peoples our rights to speak our languages. They did this systematically by forcing our children to go to Indian residential schools, where we would be punished if we tried to speak our languages. More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended these schools.

I remember attending grade 9. I remember attending grade 10. I thought I was going to a school. It was a night school. I remember we would be punished if we spoke our language. I remember sitting in detention. I remember

doing chores as punishment because of who I am, because of me speaking my language—how awful, eh? That's the experience that we've had as people.

I want to read from the TRC summary report. I want to quote this: "In 1890, Indian commissioner Hayter Reed proposed, 'At the most the native language is only to be used as a vehicle of teaching and should be discontinued as such as soon as practicable.' English was to be the primary language of instruction."

These racist and colonizing policies led to language loss. Rose Dorothy Charlie, a residential school survivor quoted in the report, said, "They took my language. They took it right out of my mouth. I never spoke it again."

Punishments for speaking in their languages were severe. In many cases, children were physically abused for using the only language that they knew. The harm and the devastation this caused for our nations, our children and our families cannot be overstated. But children would keep on speaking it in secret. This is why so many of the languages survive today.

Just a few weeks ago, I spoke in the House about a news story about how First Nations youth were treated in for-profit care homes. In that news story, we heard that they were still being punished for speaking their languages.

The change being made here today should be a model and a beginning for more change to support and care for our languages and to respect our right to speak them. This isn't just the right thing to do; it is about recognizing what is already our right to speak. Moving forward from the history and continued reality of colonial violence to Indigenous people is not possible without protecting our languages.

The right to use our languages, to revitalize them and pass them on to our next generation and to access education and media in our languages are part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I'm going to say in closing that I'm very honoured to be able to speak, in the coming months, my language. One of the things I want to do is I want to bring my mom here. My mom does not speak English, but I think sometime in May, I'm going to bring her down here, hopefully, to watch me speak my language, and there will be simultaneous translation.

**0940**

Today, I'm very hopeful for the change, but not only— all of our people are trying to reconnect and speak in our languages, the younger generations for the elders, and I think this change to the standing orders will matter to the people living not just in Kiiwetinoong but in Ontario, many of whom understand Anishiniimowin, also known as Oji-Cree.

I think it's important to note that our languages are living and continuing our ways of being, and it's important that they are key to our health, they are key to our healing. Language is medicine.

Last month, I was in this gathering in Manitoba. Our First Nations in Kiiwetinoong joined with our relatives in Manitoba for their first Anishinew Inninuwig gathering, convened by the Anishinew Gathering of Nations. Prob-



ably 90%, 95% of the time, our language was spoken. It was just an amazing, amazing gathering. Our languages serve all our communication needs and purposes, as I said before.

I know I am the only person elected in this chamber who it will directly impact today, but the meaning goes far beyond me. This change should be a reminder to all institutions where people in positions of power prevent First Nations people from speaking our languages that in doing so, you commit colonial violence.

This change should be a starting point for more change here, but in other institutions as well. More efforts should be made to support Indigenous languages in schools across Ontario, as well as more funding for organizations running language revitalization programs. It is especially important for me that this change means the future Indigenous people who get elected as MPPs will not have to face this barrier and will be able to speak their own language from day one.

When I first got elected, this feather was given to me, Speaker. It was a gift from leaders of the Anishinabek Nation. I never shared this, but it's just something I keep that I want to share with you. It's dated July 13, 2018. About a month after I first got elected, they had a blessing ceremony for me in my home community. It says:

“Sol,

“In our old customs, an eagle feather is earned through the work it does for himself and his people.

“This eagle feather that is given to you is earned.

“This feather is part of a wing of an eagle, the wings work the hardest.

“This is to remind you that you must do the same for yourself and our people.

“Thank you for standing up and taking a role that is earned by hard work and love for your people.

“Chi-meegwetch!”

I'm just sharing that because I think this standing order change, for me to be able to speak my language, is very momentous for me. I'd like to thank my colleagues here but also across for standing with me to be able to do that. This is part of the journey. This is healing. This is wellness. This is hope. The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement, and this is one step towards it. Meegwetch.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** It's an honour to have the opportunity to speak to this important and historic motion in the Legislature this morning.

When I was asked if I would like to speak to the motion, I said, of course, yes, but it wasn't without a little bit of trepidation I have to admit, because both the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and, of course, our friend from Kiiwetinoong are much more well-versed in this issue than I, but are also both much better speakers than I am. So it was with a little bit of trepidation.

As someone who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s in the suburbs of Ottawa, I have to say that I was not exposed to people from our First Nations communities, to the issues that they have faced throughout our history and continue to face. I was not taught about these issues in school like

probably most of us, or the education we did receive was from a very specific point of view that did not, I think, even begin to touch the true nature of the issues that our country has very recently started to confront. So it is coming from a very isolated and, admittedly, somewhat ignorant point of view that I try to do my best to learn about the issues that members of our First Nations communities continue to confront and the history they have dealt with, and that history continues to impact their communities to this day. While I am not at all well-versed in those issues and need to do much more work on myself and my own reflections to help move those issues forward, I am familiar with assimilation of a different culture here in Ontario and Canada.

Comme fier francophile et député d'Orléans, je connais les obstacles à la protection de la langue et de la culture minoritaire ici en Ontario.

Members of my own community have had to deal with the challenges and the obstacles of trying to protect their own culture, to protect their kids from assimilation, albeit in a much different form.

Mais la lutte contre l'assimilation, bien que sous une forme différente, est un combat auquel ma propre famille a été confronté, et qu'on a perdu.

My family lost our connection to its francophone heritage and history two or three generations ago, and so we have confronted our own challenge of assimilation and efforts to regain that connection. I'm very hopeful that efforts that the member for Kiiwetinoong and all of us are trying to push forward—this effort today from the government—will be a small step to ensuring that that stops as it relates to our First Nations people and that progress can be made to continue to protect their language and their culture.

Sol, there's one thing I disagree with, with your statement. Near the end, you said that you will be the only member impacted by this motion today, and I disagree. I think we were all impacted by your speech, and I very much look forward to seeing you here with your mom. I hope you'll let us know ahead of time so we can all be here. And thank you very much for your work on this.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 23 relating to amendments to the standing orders. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Orders of the day?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No further business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 10:15 a.m.

*The House recessed from 0952 to 1015.*

#### WEARING OF RIBBONS

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Eglinton—Lawrence on a point of order.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find we have unanimous consent to allow members to wear purple ribbons in recognition of today, March 26, being Epilepsy Awareness Day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mrs. Martin is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear purple ribbons in recognition of March 26 being Epilepsy Awareness Day. Agreed? Agreed.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### IMPOSSIBLE METALS

**Mr. Brian Sanderson:** It's always a pleasure to speak about the incredible diversity of businesses in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. Today, I'd like to speak about a start-up company that is developing cutting-edge technology to harvest critical minerals from the ocean floor in an environmentally sensitive way.

Speaker, our government is committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 30% from 2005 levels by 2030, and we're currently 90% of the way to that target. But we won't stop there; we will exceed that target, and we will grow our green economy at the same time.

The company I'd like to speak about is Impossible Metals, a company that just 11 months ago celebrated the opening of its Canadian headquarters in Collingwood. This month, I'm very proud to tell this House that Impossible Metals earned a spot on the prestigious Time magazine list of America's top-250 green tech companies of 2024, coming in at 119.

Impossible Metals is developing an autonomous underwater vehicle that can pick up mineral-rich, deep-sea nodules while avoiding microfauna and marine life, with the goal of preserving biodiversity and habitat function. This autonomous underwater vehicle will be operating at depths of between one and four kilometres along the ocean floor.

I visited Simcoe native Jason Gillham at the Collingwood office last week, and he told me the team is in Florida as we speak, preparing to test their Eureka 1 prototype, and they plan to harvest nodules at a depth of one kilometre. If these tests are successful, they will begin the design and production of the full-scale autonomous underwater vehicle that will have the capacity to harvest and hold 100 kilograms of nodules from the ocean floor.

I want to congratulate the team at Impossible Metals on their remarkable achievements. There can be no doubt that, for this company, it is the ocean floor and not the sky that is the limit.

### AYSANABEE

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I want to congratulate Aysanabee, a talented musician from Sandy Lake First Nation and also from Kiiwetinoong, for winning two Juno awards this weekend, songwriter of the year and alternative album of

the year, for his album Here and Now. He is the first Indigenous artist to win either award.

Sandy Lake is one of the Anisininew Nations who gathered at the Anisininew Inninuwig Mamawhitowin last month, where, in unity, a declaration was made that we are not Oji-Cree; we are the Anisininew Nation. They called upon all levels of government to respect and recognize us as Anisininew Peoples. We speak our language, Anishiniimowin. We are sovereign and hold rights to self-determination and stewardship over the lands. Our identity and our ways of life are unique.

Everyone should go and listen to Aysanabee's first album, Watin. It was named after his grandfather, whose voice you can hear throughout the album. In the album's first track, his grandfather spoke about being sent to an Indian residential school at eight years old, about how lonely he was and how he used to cry. He said, "I was wondering why I was sent here. And I didn't know why—what did I do wrong?"

### 1020

Aysanabee, meegwetch for bringing the voice of the Anisininew people to Canada. We are very proud of you.

### BITE OF BRANT

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I am pleased to speak today about the upcoming Bite of Brant event that will be taking place on April 9 and 10 in the county of Brant.

Bite of Brant is a deeply important initiative in the Brantford–Brant community that allows grade 5 students to connect with local farmers and gain an understanding and an appreciation for the amount of work that goes into producing the food that we enjoy every single day.

Last year, over 1,000 grade 5 students had the opportunity to press apples into cider, study planting seeds, compare input food costs, grind wheat to make flour, learn about careers in the agri-food industry, climb onto a tractor and get an up-close look at live farm animals.

Agriculture is the number one industry in the county of Brant. Bite of Brant ensures that students are able to engage with the farmers who are not only a vital part of Brant county's economy and society but are also an essential part of Ontario's prosperity.

I would like to extend a thank you to the volunteers and farmers who make Bite of Brant so engaging every single year. Last year, we had just under 130 volunteers who worked tirelessly to keep the event running smoothly.

I look forward to attending the 2024 edition of Bite of Brant on April 10.

### CHILD CARE

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, \$10-a-day child care is under threat in this city and, I imagine, in this province. Recently, parents in my riding whose children attend Blossoming Minds child care were informed that, as of the beginning of September, \$10-a-day child care wasn't going to be offered by that centre. As you can imagine, there's a lot of desperation on the part of parents. I've been

contacted by people at Jackman daycare, I understand the YMCA and a variety of operators are finding that the current funding formula does not work, and that causes huge problems for those operators but even more profound problems for the parents and the children who are looking at complete disruption of their lives.

We're in a situation where people are facing huge pressures around the cost of groceries, around the cost of housing. They do not need yet another headache—actually worse than a headache—huge disruption in their lives.

I'm calling on the Premier and the Minister of Education to take steps immediately to address the funding formula so that parents and children can have child care they can afford, so that people can continue to go to work and so that they can hopefully continue to try and keep their heads above water when it comes to cost of living.

#### ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION GRANTS

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Recently, I was proud to announce that five organizations in Mississauga–Lakeshore have just received almost \$500,000 through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Resilient Communities Fund. This includes \$99,000 for the Eagle Spirits of the Great Waters to support local events and workshops with Indigenous elders and traditional healers. Many of these are at the small arms building, where CreativeHub 1352 also received \$26,000 for their arts, culture and heritage programs.

The Canadian Community Arts Initiative also received \$71,000 for its programs and events, including the South Asian arts and heritage festival of Mississauga.

Finally, at a time when access to mental health support is so critical, I am proud to report that the Distress Centres of Greater Toronto received \$100,000. Their highly trained volunteers provide emotional support to people in distress every day at their telephone helpline. This funding will help strengthen this coverage during the critical overnight hours.

Lastly, ISNA Canada received \$200,000 for a new addictions support program to help work toward long-term recovery for some of the most vulnerable people.

Speaker, I want to congratulate all these incredible non-profits again, and I want to thank them for everything they do every day to support and protect our most vulnerable. On behalf of all the members, we appreciate everything you do here in Ontario.

#### CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Today is budget day, a day in Ontario that will impact and affect our communities, our workplaces and schools. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that our children will continue to be left on the sidelines again, with underfunding and underspending—funds which would make a difference and truly leave no child behind.

