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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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43rd Parliament

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Lundi
15 avril 2024

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 April 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 avril 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SENIORS' SERVICES

Mr. Anthony Leardi: For senior citizens, social isolation is enemy number one. The best way to fight social isolation is to stay active and connected. That's why I'm pleased to say that on April 3, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility designated the creation of two new seniors active living centres in the riding of Essex.

One is in the town of Kingsville at the Kingsville Community Centre, where seniors can participate in tai chi, take guitar lessons and learn massage techniques.

The second is located in my hometown of Amherstburg at the Amherstburg community centre, where active seniors can participate in line dancing and play in euchre tournaments.

I would like to thank our Minister for Seniors and Accessibility for creating these two new seniors active living centres.

I want to encourage all of our super seniors in Amherstburg and Kingsville and across the province of Ontario to join one of our 300 seniors active living centres across the province. Stay active, stay connected and be a super senior.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Tom Rakovevic: Auto theft has become a scourge in Ontario, up 319% since 2020 according to some metrics. The cost last year alone was north of \$1 billion. Collaborations have been announced by different levels of government, yet the numbers keep growing. If we want to stop it, we must make ending this a priority and not just lip service.

Speaker, we know the root of the problem. We know where the cars are going. We must clamp down on the ports and railway yards, which is where most of these cars end up. Are shipping companies doing enough to stop this, or are they just feigning ignorance while they collect their fees? Are automakers doing enough to protect their cars, or are they just sitting by while replacement cars are purchased? Are the overall penalties enough of a deterrent for this crime?

At the end of this month, I will be hosting a town hall meeting to discuss this growing auto-theft crisis. I will be joined by Toronto police to discuss solutions and ways to protect ourselves.

At this meeting, we will also be discussing a growing type of fraud through the use of liens against our properties called notices of security interest, or NOSIs for short. Most people don't even know these liens are registered against their own homes. At this meeting, we will discuss our bill to end this growing tool of extortion.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Just over a week ago, I joined the Minister of Transportation at the intersection of two critical transportation corridors in Niagara, the QEW and the Welland Canal, to announce that we have issued a request for proposals to twin the Garden City Skyway. It marks another key milestone in our plan to reduce gridlock, connect more people to jobs, and provides a crucial link between Ontario's international border crossings and the greater Golden Horseshoe.

1020

Now, some in Niagara might ask, why twin the Garden City Skyway now? First, this is proactive infrastructure, which means, instead of falling behind, we're getting ahead of the curve of growth for our region, because the reality is, Speaker, it's impossible to widen the QEW in the future without first twinning the Garden City Skyway now.

Second, the original bridge cannot be rehabilitated by working on one or two lanes at a time. The entire width of the bridge deck must be rehabilitated simultaneously, meaning that without a second span, the entire bridge would need to be shut down.

With over 160,000 vehicles crossing the Garden City Skyway daily, we need to ensure that this critical link remains open. Drivers in Niagara know that under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is getting it done for drivers by building better roads to reduce gridlock and get people moving. By twinning the Garden City Skyway, we're not only supporting our province's supply chain, we're strengthening our economy and building a better Ontario.

EARTHFEST LONDON

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have some exciting news: EarthFest is returning to London this Saturday, April 20. This year's event will build on last year's huge success,

which saw attendance of more than 3,000 Londoners and over a hundred exhibitors celebrating environmental action in London.

EarthFest brings active hope to our community by profiling the good work and achievements of the many organizations working to make London one of the greenest cities in Canada. Activities include practical hands-on solutions to help Londoners reduce their carbon footprint as well as music, art, food and fun.

Londoners know that we are facing an urgent climate crisis that demands urgent action, even in the absence of a serious provincial climate plan. Climate change is real. It's human-caused and it's affecting us today. We see that all around us, in the freakishly warm winter, raging wildfires, torrential rainstorms and the devastation of Tornado Alley.

I want to give a shout-out to some of the leaders in my community who have responded and continue to respond to London's 2019 declaration of a climate emergency. These include Green Economy London, which engages local businesses in setting and achieving sustainability goals; London Environmental Network, which has reached thousands of Londoners through emission reduction projects; as well as Climate Action London, Citizens' Climate Lobby and the new London Greening Health Collaborative.

I invite Londoners to come out this weekend, visit the exhibitors, drop by my table and learn how individuals can make a difference.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford and education minister Lecce, is committed to providing state-of-the-art learning environments for students. I'm honoured to rise today to recognize a significant investment from the Ministry of Education of \$16 million in my community of Oakville North–Burlington, which will be used for the expansion of Oakville NE #5 public school. This will result in the creation of 138 additional student spaces, helping working families in my fast-growing community. This investment is part of a historic \$1.3-billion commitment, the largest single-year funding commitment in the province's history to get more shovels in the ground faster and to build more schools.

This investment will build 16 new schools and school expansions across the province, create more than 27,000 new student spaces, and 27 of the projects will create more than 1,700 child care spaces.

Since 2018, a total investment of \$142 million in Oakville North–Burlington will build five new schools and add over 4,000 student spaces and 352 child care spaces.

I'm so proud of the work our government is doing in my community and across the province as we prepare students for a future with good-paying careers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I, along with many of my colleagues, joined the Ontario Nurses' Association information

pickets that were held across Ontario. In Hamilton, it was a very lively turnout—lots of energy, lots of community support, folks honking.

These 3,000 nurses, personal support workers and other health care professionals who work in long-term-care homes will begin bargaining this week. Their demands are reasonable: They're looking for safe staffing ratios so they can provide the quality of care our vulnerable residents need, and they want wages on par with their hospital counterparts.

ONA provincial president Erin Ariss said, "We are fighting for care, not profit, advocating for the vulnerable residents of Ontario's corporate-owned long-term-care homes.... Our residents deserve to receive quality care, yet what we see is wealthy corporations making record profits on the backs of our residents and those who care for them. It's not right, and it's not safe"—I agree.

ONA members who I spoke with on Friday continue to face pushback from the profit-driven corporations that run many of these homes that they work for. What they said they see are companies prioritizing their bottom line over the well-being of residents.

I, along with my colleagues, stand in solidarity with these front-line workers. I urge the government to start listening to the voices of nurses. Their fight is our fight: to ensure quality, not-for-profit care for our seniors and all vulnerable residents in Ontario.

SEMAINE DE L'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: En cette Semaine nationale de l'action bénévole, nous nous rassemblons pour reconnaître et célébrer l'importance de chaque bénévole de partout à travers la province.

Pas plus tôt qu'hier, j'ai eu la chance de participer à un brunch pour les bénévoles organisé par la municipalité d'Alfred-Plantagenet et, aussi, la chance de féliciter ces nombreux bénévoles. C'est toujours impressionnant de rencontrer ces gens formidables qui contribuent tellement à nos communautés.

La fin de semaine dernière avait aussi lieu un souper reconnaissance bénévoles dans le petit village de St-Albert dans la municipalité de La Nation. C'est tellement enrichissant de pouvoir jaser avec plusieurs de ces bénévoles et d'en apprendre plus au sujet de ce qu'ils font et de leurs organisations.

Une chose que je peux vous dire, monsieur le Président, même si je représente des petits villages, des petites communautés, nos bénévoles ont les plus grands coeurs et ils et elles contribuent incroyablement à nos communautés.

En terminant, je réitère l'importance du bénévolat, qui est une excellente façon de se faire des amis, d'apprendre plein de choses, sans compter que ça nous fournit un sens d'accomplissement incroyable.

Félicitations à tous les bénévoles de la circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour votre excellent travail.

DEBATE TOURNAMENT

Mr. Vincent Ke: I have exciting news about some Ontario teens' incredible achievements at the Harvard

world schools debating tournament. Last month, almost 300 students from across the globe gathered on Harvard's campus to compete in one of the most prestigious high school debating tournaments in the world.

After 10 rounds of debate on relevant issues of our times, a team of five talented Ontario high school students won the tournament. The debate champions are: Andy Lin, Angela Qi, Michael Peng, Kelvin Fan and Jerry Zhang from the Extraordinary Education Centre Debate blue team from my riding of Don Valley North.

This tournament included Canadian, American, Brazilian and Mexican national debate teams. The EEC Debate winners defeated Team Canada in the grand finale, becoming the first non-national team to win this tournament.

Understanding key issues, critical thinking, logic and well-structured delivery prepare students to shine their skills on the global stage of competition today, and their bright lights will make a positive impact on the world tomorrow.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Dave Smith: Special Olympics Peterborough is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals in Peterborough with intellectual disabilities through the power of sport.

The Special Olympics motto is, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave at the attempt." This is an organization that is very active in ensuring that every opportunity is given to these exceptional athletes.

1030

I've said a number of times that everything you need to learn to survive socially in life can be learned through team sport. Sometimes you score; sometimes you're scored on. Sometimes you compete with your friends; sometimes you compete against your friends. But most of the time, you're on the bench and your job is to cheer on and lift up your teammates. The camaraderie that you gain from working together to achieve something will help you succeed in so many other aspects of life.

With the upcoming Provincial Spring Games in Waterloo, Peterborough will be sending a basketball team, 10 swimmers and two athletes for tenpin bowling.

Find out how you can help by going to: peterborough.specialolympicsontario.ca.

In the final seconds, Speaker, I have to give a big shout-out to the Peterborough Wolves Special Olympics floor hockey team. They were the defending champions in floor hockey nationally, and this year when they went to Calgary, they came home with the silver medal. Congratulations to the entire team. We're very proud of you.