Children are our most valuable resource, and yet they are left to wait for services they need to thrive, services that if not accessed in a timely manner will affect their

future and ours. These are the same children that must flourish to have the ability to be our future doctors, educators and, yes, adults—the same adults who will be left to care for us in our senior years.

Ensuring there is funding to support children with autism or any special need, funding for mental and physical health are all in critical need, extra supports in our schools to assist with the years lost due to COVID restrictions—meaningful, purposeful supports instead of empty promises and slogans.

Budgets are meant to be a lifeline, not a savings account. Today, more than ever, we need a budget that is focused on our children and youth. Let's not lose sight of what needs to be fully funded for our valuable resource to grow and thrive, not just live and survive.

While today should be no surprise, I am hopeful and optimistic that this year's provincial budget will have real investments for our future: our children.

#### RAMADAN

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Good morning and es salaam aleikum. The month of March is a very special month in my riding of Mississauga Centre as so many of my Muslim Canadian friends and neighbours are observing the holy month of Ramadan. The holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide. It is observed through acts such as fasting, undertaking acts of service and spending time in prayer and reflection.

Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam, and practitioners of the faith are called on by the Quran to “eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast until night.” The reason for fasting during Ramadan is to remind Muslims that all individuals are similarly needy upon the assistance of God and that there are less lucky individuals who need their assistance.

I want to speak about one young man. His name is Beberg Khan. He's a staff member, part of the Kusendova team, and he has been on my team since 2022. He's currently practising fasting as part of his religion. I'm just so proud to have Beberg as part of my team. Even during the election, which happened to be in May, he was door-knocking every single day, even at the same time as he was fasting. I'm so proud of the growth that he has achieved. There are many Muslims like that in my riding of Mississauga Centre. For me, as a Christian, it's just so heart-warming to see that we can celebrate together in unity. That's exactly what Ontario is about.

Thank you. Ramadan Mubarak.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise here to address a crucial issue for the people of Ontario: Living here is more expensive than ever. People can't afford to pay the rent or make their mortgage payments. Families can't put food on the table, and more people in Scarborough are just

living at the food banks. Homelessness is up, and there's less good-paying jobs than ever before.

At the same time, business confidence is at an all-time low. There is a shortage of child care workers, who this government drove away by paying them pennies. For-profit nursing agencies are nickel-and-diming the taxpayers, and our universities and colleges are underfunded and slashing programs our children rely on.

Ontario is supposed to be a land of promise—this is why I migrated here—where anyone can succeed and live a prosperous life, but this government is spending millions on ads during the Super Bowl, on a parking lot for a spa and on lawyers as the RCMP investigates them because of the greenbelt scandal.

**1030**

We deserve a government that will provide solutions. They deserve a government that will stand up for the people in Ontario.

#### HANDSHAKES AND PANCAKES BREAKFAST EVENT

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Speaker, despite snowy conditions, less than ideal weather, I want to thank everyone who came out to my first annual Handshakes and Pancakes community breakfast at South Grenville District High School.

The handshakes? Well, obviously, Speaker, that's from the politicians, and I want to thank the seven mayors who joined me in a receiving line. I want to thank Mayors Shankar, Burrow, Deschamps, Shaver, Hoogenboom, Smith-Gatcke and Cameron.

The pancakes? Well, I have to tell you, I have a giant sense of pride—an extra special thank you to the South Grenville District High School's hospitality teacher, chef Brandi Donovan, and her students, who came out early in that snowy, snowy storm to both cook and serve stacks of pancakes and sausages. Really, they did it with a smile. I want to thank them.

The local maple syrup was sourced from Sherwood Springs farm in Mallorytown.

I want to talk a little bit about those students, Speaker, in my remaining time. They put on over 10 dinners in our community for various community organizations. They include Special Olympics Brockville, the Spencerville Optimist Club and local school fundraisers, including a \$70,000 fundraiser as part of the Relay for Life, which we all know supports the Canadian Cancer Society.

I was honoured to have them there. They were tremendous ambassadors, and the day was so successful, I'm already looking forward to the second annual Handshakes and Pancakes next year.

#### KIRK DIAMOND

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I am from Brampton: These are the words that I say when I meet somebody new and they ask me where I'm from. I say, "I'm from Brampton." Anybody who has said those words and meant them is used to a certain reaction: a slight narrowing of the eyes, a

subtle smirk or a brief chuckle. We're used to smug reactions. I'm used to it.

But Brampton is a global city. We have the most talented people in the world, and we make no apologies for the fact that if you put Brampton minds, Brampton talent against any other city, Brampton will come out on top. We're proud of the greatness that our city produces, and I would like to share with the House an example of that greatness, which is Brampton North's own Kirk Diamond.

When Kirk first came to Canada from Spanish Town, Jamaica, in 1994, there weren't a lot of options for people hoping to hear reggae music. In fact, tuning in to DJ Ron Nelson every Friday night was Kirk's only medium of listening to reggae music.

Fast forward 30 years to last Sunday, where Brampton's own Kirk Diamond won his third Juno award for reggae recording of the year with his album *Dread*, a collaboration with Finn.

I am proud of my friend Kirk as he is once again recognized for his impact on Canadian music. Kirk describes his music as a platform to spread a message of unity, inclusion and love, and this focus is what led him to being at the forefront of reggae music in Canada.

Kirk is proud to call Brampton home, and we are proud to claim him. Way to go, Kirk. Big up.

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Joining us in the Speaker's gallery is the former MP for Willowdale, C.S. Leung. He is also the founding president of the Richmond Hill and Markham Chinese Business Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. I am thrilled to introduce powerful Paul Raymond from Epilepsy Toronto—and note that everyone is wearing their purple in support today—and also the sensational students from Earl Haig Public School in my neighbourhood, learning about civics.

**Mr. Rick Byers:** It's great to recognize Bill Walker here in the gallery with us today. He was a fantastic MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

**Hon. Andrea Khanjin:** I'd like to introduce Nicole Bowman and Marion Mutton, who are here to see their daughter and granddaughter, who is a page in the Legislature.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Today is March 26 and, on this day in 1921, Katharine Hazel Lees was born in Summerland, BC, but she lives in Oshawa now. We had a birthday party on the weekend, but today is her birthday. So Speaker, please indulge me: Today is my Grandma Ross's 103rd birthday, and I hope that this Legislature will join me in celebrating and wishing my magical little grandma a very special 103rd birthday. Happy birthday, Grandma.

*Applause.*

## DARYL KRAMP

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Daryl Kramp, MPP for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, with five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to make statements in remembrance for the late Mr. Daryl Kramp, MPP for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, with five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to His Majesty’s government. Agreed? Agreed.

Today, we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of the provincial Legislature, the late Mr. Daryl Kramp, who was the MPP for Hastings–Lennox and Addington during the 42nd Parliament. Joining us in the Speaker’s gallery are Mr. Kramp’s family and friends: his wife, Carol Ann Kramp; his daughters, Shelby Kramp Neuman, Dr. Kari Kramp and Taryl Kramp; his sons-in-law, Brad Phillips and Geordie Nelson; his grandchildren Ainsley Phillips, Henry Phillips and Ky Graham; and his friends and former staff, Gerry Baker, Jack Alexander, Frank Hendry, Don Bonter, Eric Brick, Bob Hadley, Connie Kennedy-Pearsall, Rob Pearsall, Denise Gray, Bill Daverne and Anita Ramski.

Also in the Speaker’s gallery are Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments, and Bill Walker, MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound during the 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments.

I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It’s a great honour to rise this morning and remember the extraordinary life of Daryl Kramp. I’m one of the people in this building that comes from the great region of eastern Ontario. As an NDP politician, I’m proud to say in this place that I considered Daryl Kramp a friend and a shining example of the kind of kindness we want to see in our politics at a time when so much in this world is asking us to beat each other up all of the time.

In the time I have, I’d like to talk in my experience about Daryl’s kindness, his courage and the community he built, which I got to experience first-hand when I headed down Highway 7 and went to his celebration of life.

1040

To begin with kindness, it’s remarkable to meet someone who clearly was a mentor for his caucus, but who found time to be a mentor for every other member in this place. The anecdotes were overwhelming as this celebration of life this morning approached. I’ll just recount one I talked about briefly in the House. We were having a very

tense debate as the government first came to office in June 2018. We were convening over the summer. Daryl and I shared offices on the third floor of this building. I was up there hanging my head because I was finding, as I told him, the heat in this place to be a little intense. He put his hand on my shoulder, he looked me in the eye and he said, “Joel, let that heat power you to work for your people.” Amen to that.

I remember, when I was at the celebration of life in the beautiful town of Madoc, hearing people talk about Daryl caring most about getting things done for the community and caring less about who got credit for it. I want to remember the recent words of the mayor of Belleville, Mitch Panciuk, who said, “It is hard to imagine a federal or provincial representative who has been so instrumental in the development of our city in the 206-year history of Belleville.” My goodness.

Daryl was kind not only to me but to many others. But what I also learned in parsing through the research the good people of the legislative branch gave us is that he was one of those politicians who was also gracious in defeat and victory, having contested nine elections at all levels of Canadian politics.

My friend Nate Smelle, who was the provincial candidate for our party in 2018, walked into Daryl’s victory party in 2018. Daryl made a point, from the microphone, of saying, “Now, Nate, I want you to know that if NDP supporters in this riding have any concerns, they need to bring them straight to me,” in the middle of the celebration for him and his victory.

I also note that when Bruce Knutson lost to Daryl in 2004, he made the opportunity to say as Bruce walked across the street, “Bruce, I know that walk and how it feels like. I know what it feels like to walk from your campaign office, having lost a campaign, and walk into the victor’s office. It’s a long walk, but I appreciate you and I appreciate the time you’ve taken in our community to work hard for community.”

Mr. Kramp turned a riding that had been Liberal for 18 years Conservative. He went on to continue to serve in 2004, winning 2006, 2008 and 2011, losing only in a wave election in 2015 and being elected again in 2018. The people don’t lie. They saw something in him. I think all of us saw it, too.

Mr. Kramp and I shared an affection for the Christian faith. We were both raised in the Christian faith. Matthew 17:15 to 17 reads, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.” When my minister was explaining what that passage meant to me as a young man, he said, “Judge someone not by their words, Joel. Judge someone by their actions. What are they prepared to do? You will know the tree by the fruit that it bears.”

When I had occasion to go to the celebration of life in Madoc, I saw an orchard of fruits. I saw a church filled to

the gills with supporters singing *The Old Rugged Cross*, *Amazing Grace* and *How Great Thou Art*. The member from Bay of Quinte tells me there was an overflow room down the street of people there. We will be judged and remembered by the community we built, and that's what I remember with Mr. Kramp. He's someone we all should look up to. In a time of polarization and anger, let us remember what he stood for.

Thank you, Kramp family, for sharing him with us.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a great honour today to say a few words in tribute to our colleague and our friend Daryl Kramp, member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington in the 42nd Parliament. He also served for 11 years in the House of Commons and was a deputy reeve and municipal councillor for Madoc. He also served as a member of the Ontario Provincial Police, and when you look at Daryl's life, it's clear that his life was a life of service. He understood what it meant to serve others, to put others first.

I never met Daryl before he arrived here in 2018, although I knew of him. Because in 2004, he won an election in Prince Edward–Hastings against a very dear friend of my wife Linda, Bruce Knutson. And those of you who know my wife Linda would know that she is a fierce partisan and competitor, up there with the best. So the first reports I had of Daryl—well, let's just say that they weren't glowing. Close elections have a way of doing that.

I don't remember exactly when I met Daryl here in 2018, but I do remember thinking, "What was all the fuss about?" He, in some ways, reminded me of my father. He was kind, he always seemed to have time and he listened. And while I'm sure he could be partisan, I just never got that sense. He always showed a genuine interest and was a thoughtful person. He was patient. And that was clear from the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. The Minister of Health and the member from Ottawa Centre would know that that committee sometimes became a little—I won't say hard to handle, but a bit contentious, let's say.

Daryl had the most important quality we need to have as politicians: authenticity. With Daryl, what you saw was what you got. He knew what he stood for, whether he agreed with his party or not. And, most importantly, I know, he always remembered where he came from, who sent him and what they sent him to do.

I just want to thank the Kramp family for being here today and for sharing your father with us. It does come at the cost of families, but he was a great member here and served his community very well.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Guelph.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It's an honour to rise today to pay tribute to my friend and former colleague Daryl Kramp, the MPP for Hastings–Lennox and Addington. First and foremost, Daryl was a kind and decent person, representing all that's right and good about politics, somebody

who went out of his way to check in on you and made sure you knew that he cared about you.