WHITNEY MCWILLIAM

Mr. Steve Clark: I've got some sad news to share with the House today. I ask the House to join me in honouring the life of Whitney McWilliam—a dedicated public servant and, most importantly, beloved daughter, sister,

friend and new mother to son Fynn—who tragically lost her life to cancer last week.

Whitney was the long-time executive assistant to Jeff Yurek, the former member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. She later served in the Ministries of Natural Resources and Forestry; Transportation; and Environment, Conservation and Parks before becoming a program adviser at the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters.

She was a wonderful person. Her love for her family, for her community, for our province was evident in everything she did, and her memory will live on in the many lives that she's touched with her incredible kindness and her grace.

On behalf of the House, my sincere condolences to Whitney's family and friends at this devastating time. Rest in peace.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Harris: It's not often that I get to do this, but I would like to welcome page Ryder Harris's grandfather, my father and the 22nd Premier of Ontario, Premier Mike Harris, to the Legislature today.

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, it's the first time I've been first to introduce my visitors.

I have a special visitor here this morning, Speaker. I've actually got His Worship Captain Sam Billich's accomplishments right here. If I read it all out, I'd have five House duties a week, because it would take too long. So I just want to say he's a decorated veteran, having served for 28 years in both the British and Canadian armies, established three nursing scholarships in his mother's name. And, of course, he travels with great company: Order of Ontario recipient Rosemary Sadler, who is here with him. The captain is also the recipient of the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation for his involvement in the creation of the veterans' memorial which sits here on the grounds of the Legislature.

We are humbled to have you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: My guest isn't here today, but yesterday I had the privilege of going to a birthday party in Fort Erie at Garrison Place with the staff. We were there to honour Burd Sisler, who is a Canadian war veteran who belongs to Legion Branch 71. His family, his friends and the staff were celebrating his 109th birthday yesterday. Talking to him yesterday, he said he's looking forward to celebrating his 110th next April 14.

I just wanted to raise that in the House today for Burd.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to introduce an accomplished developmental service worker, Desiree Da Costa, who is with us today. Desiree penned All About Me and Cerebral Palsy. She's written a beautiful book that inspires kids in our schools. We are so grateful for you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It gives me great pleasure to welcome students and teachers from Westdale Secondary School in my riding of Hamilton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to recognize a group of people here from the sand and gravel association: Ryan Wall, Walker Aggregates and Walker Construction; Carol Siemiginowski, Lafarge Canada Inc.; Sarah Nicoll-Lawler, Walker Aggregates and Walker Construction; Scott Boyle, Miller Paving Ltd.; Gerry McGuire, Izumi Aquaculture; and Robert Mantha, Walker Aggregates. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome, from the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, John MacLellan, who is from Rankin Construction in the great riding of Waterloo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Brian Riddell: From my riding of Cambridge, I'd like to also introduce some people from the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association—and to not screw up their last names, I'm not going to say them: Sharon, David, John, Mal, Frank and Jim. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a few constituents here today. I have Kevin Vallier, CEO of Farm Fresh Ontario, and Melinda McArthur, the vice-chair of Farm Fresh Ontario. I also have John MacLellan, who is a councillor from the township of Wainfleet and is here today with the Ontario Sand, Stone and Gravel Association.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'd like to welcome Michael McSweeney, the executive director of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association. They will be hosting meetings throughout the day and, of course, will be having their reception in the evening.

As you know, aggregate plays a big role in building infrastructure, so I welcome all of the members to the House today.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome members from the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association to Queen's Park today. They're working across the province to supply important materials to the important projects that are busy building Ontario: Sharon Armstrong, David Hanratty, John MacLellan, Mal Wensierski, Frank Kielbowich and Jim Karageorgoes.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Like others, I want to introduce members of Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association this morning: Michael McSweeney, Rob Pierce from R.W. Tomlinson, Neal DeRuyter from MHBC planning, Pat Madden from Austin Powder Company, Mohammed Mousa from Dufferin Aggregates and Julie Harrington from OSSGA. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I want to note the contributions of today's page captain, Shivanshee Patel, who is from my riding and a student Doon Public School. Thank you so much for everything you're doing.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce two of my guests here today: Dr. Jodi Cooley and Michael Whitehouse from SNOLAB up in Sudbury. Thanks for being here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, would like to recognize in the galleries today a former member who represented Nipissing in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th

and 37th Parliaments and served as Premier of Ontario from 1995 to 2002, Mike Harris. Welcome back.

That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. This question is for the Premier. After the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing resigned in the midst of a scandal and, of course, this ongoing RCMP criminal investigation, there was a real opportunity for a new minister to actually take the housing crisis seriously. But last week's bill was weak, it was unambitious, and it lacked the vision that we need to actually get housing built. Among other shortcomings, the bill doesn't legalize fourplexes and as-of-right, which means they're going to remain illegal in many, many parts of this province.

1040

A single detached home is out of reach for about 80% of Ontarians, but a fourplex apartment could be an affordable option. So why is the Premier ruling this out?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, Speaker, it's just the opposite; we're not ruling anything out. There is no law against that right now in the province of Ontario. So we encourage municipalities to make the decisions that are in the best interests of their taxpayers.

At the same time, well over seven million people in the province of Ontario already live in communities where as-of-right four is the law. What we are running into, though, is that this is not something that is solving the crisis in any way, shape or form. My understanding is that although it's legal in the city of Toronto, less than 70 of these units have been built; I know in other communities, like Vaughan and Richmond Hill, zero have been built.

We also know that as-of-right three has not been as successful as we had hoped it to be; less than 20,000 units have been built in that program. That is why, in this bill, we are removing the obstacles so that we can get the as-of-right three right across the province of Ontario—and we will allow our municipal partners to continue to make decisions on their behalf.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, that sounds like a lot of excuses.

I should not have to remind this Premier or this minister that legalizing fourplexes was a top recommendation of the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force. There are a lot of folks right now who are disappointed that this government has not implemented this recommendation, including the Ontario Real Estate Association. It's

just another example of how this government refuses to treat the housing crisis with the urgency that it deserves.

What's the government's solution? Well, according to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, it's telling people to go to a for-profit homeless encampment instead.

Can the Premier explain why his government continues to fight the legalization of fourplexes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know how much more clear I can be to the Leader of the Opposition. There is no law that says you can't build a fourplex in the province of Ontario. So it is hard for me to legalize something that is currently not illegal in the province of Ontario.

What we're focusing on is ensuring that there is infrastructure in the ground so that, as opposed to building, let's say, 70 fourplexes in the city of Toronto, we can build 1.5 million homes across the province. What the Leader of the Opposition fails to understand is that in order to build homes across the province of Ontario, our municipal partners need sewer and water capacity. That is why the Minister of Infrastructure is bringing forward the largest infrastructure program for sewer and water and roads in the province's history. We're doing this in the absence of the federal government. We're going to continue to do all that we can to put the infrastructure in the ground so that we can build not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of homes in every part of this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, \$5 billion of federal money for housing is on the line because this Premier doesn't like a certain type of housing.

The reality is that the government's new housing bill does nothing to get housing built. It spends as much time reversing this government's mistakes as it does putting forward any real solutions, and believe me, what it does put forward is very piecemeal.

In contrast, British Columbia's NDP government has moved swiftly, and they are seeing results. While housing starts are down here in Ontario, they're up 11% in British Columbia. There are new investments in non-market housing, new protections for tenants.

Why won't this Premier implement the NDP solutions that have been proven to work in British Columbia?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We lived NDP solutions in the province of Ontario from 1990 to 1995. And if it wasn't for that Premier sitting in the gallery today, we would still be suffering under the rules of the—

Interjections.

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

Members will take their seats. Order. Order.

Restart the clock. The minister still has some time.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Under the policies of this government, under the policies that were brought forward by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you know what we have? The highest starts in purpose-

built rental housing, not over the last couple of years, but ever. Under the policies of this government, we have the highest number of new home starts in decades. Under this government, we're removing red tape so homes can get built faster. We're building more university campuses by making it as-of-right so our students can have homes in the face of unilateral federal cuts.

We're listening to our municipal partners, because the Minister of Infrastructure is bringing forward the largest unilateral infrastructure, sewer and water program in history, and the Minister of Education is building schools in all these new communities—roads, everything. We're getting it done.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Ms. Marit Stiles: I will remind the minister that it was in 1995 that this province stopped building truly affordable housing in this province. We are behind by 1.4 million units right now because of that decision.

Last week, the Premier doubled down on preventing new homes from having EV charging infrastructure. The government knows the cost of installing an EV charger during construction is so much cheaper than putting one in later. Drivers say the lack of charging infrastructure is a huge barrier for those who would otherwise own an electric vehicle.

Why has this Premier refused to make it easier for people to buy and charge an electric vehicle in their home?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: We have done no such thing. In fact, we're making massive investments so that people have jobs and can buy electric vehicles.

What the opposition would rather do is they'd rather keep people unemployed and then subsidize them to buy vehicles. What we want is to give people the ability to work in the province of Ontario—\$28 billion worth of investments.

But as I said last Thursday, it is not up to the government of Ontario to fund a decision that you make. She talks about British Columbia—the highest price for gas in British Columbia; the highest expenses; the place that is most expensive to live in the country, British Columbia.