Daryl reached out to me shortly after we were elected in 2018 and he wanted me to know that he might be new to Queen's Park, but he was not new to politics, and if I needed advice, I could reach out any time. We both agreed that we would work across party lines, and that's a promise Daryl kept. It was during our time on committee that we really got to know each other, before and after committee meetings, having many conversations about how we could make Parliament work better. And it was when I was down, after losing a vote on what I thought was a reasonable amendment, Daryl would walk up to me, give me a pat on the back and a pep talk.

Daryl and I formed a stronger bond when it was my turn to reach out to him and say how much I enthusiastically supported his private member's Bill 216, the Food Literacy for Students Act. I, along with many local food and farming advocates, were strong supporters of Daryl's bill, and it was my turn to repay the favour whenever he got down and needed some words of encouragement when he was frustrated that his bill was hitting some roadblocks.

Our last conversation was about Daryl's health and Daryl's bill. This past December, I was walking through the hallways just before we were going to rise, and the light was weird and this tall gentleman started walking towards me and I couldn't quite see who it was. And this voice said, "Mike, it's Daryl—Daryl Kramp. Do you have a minute to talk?" And in my mind, I didn't, because I was late. I knew I was late, but something told me to stop and have a conversation. We talked about his health. Most of all, we talked about his family. We talked about our relationship and how much he appreciated my support for his bill. But most of all, he wanted to ask me how I was doing. In the midst of his health battle, he was more concerned about how I was doing. So, Speaker: Daryl, a kind and decent man indeed.

**1050**

I want to say to the Kramp family, thank you for sharing such a remarkable person with us. His legacy lives on in our hearts.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** It is a tremendous honour to speak and recognize my friend and colleague Daryl Kramp, and I want to thank my colleagues from across the aisle for their heartfelt tributes to Kramp as well today.

Three quarters of our caucus would love the opportunity to stand here and tell stories about Daryl Kramp, because there are so many, and I will try and limit it to just a few here today.

Welcome to the family. I'm not going to look there, because I won't be able to get through this; this is going to be one of the hardest tributes that I've ever had to deliver. But again, I am extremely honoured to do so. His family is here, his friends, his campaign workers, his staff. And Denise Gray is here. I don't think she was introduced, Speaker, but Denise is here.

He would always say his staff don't work for him; they work with him, and it's one of the things, one of the many

lessons, that I learned from Daryl Kramp. He was a tremendous role model. He was a mentor for me. He was certainly a mentor for this guy, MPP Bresee, who holds the Hastings–Lennox and Addington seat that Daryl held in this Legislature for the four years that he was here.

While he certainly was steadfast in his service to community, Kramper always maintained his priorities were faith, family and friends—in that order—and your presence here today is a testament to just how he lived his life.

When we speak about political legacies, and we do it all the time, we often talk of community leaders as giants, and Daryl was a giant. He was quite literally a giant, most often a friendly one—I've seen him get mad a few times, however—a larger-than-life personality, an uproarious laugh. I look back at some pictures of us together in our time as MPP and MP, and I think, in three quarters of the pictures, we weren't just having a laugh; we were having all of those all-out belly laughs, because he was just one of those guys. He made everyone around him welcome—and that's regardless of their party affiliation, Joel. It might not be what you'd expect from one of the most imposing fastball pitchers that Hastings county has ever seen, a hardened cop or a hockey promoter who brought the big, bad Russians to town on more than one occasion.

He and Carol Ann, the love of his life, hosted people at Moira Lake. His entire family lives on that lake, south of Madoc.

He loved watching his grandkids. Some of them are here today. It was funny; when Bill Walker and I had a chance to go out for chicken wings and beer with him a couple of weeks ago, he was wearing a Yale baseball cap, because that's where his granddaughter Anna Belle was a goaltender, playing hockey. We made fun of Daryl wearing an Ivy League baseball cap, as you can understand. But he loved watching kids play hockey and volleyball.

And he enjoyed music. His favourite song, I think, was the national anthem. If you ever heard him—I'm still a little deaf in this ear from standing next to him while he was singing the national anthem, because he really belted it out.

He was a real treat. If you had the pleasure of visiting his former restaurant, Two Loons, right across the lake from where he lived, Daryl would cook up his famous chicken wings, and quite often, they had the infamous Friday-night seafood buffet. The whole family worked there. Daryl was just an incredible host, just a friendly guy, and quite often, he would be holding court at the restaurant as well. Of course, they continued that tradition at their home, with people coming in all the time, day or night.

I remember 2018, when Daryl came out of his short-lived retirement to run provincially, owing to his sense of obligation to see the books balanced and wanting to be a part of Team Ford or Ford Nation here in Ontario. He took that new Hastings–Lennox and Addington riding with 50% of the vote. I'm told he was beaming as his girls updated him throughout the night on the polls as they were coming in.

I was busy in Bay of Quinte that night, so I wasn't there, but I've seen this team in action on election night before.

It was 2004 when Bruce Knutson was running. Former Chrétien Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief decided that he was going to retire. He was a Prince Edward county farmer. He didn't reoffer for election, so Bruce stepped up for the Liberals. I was a news reporter at Quinte Broadcasting at the time and I was assigned to cover the Prince Edward–Hastings riding. The Liberal and Kramp campaign offices were literally across the grocery store plaza parking lot—like, Liberals on one side, Conservatives on the other. So yes, while it was a long walk that night for Mr. Knutson, it was actually a very short walk.

But the funny part of the story is, expecting to see another Liberal victory, because it was a Liberal stronghold for quite a time, I was positioned at the campaign office of the Liberal candidate. The early poll results started to come in and they were quite favourable for the Grits in Prince Edward–Hastings that night. So I listened to, and recorded on my tape recorder, a victory speech from the Liberal candidate. I walked across the parking lot to get what I thought was going to be a concession speech from Daryl Kramp. And there was a lot of scurrying going on. The family was there, of course. They decided, “You know, we're going to wait until the north votes come in.” Kramp was the king of the north in Hastings, and he cruised to victory and really started the political legacy in Prince Edward–Hastings. A lot of those team members are here, and they've been introduced by you, Speaker, and they've stuck by Daryl Kramp all these years. So, that night, I recorded two victory speeches and a concession speech as well.

When he was first at Queen's Park, I had an invite from Paul Miller, the long-time NDP representative from Hamilton, to come up to his office and join him for a couple of cocktails, which we tend to do from time to time. Because Daryl was new here, I asked if Daryl could come up. I wanted him to meet some of the members opposite. It turned out that Daryl had worked in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek as an OPP officer when he faced off against some of the toughest biker gangs in the Hammer and organized crime down there. It turns out that Paul Miller knew all the same people that Daryl did. I remember sitting there just listening to the two of them go on for hours and hours telling stories. That was Daryl Kramp; that really was Daryl Kramp. Needless to say, he got to know a lot of the people on the opposite side of the bench just as well as in his own caucus.

This isn't to say that Daryl couldn't be tough when he needed to be. You always knew where you he stood with him. When he believed in something, he fought hard for it. He was crucial—and Don Bonter is going to put a big smile on his face here—to the construction of a two-lane bridge joining Prince Edward county to Brighton. They were going to build a one-lane bridge; can you imagine that? Don Bonter and Daryl Kramp went toe to toe on that one and they fought for that bridge.

He dug in his heels for equitable rural funding, better broadband, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network. A large part of Daryl's legacy, as you say, is he built large parts of Belleville and Prince Edward–Hastings.

He also travelled to China a lot, which wasn't mentioned this morning. He negotiated a number of trade deals on behalf of Prime Minister Harper. As a matter of fact, Daryl Kramp is responsible for bringing the pandas from China to the Toronto Zoo. That's actually a fact. They had a 10-year stint as residents at the Toronto Zoo. They've since had to be returned. But often, and Carol Ann will know this, when Daryl would be in China, and sometimes the Prime Minister would be there, they could care less about seeing the Prime Minister. They only wanted to see their friend Daryl Kramp.

His work with local agriculture producers and Minister Lecce ensured that food literacy will be on Ontario's education curriculum. He secured long-term-care beds across his riding, including in his beloved hometown of Madoc, and the reconstruction of what's known as "Kramp crossing," which is an old train track that joins the trail system to the village of Madoc across Moira Lake.

One could argue, though, that his biggest challenge here at Queen's Park was keeping our massive caucus that was elected in 2018—as our caucus chair. There's now a big guy here, his dear friend Will Bouma, who's filling that chair, and I know he learned a lot from Kramper.

Kramper's leadership tied with his well-curated motivational quotes—he loved his quotes, we all know that—and I'm going to wrap up shortly, but I hope you're entertained.

**1100**

It was a different caucus meeting where one of my greatest memories of Daryl Kramp came to pass. Now, I wasn't there, but Minister Calandra and Minister Rickford were there. And it happened in his last year of an 11-year run on Parliament Hill as part of the Harper government. We all remember the day, October 22, 2014, when a masked gunman fatally injured Corporal Nathan Cirillo. He moved west uphill on Rideau Street, entered Centre Block just below the Peace Tower. The gunman and security guard sparred. There were gunshots ringing out in the hallway, and just to the left was the Conservative caucus meeting that was under way in that caucus room. And I've heard this from many people, Daryl put his training, put that booming voice to work in a power of persuasion. He ordered that the Prime Minister be put in a closet in that caucus room. He barricaded the doors with his colleagues, and they had flagpoles as spears ready just in case the perpetrator came through that door.

He's quoted as saying, "We didn't have any idea what was there, if it was one or more, or what the armament was. Once the whole myriad of shots started to ring out, believe me, the activity of barricading the door stepped up quickly—almost instantaneously."

Daryl and his colleagues were actually heroic that day. He said that returning to the House of Commons the next day was very difficult because they were in lockdown for hours and hours the day that that happened. But he said it was "probably one of the finest days" as all parties came together and rallied as Canadians first—and that's how he lived his life.

And so, how proud he must have been following that to see his daughter Shelby, who's with us today, take her place in the House of Commons in 2021 as he was deciding to finish his lengthy political career.

And as was mentioned, Daryl battled cancer in his later years as he served, and I know he had some really, really tough days. Most mere mortals probably wouldn't have survived the 12-plus-hour surgery that he underwent and then the ensuing radiation treatments. But it was his faith, his family and his friends that pulled him through. He recovered. He was the same gentle giant with the big personality, smiles and laughter.

So we will remember Daryl Kramp, and it seems only fitting that I end with a quote. That's what Kramper was all about. This one is Ernest Hemingway: "Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another."

Daryl lived an incredible life. He fought off death as long as he could, and he was dignified in doing it. And why wouldn't he with the love that he had all around him: Carol Ann at his side, an adoring family of daughters and sons-in-law and grandkids and an entire community in his corner. It was a well-lived life.

We thank his family, of course, for sharing him with us. He made a mark not just in Madoc and in Prince Edward-Hastings or Ontario, but in Canada. He indeed made the world a better place.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I want to thank the members for their heartfelt and eloquent tributes as we have given thanks for the life and public service of Daryl Kramp.

It is now time for oral questions.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Let me start by extending my condolences as well. Thank you to MPP Daryl Kramp's family who are here with us today.

I'd also like to start by congratulating our deputy leader, the MPP from Kiiwetinoong, on a truly historic change to the standing orders. I look forward to hearing him speak in his language more often in this place.

My question is for the Premier. Today, Ontarians will be watching as this government lays out its priorities for the upcoming year. People are looking for hope, for a commitment that things are going to get better. One thing they don't want to see is more of their hard-earned dollars going towards private, for-profit health care.

Last year, the government doubled funding for private, for-profit clinics while public operating rooms were collecting dust. To the Premier: Will you finally properly fund our existing public operating rooms, or are we going



to be seeing the government handing over more contracts to for-profit clinics?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The short answer is, we have and we will. We will continue to rebuild our health care system to make sure that people are not languishing on wait-lists.

When we made a small change in cataract surgeries, expanding in four different communities, we now have 17,000 Ontarians who are back at work, back with their families, back in their communities, reading to their children. Those are the kinds of quantitative changes that are making a difference, that are impacting the lives of Ontarians, and I think at 4 o'clock, you will see additional exciting news coming from the Minister of Finance.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** More funding to private, for-profit corporations while our public operating rooms are sitting empty; more emergency rooms closing; millions of people losing access to their primary health care: Those are not the priorities of Ontarians.