We are bringing jobs back, opportunity back. That is the record of this government: 700,000 jobs, cutting taxes, cutting red tape, bringing back employment to the province of Ontario in the same way that the 22nd Premier of the province of Ontario did each and every day, focused on the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll go back to the Premier. I don't think the minister has been following what's happening in this sector, but EV sales are down here in the province of Ontario, and the Premier isn't doing anything about it. Not only is he jeopardizing the province's so-called made-in-Ontario electric vehicle program; he's risking the tens of thousands of good jobs that go with it, like the workers in

Oakville who feel let down by the Premier's lack of action or the delay of EV production by Ford Motor Co.

Back to the Premier: Workers in Oakville are worried. Will you show some leadership, or will you leave them behind like you did with the GM workers in Oshawa?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, chased 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of our province and brought our auto sector to the brink of collapse. In 2019, Reuters reported that companies planned to spend \$300 billion on EVs and none of it was coming to Canada.

Since then, over the last three years, Ontario has attracted \$28 billion in new EV investments, creating thousands of good-paying jobs across the province. Unfortunately, the NDP and the Liberals voted against every single item that brought this unprecedented success to Ontario.

By creating the conditions for businesses to succeed, our province is now a global auto manufacturing powerhouse.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The member for Brampton North will come to order. Minister of Education will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I heard you. Start the clock. Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontario has the workers, we have the expertise and we have the energy to power a strong EV sector here. It used to be a signature policy of this government, but now they're throwing it in reverse, with a weak commitment to electric vehicles and sustainable infrastructure. In the process, this Premier is jeopardizing sales and production by not making our new homes EV-ready. It is so short-sighted.

The people of Ontario want to know—and I'll go back to the Premier again—is the government backing away from plans for a sustainable auto sector in Ontario?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's quite clear that our plan is working: 300,000 manufacturing jobs left our province for other jurisdictions at a time when those who are running the auto plants were saying that Ontario was the most uncompetitive jurisdiction in North America to build cars, to now, six years later, investing \$28 billion into EV platforms, EV battery manufacturing facilities. The world is moving to EVs in Ontario because we have the energy and we're committed to building the energy infrastructure to support the implementation of electric vehicles.

Now, the NDP energy critic is against all of the investments that we're making in our nuclear sector, including building small modular reactors at Darlington, leading the world on that front; putting an extra 4.8 gigawatts at Bruce

Power; refurbishing the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. That's how we're going to power Ontario well into the future.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This government has boasted about their electric vehicle investment, but like so much they do, they aren't plugged into what is really needed. Folks are excited about electric vehicles, but they won't buy them if they know they can't charge them. When this Premier was elected in 2018, one of his first moves was to rip out EV charging stations, cancel EV rebates and end the building code requirement to make sure homes were wired and ready. Without the infrastructure, automakers are signalling a slowdown on EV production. This Premier is putting good auto jobs at risk.

When will this Premier switch gears and support the future of electric vehicles by committing to the charging infrastructure that they will require?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, let's wrap it up. Let's see what we've done. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has encouraged \$28-billion worth of EV manufacturing to the province of Ontario. The Ministers of Mines and Northern Development are unlocking the resources of the north so that we can power the investments in the south. The Minister of Energy is investing in small modular reactors—so the opposition knows, these are the reactors that will power the EV revolution of tomorrow—while refurbishing our nuclear fleet. And later today, we will be voting on an NDP bill that will kill what the Minister of Energy is doing, put in jeopardy what the Minister of Natural Resources is doing and put in jeopardy the \$28 billion worth of investments.

So this is what I tell you: We will vote against that, and we will continue our program of investing in the people of the province of Ontario so that they have the resources to invest in themselves and they have the resources to invest in their communities. It's about giving people the tools they need to succeed.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, my question is for the Premier. The future is electric—on the road, across communities and at home. Building EV-ready homes is future-proof, but that's not what we're building today. Aftermarket charging infrastructure is expensive, and when compared to the minimal cost of wires and the rough-in in a new build, planning ahead is the way to go. EV-ready homes are more affordable for homeowners and drivers.

This Premier has said he's picking the side of developers, but we hope he will switch to be on the side of auto manufacturers, autoworkers, drivers and homeowners. Building houses already roughed in for charging is an easy

and practical fix that we could do today to save people a lot of money.

So my question is, will the Premier put charging rough-ins back in the building code so we can have EV-ready homes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, Mr. Speaker, what we will do is we will allow homeowners to make those decisions on their own. Because that is what we do: We allow homeowners to make that decision on their own.

As I said on Thursday, I come from an Italian family. Many of my relatives—even ourselves, we had a stove in the garage. It was a 220-volt stove, because a lot of us like to cook in the garage. I didn't ask the people of the province of Ontario to cover the cost of that stove in the garage. Do you know what my dad did? He called an electrician, who put the stove plug in the garage, and he paid for it, Mr. Speaker.