People are looking for reliable health care; for accessible mental health supports; safe, comfortable long-term and home care. How can people trust this government to deliver on their health care when they've clearly prioritized private profits over public needs?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I remember very distinctly, within months of that cataract expansion, talking to a grandmother in southwestern Ontario, and she was so incredibly pleased that she was able to access that cataract surgery faster as a result of our investments. It made a difference in her life. It made a difference in her family's life.

What people want, Speaker, is to remove themselves from those wait-lists and actually get the critical surgery that they need. This is what those investments are doing. This is how we are rebuilding a health care system that, frankly, had been ignored for far too long from the Liberal and the NDP parties of Ontario. We will make that rebuilding. We will continue to make those investments, and we will continue to get it done in the province of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the truth is that after six long years of this Conservative government, access to health care increasingly is depending on where you live and how much you have in your wallet. So much for their no-credit-card promise, right? The government's risky privatization experiments aren't just costing people money in extra billing; they're threatening the entire health care system by draining all those public resources into private profits.

So my question to the Premier is: Does he understand that Ontario's economic prosperity depends on a strong public health care system? And can he commit today that not a single health care dollar in the budget is going to go to for-profit health care?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Perhaps the member opposite should have a conversation with, for example, the Ottawa Hospital, which is doing some innovation that actually ensures that people get access to surgery faster. It has literally made a life-changing experience for the people of Ottawa who have had access, have been removed from those long-term wait lines for surgery, making sure that they get access.

That's the type of innovation that we are going to encourage. That's the type of innovation that we are seeing coming forward from hospital leaders, from physicians, from surgeons across Ontario, who say, "I have a better way. We know we can improve the system, and I'm going to embrace that change. We are going to embrace that change."

If the NDP want to sit on the sidelines and continue to say no, that's fine, but we're going to get it done in the province of Ontario.

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## HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** We want innovation too. We just want it in the public health care system, not something that you have to pay for through your credit card.

Speaker, everybody in this province should have access to a family doctor, period. But under the Conservatives, 2.3 million people in Ontario do not. And that number is expected to rise to 4.4 million—that's a quarter of Ontario's population—by 2026. That means more people without regular checkups, more people missing a chance for early diagnosis or just putting up with pain and discomfort.

Instead of dealing with this, this government said no to our proposal to fund health teams and shared administrative support to get more people in front of a doctor.

So my question to the Premier is, will we see a change in approach in today's budget or will it just offer more of the same?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, where was this party when we announced a \$110-million expansion of primary care multidisciplinary teams? They were silent. They would prefer to bring forward motions that talk about ensuring that we have more administrative staff.

We are laser-focused on making sure that we have sufficient health human resources, whether those are expanded seats in two new medical schools in the province of Ontario—the city of Brampton, the city of Scarborough—where we are seeing expansions of medical residency seats in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, over 100 new seats.

And I may say that the numbers show that while your government was in government for a very short period of time, you actually cut residency seats in the province of

Ontario, as did the Liberals when they were in government.

We are the party that is rebuilding our health care system, whether it is through expansions in education, opportunities for people to join multidisciplinary teams and—

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

I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Ontarians feel like they're being left behind. Hundreds of complaints have been made about extra billing by these profiteering health care companies. The government won't disclose the bad actors that are gouging people in need. And every day, we're seeing more of these ads popping up in subways, on billboards, demanding pricey subscriptions, health services that can cost people thousands and thousands of dollars a year just to access the most basic of care.

I want to know if this is how the Premier sees the future of this province. Is it going to be like Netflix for health care? Are we going to have to subscribe to have basic health care needs met?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, every single day in the province of Ontario, we have 600,000 people interacting with our OHIP-funded, publicly funded services. Those are people who are accessing primary care physicians. Those are people who are getting necessary surgeries. Whether it is in our operating rooms, whether it is in community diagnostic centres, those are people who are getting the service they need and deserve in the province of Ontario.

Can we do more? Absolutely. But I want to be clear: Ontario leads Canada, and we will continue to make those investments to ensure that we continue to lead Canada in all access to health care services, including, of course, primary care multidisciplinary teams, which are the backbone of our health care system.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, 600,000 women are waiting for mammograms in Ontario right now—600,000. And \$1 billion has been hemorrhaged out of our health care system and spent on private agency nursing companies.

Speaker, people deserve to get health care that's close to home and available when they need it. Instead, they are seeing their rural emergency rooms close; 600,000 women can't get mammograms. It is not the reality in Ontario anymore.

The Liberals opened the door to privatization of health care in this province. We watched it, we saw what was happening and we fought it. But this Conservative government is doubling down and throwing the doors wide open.

So Ontarians want to know: Today, in this budget, is it going to be more of the same or can they count on this government to protect their public, not-for-profit health care system in the province of Ontario?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member opposite refers to mammograms—an investment, of course, you may have missed, that we have actually increased the access to mammograms for women in Ontario. You continue to vote against these investments. You continue to say that we have not done the things that you vote against every single time we bring it forward. This year, we will have women who have access to mammograms who are 40 and above, a change that our government made under the leadership of Premier Ford. The NDP, the Liberals, continue to say that we have not done enough.

I want to continue to invest in our publicly funded system. It is unfortunate that we do not have opposition members who understand how critically important this is to the people of Ontario.

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

The next question.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. The Conservatives are on track to lose \$357 million in federal funding because this government is failing to meet its own affordable housing targets. This government has two choices: Submit a credible plan to the federal government to build more affordable housing by Friday or explain to Ontarians how this government plans to account for the loss of \$357 million earmarked for affordable housing in this year's budget. Which choice are you going to make?

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

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The choice that we made is to overachieve targets by 170% when it comes to renovating and upgrading old housing stock. The choice that we have made is to ensure that we're at 60% of the target that we are asked to achieve. What is happening is that the federal Liberal government, supported by the NDP, is unilaterally cutting funding to the province of Ontario of over \$357 million, on top of the \$400 million that they have already shortchanged the people of the province of Ontario.

Our municipal partners agree with us that this is a unilateral cut by the federal government. We remain at the table. We are not going to make up some program because the federal government—the Liberals and NDP—have decided to change the goal post. We meet a target, they change the goal post.

What this is is an immature federal government doing what they do best: pitting one region of the country against another. They're treating Ontario differently than every other province. We won't stand for it. We'll continue to make investments that are right—

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Back to the Premier: Of all the provinces and territories, the Conservatives are dead last in building affordable housing—dead last. Experts are telling you very clearly what is needed to build more affordable housing. From permitting inclusionary zoning to funding community housing to coming up with a good definition of “affordable housing” that we’ve waited two years for—you haven’t even come up with a definition of “affordable housing.”

Premier, can you commit to submitting a better housing action plan by Friday so we don’t miss out on this federal money?

*Interjections.*

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

Once again, I’ll ask the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It shows you where the NDP are. We actually passed the definition of “affordable housing” months ago, with the support of the NDP, with the unanimous support of everybody in the entire House. So we’ll keep on going.

What is happening here is classic Liberal and NDP. Because we are meeting our targets—170% of the target; because we are meeting 60% of the target—we’re still months, years away from having to hit the 100% mark. We’re crashing through those targets for the people of the province of Ontario.

What they’re doing is pitting one region against another region. We saw it with the carbon tax. We’re seeing it on housing. You know who can help make a difference? It is the NDP in Ottawa, who hold the balance of power. Instead of supporting a \$700-million unilateral cut to the province of Ontario, take down an immature government that pits one—

*Interjections.*

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

The next question.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** My question is for the Minister of Finance. Across the world, economic challenges continue to grow, and we know that Ontario is not isolated from this geopolitical uncertainty. Families, workers and business in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh and throughout Ontario are feeling the financial pressures that have been caused by ongoing supply chain disruptions, inflation and high interest rates, and with the federal Liberals proposing a scheduled 23% carbon tax hike next week, Ontarians are looking to our government for much-needed support to make life more affordable.

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Speaker, we know the people of Ontario need and deserve more relief. That’s why our government must continue to demonstrate through legislation, investments and other

initiatives that more financial support will be provided to Ontarians.

We have a strong plan for the future. Speaker, will the minister please tell this House how our government is keeping costs down and putting money into the pockets of the people of Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Parliamentary assistant and member for Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the great, hard-working member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Members of the Legislature, today is budget day. This is a big day. We are excited about rebuilding Ontario, continuing that path and to make life affordable for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, just yesterday, under Premier Ford, our government announced an extension of the gas tax cut, now saving the average household \$320 per year. This represents the largest tax cut this century in Ontario. And yet, while we are cutting taxes and putting money back in the pockets of the people of Ontario, the federal Liberal Party is set to implement a 23% tax hike on the carbon tax in less than one week. The Liberal plan to tackle affordability is to make life more expensive for the people of Ontario and Canada. That’s why we continue to call to scrap the tax and stand with our government as we make life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that response. It’s great to hear that our government is consistently introducing measures that will provide real financial relief for Ontarians.

I know the people in my riding will be thrilled to hear that we are extending the gas tax cut. Obviously, we’re the automotive capital of Canada, and they look forward to seeing our government continue to find more ways to reduce costs and make life more affordable. That’s why we must continue to show leadership and demonstrate a strong economic vision that that will help families during this challenging time. Unlike the members opposite, who refuse to stand up for Ontarians on this carbon tax, our government must remain committed to investing in what matters to most people as we build for a stronger future.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please explain what our government is doing to help Ontarians during these challenging economic times?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you again to the great member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Speaker, I am proud to say that in just a few hours, our government will deliver the 2024 budget, our plan to build a better Ontario. Even for my great colleague the member—I know we can’t reveal too many details yet. But what I can say is our government has a plan. It has a plan that supports Ontarians through these difficult times of high inflation and high Bank of Canada interest rates, and it’s a plan that will help keep costs down. This is a budget that will continue our government’s plan to build up our province without raising taxes on the people of Ontario.

## FIRST NATIONS LAW ENFORCEMENT

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** On April 1, the long-delayed Community Safety and Policing Act will come into force. Under the CSPA, First Nation laws are exempt from being enforced.

The chief of the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin Anishnaabe Police Service told us last week that criminal behaviour on-reserve has gotten worse while Ontario delays the changes needed to enforce laws on-reserve.

Speaker, fixing it will only take a simple amendment. Will the Premier commit to making that amendment immediately?

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

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I want to thank the member for the question. The Community Safety and Policing Act, which will come live on April 1, replaces a piece of legislation that's 35 years old. And under both the old act, the Police Services Act, and the Community Safety and Policing Act, police can enforce municipal and First Nations bylaws equally. Our government, as the member knows, takes public safety very seriously all over Ontario.

But I want to say one other thing. Thanks to the Chiefs of Ontario, who made a suggestion to establish a collaborative table under the Ministry of the Attorney General, we did just that. The collaborative table is an excellent table to table ideas for us to consider. That's exactly why it exists.

Mr. Speaker, we take public safety seriously all across Ontario.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** First Nations came to Queen's Park last week to work with the government. The Attorney General and the Solicitor General couldn't be bothered to meet with the leadership.

The Ontario Regional Chief said, after his meeting with government members, "We didn't hear any commitments to reach a timely resolution." April 1 is six days away.

Will the government work with the chiefs and amend the Community Safety and Policing Act?

*Interjections.*

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

The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** First Nations communities are encouraged to work collaboratively with their local police service to determine what enforcement options are best for them. The provincial and federal government, as the member opposite knows, do not direct any police services in Ontario.

Just two weeks ago, I was at the Ontario Police College. This was my sixth march past ceremony. I made a point of meeting with all of the cadets that are going to First Nations police services. It was over two dozen.

We take public safety in the four corners of Ontario very seriously. That's exactly why the Community Safety

and Policing Act, that will come live on April 1, will provide an unparalleled opportunity for communities all across Ontario to feel that the legislation brings them up to the times that they're in.

One more thing: It is very important to know that I stay in regular contact with the police chiefs on a regular basis, including those serving First Nations communities.

## TAXATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Families in my great riding of Newmarket–Aurora are concerned about the ever-rising cost of living. They are paying more for everything from their energy bills to groceries.

The carbon tax is only making things worse. While our government continues to advocate and fight for Ontarians, the federal government continues to disregard the people's concerns by ruling out any future pauses or exemptions on this carbon tax. That's unfair to Ontarians who work hard to make a living, to raise a family and to support their young children and their aging parents.

But despite the affordability struggles many people in our province are facing, the NDP and the Liberal members opposite continue to remain silent. It's shameful that they refuse to join us in calling for the elimination of this disastrous tax.

Speaker—

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

The Minister of Energy may reply.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** We're five days away from the federal carbon tax increasing by a massive 23%.

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** It is Groundhog Day for the Liberals because every April 1, they're making it more expensive for the people across Canada and here in Ontario when it comes to paying for gas, groceries and delivery of vehicles, for farmers to grow the crops. The queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and the Liberal caucus here as a matter of fact just appointed their new candidate for the Milton by-election who's on the record supporting the federal carbon tax—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Todd Smith:** I know it's shocking.

Bonnie Crombie was out last week announcing the new hand-picked members for her advisory committee. Kathleen Wynne's environment minister Chris Ballard helped design the Liberals' multi-billion-dollar cap-and-trade program; he's on the committee. And before being voted out by rural voters for this giant-slayer right here, Lisa Thompson, the new agriculture minister, Carol Mitchell wanted to impose a carbon tax on farmers, and she was the agriculture minister. Let's scrap the tax while we—

*Interjections.*

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

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**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you to the minister for his response. People's household budgets are being stretched thin as the carbon tax drives up the cost of daily necessities like food, home heating and transportation. Our government has shown time and time again that we do not need the carbon tax to cut emissions.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, which oversaw skyrocketing electricity rates that forced families into energy poverty, we have made energy more affordable so Ontario families do not have to choose between paying their electricity bills and putting food on the table. While carbon-tax Bonnie Crombie and her minivan caucus continue to work against us, we will not stop getting it done for the people of Ontario.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to counter the impacts of the costly Liberal and—

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks to the member opposite. We're taking a common-sense approach and ensuring that energy and electricity prices are affordable in the province of Ontario, something that those in the Liberal caucus and even the NDP caucus really don't understand. It's because we have brought that stability to energy prices in Ontario that we're seeing our economy grow.

Now, Bonnie Crombie, the queen of the carbon tax, and her Liberal caucus are telling the people of Ontario that we're better off with this federal tax. As a matter of fact, the federal environment minister said last week that Bonnie Crombie was happy to have the federal increase on carbon taxes—a whopping 23% that's going to happen five days from today when we're in the midst of an affordability and cost-of-living crisis in Ontario.

It's completely unacceptable that Bonnie Crombie and her cast of Liberals are supporting this expensive tax that's driving up the cost of everything in our province. It's time to do the right thing. It's time to scrap this tax.

#### HEALTH CARE

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier. OPSEU/SEFPO Local 5115 workers, the front-line workers of the Regent Park Community Health Centre, are on strike for fair wages. This government is starving public health care. Their wages were frozen by Bill 124 during an affordability crisis.

These health care professionals are doing some of the most difficult work in this province, literally at the epicentre of a poisoned drug supply and opiate overdose crisis. Despite all of this, they continue to show up for our communities, doing that hard work. Will this government show up for them in today's budget and fund public health care so that they can get back to work and receive the fair wage they deserve?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** While I'm obviously not going to talk about specific labour relations that are happening, I will say that public health units have had a 16% increase

since 2018, when we formed government, and that is of course outside of all of the investments that we made sure were in place for our public health units to protect the people of Ontario during the pandemic, obviously making sure to distribute the vaccines to people to keep them safe. I will say a 16% increase for public health units across Ontario is unprecedented.

Of course, in the last Association of Municipalities of Ontario, we also made a commitment and shared with our municipal partners that a 1% increase was part of our plan to invest in public health infra in the province of Ontario.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Back to the Premier: Political messaging will only get you so far. That spin is not being believed by anyone. The only people who agree with you are private health care investors who are looking to gut our public health care system.

Real, honest Ontarians like Kirsty Millwood, who actually is in the chamber today to listen to this debate—she is a front-line foot health worker and the president of OPSEU/SEFPO Local 5115. She tells me, “We need funding for community health care centres. We need to provide critical services. We keep people out of hospitals. We save lives daily.”

We lost so much because of Bill 124, Speaker, but they continue to show up for work. Now is the time for the government to stop forcing them out of their jobs because they are living with unlivable wages. Will this government properly fund community health care centres at the health care rate of inflation?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** A 16% increase since 2018, and where was this party? They voted against every single one of those investments. Whether it was the fall economic statement, estimates or budgets, you always vote against the investments we make in the province of Ontario.

The \$110-million investment in primary care multidisciplinary teams does in fact include community health centres, and they do get an increase in their annual operating budget. Why, Speaker? Because we see the value in the multidisciplinary teams. Why do we continue to expand primary care in the province of Ontario? Because we see the value in making sure that we have a stable health care force that is connected to the people in our communities.

We'll continue to make those investments and rebuild the province of Ontario and our health care system, and the people of Ontario will watch who votes in support of those investments.

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

The next question.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** The dream of home ownership in Ontario is no longer a dream for young people and families. It has become a nightmare under this government.

Speaker, they claim they are the government of yes. To quote the government members in this House:

The Minister of Housing: “We’re trying to end NIMBYism.”

The member from Brampton North: “NIMBYism is one of the most dangerous forces in our politics today.”

The former Minister of Housing: “We’ve gone past NIMBYism. I think we’re now in BANANAism ... ‘build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone.’”

But as we found out, they are the government of, “no, not in my backyard,” and “build absolutely nothing near anyone anywhere.” My question is, when did this government decide to make like a BANANA and split on building housing for the people of Ontario?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Oh, Speaker—

**Interjection:** Where do you start?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It’s true: Where do you start with a question like that, Mr. Speaker?

Let’s get this straight: The Liberal leader, who takes one position one day, another position the next day, one position one day, another position the next day—it’s like one of those weather vanes in a hurricane; you never know which way they’re going.

Do you know what the reality is? We made the decision to work with our municipal partners, and do you know what they told us? The number one obstacle to building homes is the infrastructure deficit that was left behind by the previous Liberal government. They said that because of the infrastructure deficit, there’s not enough sewer and water in the ground to build millions of homes. That is why Liberals advocate for policies that will build hundreds of homes while we want to build millions of homes. We are not ashamed to work with our partners to put infrastructure in the ground to build millions of homes so that everybody can have the dream of home ownership.

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

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Why doesn’t this government talk about my track record on housing? Because it’s better than theirs, and they know it. I am MPP YIMBY. The people of Beaches–East York put me here to represent them because they know I can get it done.

Meanwhile, the Premier and the head of the provincial housing supply action team are dead set against gentle density that will help Ontario get on track with the housing crisis. They are losing out on crucial federal funding because they refuse to be bold and lead the charge on allowing fourplexes. The legacy of the government will be one of NIMBYism.

## 1140

But it’s not too late to change course. You can even borrow the Ontario Liberal housing bill; we’ve done the work for you. Start with fourplexes and start now.

Speaker, my question is: When will this government actually get the shovels in the ground instead of leaving them on the shelf in Home Hardware?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** If I was to borrow Bonnie Crombie’s housing plan, I would have the massive record that she had as the mayor of Mississauga. What did we see? The population of Mississauga actually decreased when the population of the province was exploding. In fact, in her last months in office, she had a massive start of 12 homes in her community. So thank you very much. I don’t think this caucus here wants to borrow anything from that small group of individuals over there who, for 15 years, stood in the way of building homes.

You know who agrees with me? The former Liberal cabinet minister who testified at one of our hearings and said that the crisis started under the Liberal watch, Mr. Speaker.

What I’m going to do is this: I’m going to put infrastructure in the ground, and I’m going to make sure we build millions of homes instead of the hundreds that they would like to build.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The people of Ontario are tired of Liberal tax hikes. They remember what the province was like under the previous Liberal government, when it was hiking taxes at every opportunity. Businesses fled the province in droves, and workers’ hard-earned paycheques shrunk, and the future of Ontario’s economy looked bleak.

Our government came in and reversed course. We know that lowering taxes and reducing costs are the keys to prosperity for our workers and for our businesses. That’s why we’re calling on the federal Liberals to stop their carbon tax hike of April 1.

Speaker, can the minister highlight what we’ve done to lower costs across the board so that the federal Liberals can learn from our example?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Look, we have shown the Liberals the way—shown the Liberals that cutting red tape and lowering taxes are the keys to creating growth and jobs in Ontario: 11 red tape reduction bills, nearly \$1 billion in cost savings, 500 unnecessary pieces of red tape reduced—all voted against by the Liberals and the NDP. A 10% Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, \$2 million in savings per business per year—voted against by the Liberals and the NDP. The gas tax reduction, 11 cents a litre—voted against by the Liberals and the NDP.

Speaker, that’s how you get 700,000 jobs created: by lowering taxes and cutting costs. Listen to the people of Ontario. Scrap the tax today.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I thank the minister for that response. We can't just stand around and watch as the Trudeau Liberals hike yet another tax. We've encouraged the Liberals in this House to call on their federal counterparts to stop the April 1 tax hike, but instead, Bonnie Crombie couldn't be bothered, saying she's not there to tell the federal government how to do their job.

It just goes to show you that, even with a new leader, the Liberals have not changed—not one bit. They'll watch as Prime Minister Trudeau hikes the carbon tax again, even though they know it punishes businesses and households across Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the Liberals how lowering costs creates growth and new investment across our economy?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, the Liberals need to get their hands out of the pockets of Ontario's businesses and workers. Again, we've shown them the way—although they voted against every one of these: the child care tax credit—families can claim 75% of their eligible child care expenses; Low-income Workers Tax Credit, a tax credit to reduce or eliminate your Ontario personal income tax; Guaranteed Annual Income System—we not only increased the eligibility, we doubled the payments in 2023 for our seniors. And last year, that has helped to create 180,000 jobs in Ontario, \$11 billion in foreign direct investment, which alone created 12,000 jobs.

We've shown the Liberals the way: lower taxes, cutting red tape, that's how you create jobs, not by bringing in a carbon tax.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Staffing shortages are having a severe impact on our schools, robbing our children of the supports they need to learn, to be safe, and in some cases, to even be at school.

As one Ontario principal says, "We are not staffed properly to support students. We can only respond to emergencies..." The Minister of Education has been frantically pointing fingers in every direction instead of taking responsibility and coming up with a plan to fix it.

Where is the plan, Speaker? Will we finally see it in today's budget?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** What you will see in today's budget is a continued commitment to public education with a commitment to build schools, to invest in back to basics on literacy and math and improving standards in Ontario's publicly funded schools. That is the cornerstone of our plan to get back to basics and to create pathways to good-paying jobs for our young people.

If the members opposite want to be constructive, if they're concerned about absences within schools that impact quality education, then they will stand up to their union friends and insist that retired educators are permitted

to be in classrooms where they belong instead of unqualified staff ahead of teachers. It makes no sense that the NDP—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:**—would rather unqualified staff instead of a qualified, merited teacher leading education in Ontario's publicly funded schools. Why don't they stand up for children, stand up for the right to learn of every child in this province?

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

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I didn't hear a plan there, just more buck-passing.

We have over 40,000 teachers who are qualified, certified and in good standing with the Ontario teacher's college who are choosing not to teach in our schools because of this minister's policies.

Meanwhile, we have an attendance problem in high schools because why bother going to school if you're not going to learn anything today? And more than half of principals say they've asked parents to keep their children with special needs home. This is serious, and it deserves a better response than finger pointing from this minister.

So, I repeat, will we see a plan to address staffing shortages in today's budget?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** BC Global News reports, "Union Warns of Growing Burnout, Reliance on Uncertified Teachers Amid BC Staffing Crunch" in the New Democratic province of BC. The UNESCO reports, "The world is facing a significant teacher shortage." Even with challenges in the federation that precede our government, we have a plan. It's why we cut certification in half. It's why we ensured 3,000 more educators are in our schools today. It's why we revoked regulation 274 to allow speed and qualification to triumph for the hiring of new educators.

Unlike provinces east and west that have significant shortages that are plaguing the continuity of learning, we have gone ahead of this, and we're committed to going even further, in partnership with the Minister of Finance, to invest in quality learning, to raise standards and ambitions, to give hope and economic opportunity to young people. When they graduate, they can get a good job and achieve the dream of this country.

#### FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Before the March break, in a brief elevator conversation, the minister and I had a discussion about what our plans were when we'd be going home for the March break. Part of my plan was to continue the ongoing tour that I've been doing in lumber mills and forestry operations across northern Ontario.

Well, Minister, the report card is in. Do you think you received a passing grade?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** That's quite a question. Do you know what? In talking with the forestry sector throughout

Ontario, talking with mayors, talking with people all throughout the sector, I think we are getting a passing grade. We are making investments in the sector that are unprecedented. And I'd highlight the recent announcement of \$60 million to support our biomass plant—\$60 million to drive innovation, to drive the future of forestry in Ontario, to make sure that there are opportunities not only today but tomorrow.