So I think the people of the province of Ontario can make that decision on their own. They don't need big daddy government coming in on their behalf. My goal is to keep the price of home building low so that more Ontarians can afford to build it, not higher.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Oshawa will come to order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. Order.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Energy.

On April 1, the federal Liberals—supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie—increased the carbon tax by 23%. This costly tax is raising the price of everything, for both energy costs and food prices. It's forcing Ontario drivers to pay over 17 cents per litre more at the gas pumps.

Speaker, it's so disappointing to see the Liberal and NDP members of this Legislature turning a blind eye to the hardships people everywhere are experiencing. They should be joining us and calling on the federal government to scrap the carbon tax now.

Can the minister please explain why the carbon tax is causing damage to all aspects of life for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the great member from southwestern Ontario, who is always standing up for residents in his part of Ontario and ensuring that they can afford to live in our province.

As we continue to reduce taxes and reduce fees and reduce the cost of living, the federal government continues to jack it up. On April 1—just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker—the federal government did it again: a whopping increase of 23% to the federal carbon tax, which is impacting the price at the pumps. It's impacting the price of home heating for natural gas furnaces, the price at the grocery store. It's impacting the cost of living in Ontario.

Last week we saw something interesting at the federal Parliament. We actually saw the federal NDP, with Jagmeet, and we saw the Parti Québécois—or, actually, the separatist party—supporting a Conservative motion to encourage Prime Minister Trudeau, who increased the carbon tax, to meet with Premiers right across the country. All of them are opposed to the carbon tax. It's time to sit down, have that discussion and also scrap the tax.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's reassuring to hear that our government continues to stand up to the federal government and fight for the people of this province.

Speaker, people in my riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington are concerned about the impact a whopping 23% carbon tax hike will have on their home energy bills. They feel it's unfair to them and communities across Ontario that the federal Liberals have burdened us with this unnecessary cost.

Our government will not give up, Speaker. We'll continue to fight this tax, deliver affordability for Ontario and put more money back in people's pockets.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax is punishing people in Chatham-Kent–Leamington and throughout Ontario who rely on natural gas and propane to heat their homes?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, it's pretty simple: The federal carbon tax is right there on the bill, clearly marked for anybody who is an Enbridge customer or has natural gas coming into their home. It's the federal carbon tax right there on the bill that sometimes actually is more expensive than delivery costs.

The people of Ontario are feeling the pinch, but it's not just the people of Ontario; it's people right across the country that are getting hammered by this federal carbon tax. Just look at Newfoundland, where the Liberal premier, Andrew Furey, actually pleaded with Prime Minister Trudeau to put the pause on, back on April 1. But since he hasn't done that, he's now joined the chorus of Premiers of all stripes, from right across the country, to sit down and have an adult discussion—something the Prime Minister hasn't done since 2016—with the Premiers, Speaker.

We believe that the Prime Minister should be sitting down with those Premiers. I just wish that the queen of the carbon tax here in Ontario, the Liberal leader, would support us in sitting down and having that mature discussion about axing the tax in Ontario.

1100

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Housing. A new report shows that Ontario rents have risen three times higher than guidelines due to rent control loopholes, with an average increase of 54.5% over the last decade.

Thousands of tenants in Parkdale–High Park and across Ontario are experiencing massive increases to the cost of housing, and there is no end in sight.

My question is, will you close rent control loopholes so Ontarians can find and maintain housing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm very proud of the number of purpose-built rentals that we have increased. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing mentioned just moments ago, we have historic records of purpose-built buildings, and that is something that is important to the people of the province of Ontario who need a place to live.

We are working non-stop at achieving our goal of 1.5 million housing units, and we will get there with or without the help of the opposition, who would vote against every single initiative that we do when we achieve these records.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary? The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Back to the Premier: Today, my constituent Lindsay is receiving an N13, a demoviction notice. She tells me, "As a tenant who is now dealing with finding a home on top of dealing with the immediate aftermath of experiencing domestic violence, I'm at a complete loss. All of the homes being built are not made for people like me and my two young children. I've started looking for housing options so I can continue to live and work in Toronto once demovicted, but there is nowhere safe that I can afford to raise my family."

Speaker, there is no affordable rental housing in Ontario because of the rent control loopholes that have been introduced by the Conservative government.

Will this government admit that they have the power to help Lindsay and her two young children by introducing real rent control today?

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: The reason we have a housing challenge isn't because of a particular policy that we put in place; it's because the Liberals, during their entire mandate, supported by the NDP at every turn, did absolutely nothing except create red tape, create barriers, get nothing built—absolutely nothing.

When this government came to power, we recognized the crisis for what it is, and we made a public commitment. The Premier made a commitment. The municipal affairs and housing minister made a commitment. We will build 1.5 million spaces, and we'll do it, notwithstanding that we're starting from behind. We're starting from behind because no investments were made; no money was put forward; the red tape was building up. But we will persevere. We will get the job done.