1150

Speaker, we will continue to drive that innovation. We will continue to work with our forestry partners. We will continue to make sure that northern Ontario thrives, grows and is part of the great economy right here in Ontario.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Once again to the minister: Minister, there's a saying, "If a tree falls in the forest, does anybody hear?" Minister, it's time to listen.

If I had to grade the minister's effort, he'd get an F. Why? Because you have failed to contact the mills that relied on Espanola and Terrace Bay. You have failed to contact the forest operators who feed the mills. You have failed to contact the trucking operators who deliver the wood, the chips, the paper.

Minister, the silence in the forest is deafening. The mills, the truckers, the operators have been waiting a long time. The entire industry has asked for a gathering of minds to address this crisis. Minister, the doors are open. They're waiting for your call, and they welcome you any time.

Do your homework, Minister. Your words don't match your actions. Make the calls.

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

Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** It's absolutely astounding to me that the member opposite would stand up and say that. They had years to support a Liberal government that made no investments in the forestry sector. They did not push them at all. They did not make sure that forestry was a significant part of the economy here in Ontario—but we are, every single day.

We are talking with the mill operators. We are talking with the forestry operators. We are making sure that we're making critical investments in the north. We'll continue to do that, because this is the only government that recognizes the value of the north. We've heard time and time again that the north was referred to as a "no man's land" by the previous government.

Well, this government knows the opportunity that lays within the north. This government is working with the forestry sector. This government is working with sectors throughout northern Ontario to drive economies, make sure that people have prosperity, make sure that we can integrate the economy in the north with the economy in the south and have a strong, prosperous Ontario.

I make no apologies for the efforts that we have made in northern Ontario and will continue to.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** My question is to the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is making life difficult for the people of Ontario. At a time when many Ontarians are already stretching their household budgets to heat their homes, they should not be forced to choose between feeding themselves or staying warm during those cold winter nights.

But the federal government and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, continue to ignore the harmful impact of the carbon tax. And with another hike scheduled next week, the Liberal members in this House are still refusing to speak up on behalf of their constituents.

Unlike the Liberal leader, who raised taxes every single year as mayor of Mississauga, our government, under the leadership of the Premier, has been advocating for the people of this province since day one, and we will not stop until the federal Liberals finally scrap this tax.

Can the Minister of Energy tell this House how the federal carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** It is indeed driving up the cost of everything across Ontario and parts of Canada where the federal government keeps the carbon tax in place.

But what's really astounding, I think, to a lot of people is just the silence or even quiet support of the federal government's carbon tax from the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, in Ontario. As a matter of fact, she has put together a climate panel that's made up of supporters of the federal carbon tax.

And as a matter of fact, the provincial Liberals in Milton just announced their candidate for the upcoming by-election in Milton. Guess where the candidate stands on the federal carbon tax? Fully supportive.

The carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything. It's hurting Liberal numbers here in Ontario, so we can fully understand why the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, isn't putting her name on the ballot in Milton: because Liberals across Canada, including here in Ontario, are facing certain defeat because of the carbon tax that's making life unaffordable for people.

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

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I want to thank the minister for that answer. It is very fortunate to see the federal government intentionally disregarding the welfare of most Ontarians, and they're blatantly ignoring how the carbon tax is leading to increasing energy costs.

But Speaker, the most concerning thing is that it's only going to get worse. The federal Liberals and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, want to keep raising the carbon tax every single year. That means higher costs for groceries, higher costs for gas, higher costs for home heating and other essentials on April 1 every single year.

Only our government, under the leadership of this Premier, has been standing up for Ontarians and calling on the federal government to scrap the carbon tax.



Speaker, can the minister please explain why Ontario families cannot afford the carbon tax increase that Bonnie Crombie Liberals are supporting?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Sadly, Speaker, my colleague isn't wrong; the Prime Minister is going to increase the carbon tax again five days from now, on April 1, and the Prime Minister has the full support of Bonnie Crombie. But that shouldn't be a surprise, because the queen of the carbon tax was there when Stéphane Dion was the Liberal leader in Ottawa, and a part of that caucus that was in support of Stéphane Dion's climate pricing, carbon pricing tactic, the Green Shift. This was unbelievable, that this caucus, this Liberal caucus, is fully supportive of a tax that is making life more unaffordable in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis that in five days is going to go up again.

Mr. Speaker, the new candidate for the Liberals in Milton is supportive of the federal carbon tax. The provincial Liberal caucus is in support of the federal Liberal carbon tax. Bonnie Crombie and the Ontario Liberals are supportive of the carbon tax. Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals—

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

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is for the Premier. Many times in this House, New Democrats have called on this government to raise Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates to an amount that will bring people out of legislated poverty. Our constituents are struggling to pay the rent, and they're left with little to nothing for anything else, like food or utilities.

Speaker, can the Premier tell me, will today's budget finally support Ontarians and make OW and ODSP rates livable for people of Ontario?

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

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I thank my colleague for the question. Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, no government in history has stood up for Ontarians more than this government. When we raised the Ontario Disability Support Program by 5%, tied that to inflation and as a result saw an increase of an additional 6.5%, the opposition was not supportive of that.

Mr. Speaker, we went a step above and beyond that: We removed and changed the earned income threshold from \$200 to \$1,000 so that people can earn more income, and we're seeing the results.

Now, the opposition unfortunately has not supported any of these initiatives to help Ontarians. At a time when life is unaffordable, you have heard time and time again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy, every single member on this side get up, stand up from their seat and say, "Stand up for Ontarians. Your counterparts in Ottawa control—they are able to make sure that they wipe the federal carbon tax and make life more affordable for—"

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. Again, I'll ask members to make their comments through the Chair.

Supplementary?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Listening to this minister makes me so angry to know how many people are suffering each and every day on our streets. People have to line up at food banks month after month. Many are struggling with additional barriers like living in below-standard housing. ODSP recipients can't live in loving relationships under the same roof for fear of clawbacks or being cut off from any funds altogether due to their cruel legislation.

**1200**

So back to the Premier: Will this year's budget provide real, meaningful benefits for people of OW and ODSP, and end the punitive clawbacks?

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services will speak.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Mr. Speaker, what should make this member and every member across upset is when they failed the people of Ontario, when they held the balance of power here for year after year after year.

Now, my suggestion to the member is real: You hold the balance of power in Ottawa. Call your colleagues. Make sure that they remove the increase on April 1.

Mr. Speaker, here in Ontario, as I mentioned to you, we will always stand up for every Ontarian, which is why we increased the Ontario Disability Support Program by 5%. That support, Mr. Speaker, was increased by an additional 6.5% to a total of 12% in less than one year. Also, the earned income threshold was changed from earning \$200 to \$1,000, so that those who can and are able to contribute—there are over 200,000 jobs that are not being filled in this province, Mr. Speaker. We want Ontarians to have more money in their pockets—

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

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. The minister will take his seat.

The next question.

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

The carbon tax is increasing the price of everything in our province. This includes the cost of building materials and transport. I've spoken to operators who have expressed concern over the rising costs of building new long-term-care homes. They're worried that the carbon tax will only escalate those costs. We need to keep building these homes, so Ontario's seniors can stay in the communities they helped build, close to their loved ones.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what our government is doing to protect Ontario families, especially our seniors, from the negative impact of the carbon tax?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** I remember visiting Osgoode Care Centre in that member's riding and listening to the seniors, the operators, the hard-working front-line health care workers, and they're saying the same thing: that cost has gone up a lot, and that's affecting how they give care to our seniors.

Let's give another example. In Barrie, the municipality has informed me that it must create a 13% contingency fund due to rising costs. In Sault Ste. Marie, building costs have gone up by \$20 million in just four years. It's in every corner of this province that we are seeing costs explode, thanks to this Liberal carbon tax, which is about to go up again in a time of high inflation and such economic uncertainty. It's why our government introduced the construction funding subsidy: to help the sector, under the leadership of the great former Minister of Long-Term Care.

But, Speaker, we call on the Liberals who are here in this Legislature to call their federal counterparts and say, "This is not the right thing to do. This is not fair on the backs of seniors." Our seniors took care of us; we need to take care of them. Let's get rid of this unfair tax.

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Speaker, through you: Thank you to the minister for his response, and especially for taking the time to come and visit the Osgoode Care Centre with me.

Unlike the opposition NDP and Liberals, our government is working hard to address the challenges Ontarians are facing. We know that the carbon tax is increasing the price of everything in this province. That's why we've been asking the federal government to scrap this tax since day one. But, Speaker, the opposition continues to ignore their constituents and support a regressive tax that only harms Ontario families.

Our government must continue to ensure that our seniors receive the care that they need and enjoy the high quality of life they deserve in a long-term-care home like the Osgoode Care Centre across the province. Speaker, can the minister please further explain the effect the federal carbon tax is having on Ontario's long-term-care sector?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** A very legitimate question, Speaker—some really grave concerns there, because frankly, Speaker, this is the concern in every corner of the province when we travel from long-term-care home to long-term-care home. It's not just affecting the cost of food and heating; it's affecting the cost of absolutely everything, and it's no surprise that the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and the Liberals won't even talk about their support for the Liberal tax.

It's not just one tax either, is it, Speaker? It is a tax on the tax. The HST is taken on top of the carbon tax. They're literally taxing a tax. This is a tax on a tax that is a tax on business, on consumers and on care for our most vulnerable seniors in long-term care. It is a tax on everyone. It is a tax that is unfair.

Once again, we call on the Liberals to do the reasonable thing: Call the Prime Minister and tell him this is not a fair tax on our seniors. Let's get rid of this tax.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our question period for this morning.

The government House leader on a point of order.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the afternoon routine, and at its conclusion, the House shall recess until 4 p.m. today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to proceed immediately to the afternoon routine, and at its conclusion, the House shall recess until 4 p.m. today. Agreed? Agreed.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I would like to introduce a number of guests who are here today; they were not here earlier this morning. They are Scott Jordan, Haran Thurairasah, Katherine Tedford, Susan Brundi and Kirsty Millwood. They're all striking workers from Regent Park Community Health Centre and members of OPSEU Local 5115.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Just a quick point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to give a shout-out to Liam Brearley from Gravenhurst, Ontario. This past weekend, Liam took the gold medal in the snowboard slope style at a World Cup event in Switzerland. He also secured the season's overall title, and he's the first Canadian in World Cup history to take home the slope style FIS Crystal Globe. Congratulations, Liam. It's pretty amazing.

**Mr. Tom Rakocovic:** The mother of page Bhavna has joined us. She's there in the members' gallery: Minakshi Das. Welcome to Queen's Park. Your daughter is doing a wonderful job. We're all very proud of her.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson):** The committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Institut de recherche agricole de l'Ontario.

**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? Introduction of bills?  
 Statements by the ministry? Motions? Petitions?  
 This House stands in recess until 4 p.m.  
*The House recessed from 1209 to 1600.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### 2024 ONTARIO BUDGET

#### BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2024

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Finance has moved, seconded by the Premier, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I will now ask our pages to deliver the budgets to the members.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That has to be a new record. Thank you. Congratulations.

I would now ask all members if you have received your copy of the budget.

I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by dedicating the 2024 budget to the story of a 19-year-old who left his home in war-torn Europe in 1949 and found his way to Canada.

With nothing but the shirt on his back, he dreamt of a new life and an opportunity to go to university, to get a job, to raise a family, and feel safe and free in his new country.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that young man was able to work hard and through being industrious, get into engineering at the University of Toronto, marry a beautiful woman, get a job in Montreal, and raise three wonderful children.

That 19-year-old is about to have his 94th birthday.

And while he never saw his parents again, as the Iron Curtain prohibited him from going back to his homeland, he lived the Ontario dream, he lived the Canadian dream.

Mr. Speaker, that young man who came to Canada is my father. And I dedicate this budget to him, and the hope and dream for all 16 million Ontarians, that they can have the same opportunity as my father had.

An opportunity to build a future right here in the great province of Ontario.

On behalf of Premier Ford and our entire government, I am pleased to introduce the 2024 Ontario budget, our plan to build a better Ontario.

Au nom du premier ministre Ford et de l'ensemble de notre gouvernement, je suis heureux de vous présenter le budget de l'Ontario de 2024—notre plan pour bâtir un Ontario meilleur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you are aware, the budget is a forward-looking document.

It's a road map.