We are getting the job done, and we will not apologize for that.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Speaker, the federal Liberals think that they know better than the hard-working people of this province. When people are hurting because of the rising cost of living, it seems logical that governments of all political stripes would do their part to reduce costs. Instead, the Liberals are doing the opposite: They are hiking taxes at a time when families are already struggling to get by. Families are having trouble heating their homes, filling their gas tanks and putting food on the table, and the Liberal solution is to make things more expensive. The worst part is that Bonnie Crombie and her Liberal colleagues don't even have the guts to stand up and tell the Prime Minister to get rid of this terrible tax.

Can the minister please explain what risks the federal carbon tax poses to our economy?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The federal Liberals are doing to our country what the previous provincial Liberals did to the province of Ontario. Raising taxes at every opportunity, they chased businesses and jobs out of the province. Our manufacturing sector was on the brink of collapse, with 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost.

We came in and lowered costs right across the board. We've restored Ontario's ability to compete on the global stage. And 700,000 more men and women are working today than before we took office.

Speaker, our message to the federal government is clear: Do not jeopardize the progress that we have made. Scrap the tax today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

We've heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario that the last thing they want is a carbon tax. But the federal Liberals are actively ignoring the concerns of hard-working Ontario families, just as the previous Liberal provincial government did.

We don't believe the way to fight climate change is by crushing businesses and workers with tax hikes, and neither do the people of Ontario. We have an abundance of clean energy right here in our province, and we're making sure Ontario is a leader in building clean tech for the future, like electric vehicles. That's how to help lower emissions; not by implementing a carbon tax that drives the cost of everything up and up and up.

Can the minister explain how the carbon tax will hurt the progress that we've made in reducing costs so that businesses and workers can succeed?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the previous Liberal government's high taxes chased businesses and workers out of the province, but when we took office, we reversed course. We cut 500 pieces of red tape, saving businesses \$1 billion annually. We put in immediate equipment writeoffs, saving businesses nearly \$1 billion every single year. We lowered WSIB premiums by 50%, saving businesses \$2.5 billion annually. As a result, those businesses that fled the province under the Liberals are coming back. We have reshored companies that left for cheaper, more competitive jurisdictions. And we've rebuilt our province's manufacturing might, with 700,000 new people working again.

We can't allow the Liberals to crush our momentum.
Scrap the tax today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. The owner of property in Innisfil has been charging people facing housing insecurity \$500 to set up a tent on their property. The ad for the property notes that they will have access to a communal washroom and kitchen. Shockingly, instead of working to resolve this province's homelessness crisis, the member for Innisfil has started referring people to this for-profit encampment.

My question to the Premier is this: Is he going to start counting tents as part of their affordable housing numbers?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It really highlights just how irrelevant the NDP have become in pretty much every single policy issue facing the province of Ontario.

The reality is this: We have increased funding to the Homelessness Prevention Program to record levels. The member will know this because she voted against that, as did the entire NDP caucus. We've actually increased homelessness prevention funding in every part of the province, including in the member's own riding, by 34%. She will recall that she voted against that as well.

What we are doing across the province of Ontario is restoring, rehabilitating and renovating our affordable housing stock. Do you know why? Because we were left with an infrastructure deficit by the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP. What have we done? We are renovating, rehabilitating and restoring 123,000 affordable housing units in the province of Ontario. That is an unmatched record in the history of this province.

We will continue to support those who want help. As the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services said, we will leave no one behind. That is our goal each and every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: To the minister: It's clear that you're going to help people who are in need of help, who want help, by referring them to for-profit encampments. That's what your government is doing.

Unfortunately—and this is shocking but not surprising—this for-profit encampment is targeted toward people who are on OW or ODSP because the programs don't even cover the cost of rent.

This Conservative government has fuelled a housing and affordability crisis, and now they seem to be endorsing its exploitation.

1110

Speaker, will the Premier tell Ontarians whether for-profit encampments are part of his affordable housing strategy?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Speaker, truly a question from the NDP that really highlights just how irrelevant they are in the discourse in the province of Ontario. It is

no wonder nobody pays attention to them. It is no wonder that members leave their caucus in droves, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what we're doing: We're putting infrastructure in the ground. Do you know why we're putting infrastructure in the ground, colleagues? So that we can build millions of homes across the province of Ontario. You know why we have to do this work, Speaker? Because for 15 long—long—arduous years, the former Liberal government did absolutely nothing. And do you know who supported them in that? The NDP: the most irrelevant party that this province has ever seen.