A blueprint.

It's our plan to rebuild Ontario's economy.

This budget provides certainty to markets and, more importantly, confidence to people that the government is prepared for whatever lies ahead—regardless of the challenges that the national or global economy might throw our way.

But before I turn my attention to the road ahead, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quickly take us down the road just travelled.

Much of this will not be news to the people of Ontario. It has been a challenging year.

Life has rarely been this expensive.

The Bank of Canada has for months now repeatedly raised interest rates at a big pace.

The pace and frequency of the Bank of Canada rate hikes has been punishing—perhaps most of all on homeowners whose mortgages have in some cases increased thousands of dollars a month.

Making matters worse, the federal government's carbon tax is making everything more expensive. From groceries to gas, the hard-working people of Ontario can't escape paying the high cost of the federal carbon tax.

I almost can't believe I'm about to say this ... the federal government is set to increase its carbon tax.

It's astonishing. The people of Ontario ... the people of Canada ... cannot afford it. But more on that later, Mr. Speaker.

Our public finances are also not immune to economic uncertainty.

Even so, Mr. Speaker, and it might be an odd thing for a finance minister to say ... but let me say it plainly ... the pressure of managing a government budget pales in comparison to the pressures many families are facing as they manage their family budget in a time when everything is costing more ... or the challenges of a small business owner managing their budget in order to keep the lights on and keeping local workers employed.

These are the real challenges and real problems of real life and real people ... of making rent ... of paying the bills ... of affording groceries.

And the best way to help people is by getting the big decisions right. Making smart investments. Watching the expense line. And most of all, keeping costs on people low.

That's why our plan to build a better Ontario helps them.

Global economies have slowed, the cost of everything is higher, and so we have two choices.

Put the brakes on, or keep going.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to keep going—to rebuild Ontario's economy because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to keep going—to rebuild Ontario's economy, and I think about the leaders who have come before.

It was less than a month ago that our country lost one such statesman in the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Speaker, there is little left that can be said about Prime Minister Mulroney's legacy that has not already been said more eloquently by others, including of course by his own daughter, Caroline Mulroney, the President of the Treasury Board, whom I am fortunate to work with every single day.

For the rest of us, I will say this, Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Mulroney was a consequential leader who never backed down from the big challenges of his time. He was a leader who never shied away from using his time in power to try to accomplish big things for his fellow Canadians.

What a great example for the rest of us. To use our finite time in office to have the courage to implement the big ideas. And try to accomplish big things for our fellow Ontarians. And, in this budget, this is exactly what we intend to do.

And this is important, Mr. Speaker, for the global and national challenges facing our public finances are real.

Just as families and businesses are not immune to economic uncertainty, neither is any government.

Despite these challenges, we are delivering on our plan to build by investing to attract better jobs, build roads, highways and public transit, while keeping costs down for families and businesses.

**1610**

As you know, we consult widely with leading public and private sector economists in establishing our projections for future economic growth and inflation.

These projections now show that while economic growth is expected to significantly slow in the coming year, private sector forecasters are cautiously optimistic that it will not drop into negative territory before rebounding in subsequent years.

Likewise, we project inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, to remain under 3% this year before settling around 2% in the following two years. As inflation returns to the Bank of Canada target, we expect and continue to urge that interest rates should also decline.

In fact, the people of Ontario are counting on it.

The encouraging data is there, Mr. Speaker. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. We can see it. But, that said, we are not out of the tunnel quite yet.

The question is therefore straightforward ... what are we to do today with the hand we've been dealt?

And there are options. There are choices.

One choice would be to put the burden on taxpayers. To raise taxes, tolls, tuition or fees.

Well, we are not going to do that, rest assured.

A second choice would be to tighten our belts. To cut investment in housing, roads, or better public services. In short—to retreat—and do less.

We are not doing that either.

A third choice, Mr. Speaker, might be to throw our hands up, retreat, and expect municipalities to fill in the gaps.

We are not doing that.

Instead, here's our choice: We are going to follow through on a plan that is working—knowing that the higher deficits,

compared to what we projected last year, will be time-limited while the return on investment will be felt for decades and for generations to come.

And we will continue on a path to a balanced budget.

We told the people that we were going to invest more in roads and highways.

And does this budget invest more in roads and highways, I ask you?

**Interjections:** Yes.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** We told the people that we were going to invest in more transit.

And does this budget invest more in transit?

**Interjections:** Yes.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** We told the people of Ontario that we were going to invest to build more houses.

And does this budget invest in more houses being built?

**Interjections:** Yes.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** And we told the people that we would do everything in our power to keep their costs down. No new taxes. No new tolls. No new fees.

And we have done that, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, we've taken action after action that together are saving the hard-working people of Ontario thousands of dollars each and every year.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, this government scrapped the tolls on Highways 412 and 418 in Durham region, a move that will save drivers \$68 million by 2027.

Now, I'm told that some parties in this House supported those road tolls and voted against removing them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as someone who represents a Durham constituency myself, I have yet to find a driver in the community who shares the Liberal Party's enthusiasm for a more expensive commute.

To that end, here's what the Get It Done Act does.

We are also proposing to enshrine into law the freeze on Ontario driver's licence and photo card fees.

And we are finishing the job when it comes to scrapping the licence plate sticker fee by automating the licence plate renewal process.

These measures will save the people of Ontario an additional \$66 million over the next five years and hours of paperwork.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not point out one more thing the Get It Done Act would do.

We will be enshrining into law ... a new, clear rule ...

That will require all future provincial governments to seek the consent of the people before being allowed to burden people with the high cost of any kind of new provincial carbon tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are in a pivotal moment in which leaders from all levels of government, all parties, all across Canada need to stand up against the federal carbon tax and the suffering it has caused.

And when asked about the carbon tax: Premier Ford has always been very clear.

He opposes it. Full stop.

It's a simple answer to a simple question.

Everyone in this House should also aspire to answer that question just as clearly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's time to return to the astonishing news about the federal carbon tax.

In a few short days, on April 1 in fact, the federal government is set to increase the carbon tax by 23%. With so many people already hanging on by a thread. It's astonishing, Mr. Speaker.

The Bank of Canada has said this carbon tax is increasing inflation, and when factoring in both fiscal and economic impacts, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said most Canadians will pay more in carbon taxes than they will see in rebates.

Mr. Speaker, while we need the federal government to pause or cancel its carbon tax increase, we will continue to do what we can to help the people of Ontario manage the impact.

This is why I am proud to announce that our government is proposing to extend our gas and fuel tax cuts until the end of 2024.

Ontario drivers will continue to save over five cents per litre every time they fill their cars for another six months.

This would save Ontario households an average of \$320 over the two and a half years since the cuts were first implemented in July 2022. That's real money back in people's pockets.

We are also eliminating the 6.1% on-site wine tax and maintaining the beer tax indexation freeze for an additional two years.

As well as a freeze on college and university tuitions for at least three more years.

We are moving forward with auto insurance reforms that would provide more choice and flexibility to drivers in order to keep their premiums more affordable.

And we are also stepping up supports for some of our most vulnerable by expanding the annual income eligibility threshold for the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System program for low-income seniors—and ensuring that the benefit is indexed to the rate of inflation. This one move will result in about 100,000 more Ontario seniors receiving support, while at the same time increasing the support that eligible seniors get.

And, of course, we have given transit users the break they dearly needed by working with municipal partners to implement One Fare.

Now, you only need to pay once when connecting from GO Transit, TTC, Brampton Transit, Durham Region Transit, MiWay in Mississauga and York Region Transit.

Mr. Speaker, I have a pop quiz for you and the other members here ...

Do you know how much the average, daily rider will save each year as a result of One Fare?

**Interjection:** It's \$1,600.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** This side gets an A.

Because this government believes that every commuter deserves a break. Whether you're driving your car or taking transit, our government is putting more money back into people's pockets.

Mr. Speaker, making it cheaper to drive or take transit is just one part of the equation. We also need to make it more convenient.

So, we are also ready to build the roads, bridges, highways, transit and other transportation infrastructure that our growing province badly needs.

Today in Ontario, we are building new roads, bridges and highways across the province while investing in the largest expansion of public transit to be found anywhere in North America.

It's time now, Mr. Speaker, to take you on a tour, so I invite you to break out an Ontario road map and maybe stick some pins in the projects we're getting built.

—In Windsor, shovels are already in the ground to expand Highway 3, with planning well under way to build a new interchange connecting the 401 to the Lauzon Parkway.

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—We are now supporting a new interchange at Banwell Road and the E.C. Row Expressway to support the NextStar Energy EV battery plant.

—In Ottawa, we are designing a new interchange at Highway 416 and Barnsdale Road to support south Ottawa's growing population and jobs.

—Here in the GTA, we are advancing Highway 413 which will finally provide much relief to the GTA, saving drivers 30 minutes on their commute and supporting 3,500 jobs each year.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transportation can tell you, we all know how many people across Peel, and particularly in Brampton, need the 413.

Families and businesses and community leaders are calling for this overdue relief, in face of opposition from a handful of politicians and activists who live outside the region.

Mr. Speaker, we won't let them stop Highway 413 from getting built—we will be there for the people of Brampton and Peel region. Let's get the 413 built.

Mr. Speaker, we could say the same thing about York region—where we're going to build the Bradford Bypass to give local drivers some badly needed relief.

And let's move a little closer to the great city of Pickering where we are planning to expand Highway 7 from two lanes to four lanes from west of Reesor Road in Markham, east to Brock Road to support the Pickering Innovation Corridor.

And we are taking the next step in finally getting the Highway 7 project widened between Kitchener and Guelph by advancing construction on the Frederick Street Bridge.

Keep that road map open because we have a few more pins to stick in that old map.

Here's a sampling of the work under way:

—We're also adding high occupancy vehicle lanes to Highway 404 from the 407 to Major Mackenzie.

—In the Niagara region, we're moving forward with the QEW Garden City Skyway bridge twinning project.

—We're replacing the Little Current Swing Bridge in Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands.

—And we're rehabilitating the section of Highway 403 in Oxford and Brant counties.

—We're fixing the bridges and culverts on Highway 28 in Renfrew.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** There's the member from Renfrew right there, folks.

—In northern Ontario, we are reconstructing the provincial highways such as the stretch of the 101 through Timmins.

—We're widening Highway 17 from Kenora to the Manitoba border.

—We're widening Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon and resurfacing the stretch between Coughlin Road and Highway 582.

I need a few more pins, Mr. Speaker.

—We're continuing to widen Highway 69 from two lanes to four lanes from Parry Sound to Sudbury.

—In Wellington county, we're constructing a new interchange on Highway 6 as part of advance work for the Morriston Bypass.

—We're rehabilitating the Bay of Quinte Skyway bridge.

—We're replacing bridges on Highway 417 in eastern Ontario.

—We're widening Highway 3 and Highway 4 in south-western Ontario.

Are we out of pins yet, Mr. Speaker?

Because that's what getting it done looks like.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Well, I hope the members opposite in this Legislature are paying attention, Mr. Speaker.

While some politicians don't believe in investing in roads and highways, we will not abandon every person in Ontario who is counting on us to deliver. This is why we are upgrading the Gardiner and DVP, to make sure these critical highways will be maintained for people to get to work or get home to be with their families.

We will keep Ontario moving ... and that includes transit.

We might as well get a few more pins ready for our map, Mr. Speaker.

Let's start in Mississauga and Brampton, where we have a few members. We're expanding the Hazel McCallion light rail transit line including a two-kilometre extension and loop in Mississauga through to Confederation Parkway, as well as an extension to Brampton. This is the right time to make this investment in these fast-growing communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to bring back two daily trips on the Milton GO line every single weekday, moving forward with our plan to provide two-way, all-day GO service to Milton.

What we need to deliver, Mr. Speaker, is a willing and true funding partner in the federal government.

This is one of the fastest-growing parts of the province and we are going to ensure your transit service grows right along with it.

We are also well under way on no fewer than four priority subway projects in the GTA, including:

- the Ontario Line;
- the Scarborough subway east extension;
- the Yonge North subway extension; and

—the Eglinton Crosstown West extension.

This is the largest transit investment in North America, and we are not slowing down.

We're investing in GO Transit expansions in:

- Kitchener;
- Oshawa to Bowmanville; and
- Niagara.

Making new investments in GO stations in:

- Bramalea;
- Aurora; and
- Stouffville.

All part of one seamless transit network. One network. One Fare.

More communities served. More comprehensive service.

Mr. Speaker, the GTA deserves better transit—let's get it done.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we need to move fast because Ontario is growing fast.

Ontario's population is expected to grow by over five million people over the next 20 years.

These people need homes.

To date, our government has taken action to remove the provincial portion of the HST from new purpose-built rentals.

We're also supercharging municipal efforts to get housing built through the Building Faster Fund. We announced a \$1.2-billion investment to provide funding to municipalities who have reached at least 80% of their annual target for new home construction.

Milton is a great example of how that fund is encouraging housing construction. In Milton, they did not just meet their housing construction target, they exceeded it, with over 1,900 new housing starts—a full 27% above their target. They are doing their part, and we are doing ours, which is why we are proud to invest an additional \$8.4 million in Milton through the fund.

And to date, municipalities ranging from Toronto, Hamilton, Brampton, Guelph, Caledon, North Bay, Sarnia, St. Catharines and more have all received Building Faster Fund cheques.

And in my own riding, Pickering has received \$5.2 million for surpassing their housing targets.

But we didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker.

In January, the Premier told the Association of Municipalities of Ontario that we would be expanding the eligibility for the fund to include housing-enabling infrastructure.

And in the 2024 budget we are taking the next steps by investing over \$1.8 billion for housing-enabling municipal infrastructure.

It starts with waste and waste water.

Which is why we are increasing our investment in the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. In fact, we are more than quadrupling it, to \$825 million.

And this funding will unlock more housing opportunities by helping municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand water and waste water infrastructure. This is vital to getting more homes built faster.

We will also be providing municipalities with improved flexibility on financing for housing-enabling water and

waste water projects under the Infrastructure Ontario loan program.

Mr. Speaker, we are also investing \$1 billion in a new Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program that municipalities can access to build housing-enabling infrastructure—this includes water projects, but it also could include transportation projects like roads and bridges—\$1.8 billion, Mr. Speaker, in total.

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Mr. Speaker, we are asking our municipal partners, “Will your project get more people in new homes faster?” and if they can demonstrate that the answer is “Yes,” we are saying, “Well, we want to help.”

Our government is saying yes to building more housing-enabling infrastructure.

This complements the \$1.2 billion that was announced in the Building Faster Fund to enable faster home construction right across the province.

We’re doing our part, and we need the federal government to do the same. To date, housing-enabling infrastructure has been a gap in federal housing programs. We’re prepared to work with the federal government to correct this and get this done.

So, our message to the feds is this:

We’re doing it.

Let’s work together.

Let’s get things built.

People are counting on us.

Let’s get it done!

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight that our government’s commitment to getting things built is more than just about housing.

That is why, as part of our 2024 budget we are also investing \$200 million in a new application-based Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund that will support new and improved sport, recreation and community facilities across Ontario.

Because of our growing population, not only do they need new homes and critical infrastructure, but they need sport and recreation centres, too. They need rinks and gyms and arenas right across this province.

These facilities are often the centre of the entire community where families gather, particularly in rural Ontario.

They are key outlets for improving physical and mental health, including for families with children and seniors. They are centres of the local sports and community scenes. And they help bring the entire community together in civic life.

To continue on our commitment to get things built, we are launching an infrastructure bank, the Building Ontario Fund, with an initial \$3 billion that is ready to invest and ready to build. Mr. Speaker, we’re getting it done.

And this brings me to one of the biggest investments we continue to make—in our health care system.

That is why as part of our plan to build, we are investing an additional 4% on average this year in our public hospitals, including investments that will maximize and expand our surgical system in order to keep bringing down those surgery wait times.

Our government knows that connected and convenient health care goes beyond our hospitals, which is why we are investing an additional \$2 billion over three years in home and community care.

This commitment extends to the long-term care system. We all know that building long-term care homes reduces pressures on our hospitals.

That is why we are investing \$155 million in 2024-25 to increase the construction funding subsidy to support the cost of developing or redeveloping a long-term-care home.

We need this investment in long-term care, and we need to continue using this funding specifically to fast-track construction so that we can get shovels in the ground.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I think every member of this House knows, health care is about more than buildings—it is about the people. And here, there is always more work to do, but we are acting with urgency to get the right people in the right places to make the biggest difference for patients.

Earlier this year, our government announced an investment of \$110 million in primary health care. Today, we are increasing this new investment, bringing the total to \$546 million over three years starting in 2024-25 to connect 600,000 people to care through new and expanded interprofessional primary care teams.

We expanded the Learn and Stay Grant program to help the shortage of health care workers in underserved communities as well, in the north, in the east and, of course, the southwest.

We’re investing \$45 million over three years to enhance the Northern Health Travel Grant Program, to mitigate the financial burden of medical-related travel for people in northern communities, as well as investing \$50 million for northern and rural communities to recruit and retain health care workers.

For women and children, we are investing \$15 million for mobile maternal care in remote communities, \$24 million to increase access to the Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program.

And, Mr. Speaker, I’m very pleased to announce the first new medical school in Canada that is focused on training family doctors, with York University in Vaughan.

Mr. Speaker, we have been there for our front-line workers, and that includes our nurses. This is why we are investing \$128 million over three years to support sustained enrolment increases in nursing support at publicly assisted colleges and universities by 2,000 registered nurse seats and 1,000 registered practical nurse seats.

And Mr. Speaker, as we have since day one, our government will continue to invest in more supports for people with mental health and addictions issues—almost \$400 million more over three years. This includes \$124 million to support continuation of the Addictions Recovery Fund that will maintain 383 addiction treatment beds for adults who need intensive support and help 7,000 people per year.

Moving next to education, Mr. Speaker—our government is continuing to build, including nearly 300 school-related projects including child care, of which more than

100 are currently under construction, and making sure our students have the fundamental skills they need to succeed in work and in life.

Starting in September 2025, we will introduce a new kindergarten curriculum that will include clear and direct instruction in reading, writing and math.

We are also investing \$15 million for new digital math tools to help all students succeed.

Our vision for education includes everybody, which is why we are investing \$18 million in new special education funding to help those kids who need help the most.

And increasing our investment in the Ontario Autism Program by \$120 million—double what was provided last year, to help 20,000 children and youth access critical services.

In the post-secondary system, Mr. Speaker, our government understands the importance of financial stability for institutions to ensure continued high-quality education experiences for students.

This is why our government, in addition to freezing tuition, is stepping up to the plate with a \$903-million investment into the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund, along with an additional \$10 million for small, northern and rural colleges and northern universities.

We are doing our part. Now we expect colleges and universities to do their part. This is why we introduced legislation that will require colleges and universities to provide students and parents with clear information about all ancillary fees and other student costs, such as textbooks.

Earlier this year, we also announced \$16.5 million into the Black Youth Action Plan's Economic Empowerment Stream, which is supporting better outcomes for over 60,000 Black children, youth and families in Ontario.

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Mr. Speaker, our 2024 budget also makes some urgent investments to help law enforcement protect our communities from crime.

Mr. Speaker, parts of Ontario, and in particular the GTA, are in the grips of an unacceptable spike in auto thefts.

Just as the organized crime rings behind auto thefts are becoming increasingly sophisticated, so, too, must we be. The federal government, the RCMP and municipal police services all also have a role to play here, but our message to the government of Canada is that we are at the table and prepared to do our part.

In particular, our police are asking for more tools and we are going to be there for them.

In the 2024 budget, our government is providing \$49 million in supports to help police services across Ontario crack down on auto theft.

We are also going to be investing \$46 million over three years to launch a new air support program, which will include purchasing four new helicopters to help our police services in the GTA increase patrols and improve response times to major incidents.

These helicopters will help police crack down on auto theft, as well as street racing, carjacking and impaired

driving, while assisting in apprehending violent criminals and locating missing persons.

Our budget will also invest \$30 million to provide new protective equipment to fire departments in rural Ontario communities. We will always have the backs of those first responders who have ours.

Our government is also not shying away from investing more to protect the most vulnerable among us. We are investing \$27 million over three years to enhance services for individuals impacted by sexual assault and domestic violence, and \$6.4 million over three years to provide legal support for survivors of sexual assault and for children who are victims or witnesses of crime.

We are able to make all of these investments precisely because we are rebuilding Ontario's economy in every sector and every region of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, for two decades, the manufacturing sector was negatively impacted by the rising cost of doing business in Ontario, and market share was lost. By 2018, Ontario had lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs from the sector's peak in 2004. And we all know why that is.

No more.

Ontario has turned the page and is ready for the jobs of the future.

Better jobs with bigger paycheques.

We have supported long-term targeted and strategic investments in Ontario manufacturing including:

—Volkswagen's \$7-billion investment in St. Thomas that will create 3,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs.

—The \$5-billion NextStar Energy investment in Windsor that will employ 2,500 more workers to make EV batteries; and

—the Umicore investment in Loyalist township that will create 600 direct new jobs as part of a \$2.7-billion investment.

Mr. Speaker, everybody loves a comeback story. Ontario was one of the heavyweight champions of auto manufacturing. Under the previous government, we took a fall and lost the title. But now we are coming back—we are investing to become better than ever.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is back.

The 2024 budget builds on this track record.

This includes our continued commitment to unlocking the wealth of critical minerals in the north, and working with our First Nations partners in northern Ontario to build that road to the Ring of Fire, which is helping bring prosperity to these northern communities.

And so we are pleased to announce an additional \$15 million over three years to support the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund.

We are also allocating \$100 million more to the Invest Ontario Fund, bringing the total to \$600 million, to help attract new investments and jobs.

The 2024 budget is a continuation of a plan that is working and working well. If you want to put people to work in Ontario, then Ontario wants to work with you.

It also shows that when we have the courage to compete, bet on Ontario, we will be successful.



And let's talk about those workers, Mr. Speaker. They are the backbone of Ontario's manufacturing renaissance. When it comes to having a skilled workforce, I would put the Ontario worker up against anybody else in Canada, North America or around the world.

Ontario's workers are central to Ontario's plan to build. They have stepped up for Ontario and we are stepping up for them.

With each passing day, it also becomes more and more clear many of the best jobs of the future will be jobs in the skilled trades. Demand for the skilled trades continues to grow.

Since our government launched the Skills Development Fund Training Stream in 2021, we have trained more than 500,000—that's half a million—workers in the skilled trades and health care through nearly 600 training projects.

In the 2024 budget, we are taking this program that is working and investing an additional \$100 million to help job seekers advance their careers.

We are also continuing to encourage more young people to choose well-paying, rewarding careers in the skilled trades. Simply put, it is a career to be proud of.

That is why we are investing \$16.5 million annually over the next three years to support programs that break the stigma, attract more young people into skilled trades and encourage employer participation in apprenticeships.

We are also investing almost \$22 million to expand the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and almost \$42 million to launch 100 training projects.

Mr. Speaker, whether it is workers, patients or small businesses, drivers frozen in gridlock or young families frozen out of the housing market—our government is making our position clear.

We are not stepping back from the investments that matter. Nor are we going to increase the burden on you.

By making these investments now, we can support our growing province.

We have a plan. It's a plan to rebuild Ontario's economy. And it's a plan that is working.

It is a plan designed to weather adversity and continue investing, and keep Ontario pointed towards better and brighter days ahead.

Nous avons un plan. C'est un plan pour rebâtir l'économie de l'Ontario. Un plan qui fonctionne.

C'est un plan conçu pour surmonter l'adversité, pour continuer à investir et veiller à ce que l'Ontario maintienne le cap sur des jours meilleurs.

As I said in the beginning, Mr. Speaker, my father came to Canada with a dream.

And we are making that vision a reality.

We will make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family.

A place where you can get a better job, with a bigger paycheque.

A place where you can feel safe and secure in your community.

A better Ontario.

And we've made our choice.

We're choosing to say, "Yes."

We're choosing to get it done.

We're choosing to be there for the people.

I invite all of the members of the Legislature to join with us.

And send a message throughout Ontario, across Canada and around the world.

That right here in Ontario—we are ready to build.

Thank you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** We have some things to say, but we will say them another time.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

*Debate adjourned.*

## INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

### BUILDING A BETTER ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2024

### LOI DE 2024 VISANT À BÂTIR UN ONTARIO MEILLEUR (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 180, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

**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 minister care to make a brief statement explaining his bill?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I thought you'd never ask, Mr. Speaker, so let me—no. I think I already have, and so the answer is no. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move adjournment of the House.

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1652.*







**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt  
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott  
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day  
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim  
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,  
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong  
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
<b>Barnes, Patrice (PC)</b>	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
<b>Collard, Lucille (LIB)</b>	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<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	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	