Now, to go a step further, they are as irrelevant in Ottawa as they are at Queen's Park—ignoring what the people of the province need, ignoring what the people of Canada need. You have an opportunity later today. Vote for our budget because it has historic levels of—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier: I never thought I'd see the day when having a family doctor in Ontario made you lucky; when people paid hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars just to access primary care; when riding the subway meant being bombarded with advertisements for health care services that should be insured but aren't.

Looking back at the last six years, a lot has changed. Now we have nurse practitioner-led clinics charging subscription fees to desperate patients while executive health clinics make a fortune in a primary care marketplace of this government's making.

By 2026, 4.4 million people won't have access to a family doctor, and we can't even say that our emergency departments are always open anymore.

Mr. Speaker, with so little to show under his watch, why is it that the Premier only increased health care sector funding by 0.59%, but has more than doubled the amount that he pays the staff in his own office?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Oh, Speaker, it continues to amaze me that members of the Liberal Party who actually cut the number of residency spots available for Ontario students wishing to practise and learn medicine in the province of Ontario can stand up and talk about our record. Our record clearly shows that we are investing in a health care system, whether that is including a base increase; new medical schools in York region, in Brampton, in Scarborough; ensuring that we have new clinicians able to train, practise, learn and ultimately be licensed in the province of Ontario. We are making those investments because we know that people need to have access to primary care practitioners.

I look at the announcement that we made in February—the expansion of primary care, including nurse practitioner-led clinics in his own community and across Ontario—and I see those investments already bearing fruit, because we already have additional clinicians hired taking on new patients.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate to hear the Minister of Health talk about her record because she omits the fact that her record is of the worst health care system performance in our province's history. This government is so busy rewarding its friends and enriching insiders that they have forgotten their duty to uphold the Canada Health Act.

But perhaps "forgetting" is too generous because every time this government's neglect brings another feature of public health care to its knees, there is always a private, for-profit model there to save the day. Whether it is exorbitant subscription fees to nurse practitioners or executive health clinics, whether it's pricey Pap smears or costly cataract lenses, whether it's staffing agencies gouging our hospitals and long-term-care homes, this government rolls out the red carpet for anyone praying to the almighty dollar.

Mr. Speaker, what should patients who can't afford this Premier's private health care agenda do once his gravy train has left our public health care system behind in the dust?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The Liberal member opposite can throw around all the quips he wants. The truth is that we are making investments in our publicly funded health care system in Ontario.

Ontario leads Canada in the lowest wait times for surgeries across Canada. Ontario leads Canada in the number of individuals who are matched with a primary care practitioner.

We will continue to make those investments because we see how they are changing lives in the province of Ontario. In Minto, Ontario, a February announcement led to a nurse practitioner being hired and already taking on new patients. In Kingston, Ontario, we have clinicians who are bringing on new patients, rostering new patients in their communities.

That work will continue across 78 new facilities and expanded practitioner-led clinics because we know it's making an impact, and we know we are changing—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Liberal carbon tax is punishing Ontario families. Last year, the federal government decided to exempt one form of home heating fuel, mainly used in Atlantic Canada, from the carbon tax. But they're hiking the carbon tax on lower-emission natural gas here in Ontario, where the majority of residents now have to pay more to heat their homes. That's just not right. Residents in my riding of Thornhill tell me they already feel the impact of the carbon tax on their energy bills.

The people of Ontario deserve to be treated fairly. The federal Liberals need to get rid of this carbon tax right now.

Can the minister please explain how they are making home heating and more things expensive and impacting Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member for Thornhill. We're doing everything we can to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario here under the leadership of Premier Ford, while Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal Liberals seem content to make life more expensive for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. That goes for the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, as well, who seems happy to have the federal carbon tax in place so that she doesn't have to take a position on it.

We have taken a position on it. We're making life more affordable. That's why we're seeing new investments in our province, particularly in the EV and EV auto space, where companies are flocking back to Ontario and creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in our province, where, again, under the leadership of the previous Liberal government for 15 years, we saw 300,000 jobs leaving for other jurisdictions. Over 700,000 jobs are coming back. That's all because of our sound energy policy that ensures we're competitive with other—

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

Supplementary question.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for his solid work within his portfolio.

This is exactly what our government spoke up about—the carbon tax—what we fought tooth and nail. It's ludicrous that the Liberals think it's a good idea to raise the carbon tax by a staggering 23% when Ontario families are already struggling with the increased cost of living.

But this is most concerning. This gets so much worse. The federal government and opposition parties want to nearly triple the tax by 2030. That's simply not acceptable. Can the minister please explain why Ontarians cannot afford the continued tax increase on groceries, transportation and everything else in between?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Thornhill for the question. It's pretty obvious when you drive by a gasoline station now and you see the price at the pumps is over a buck sixty and, in some parts of northern Ontario, more than that. The carbon tax has gone up a staggering 23% two weeks ago, on April 1, under the leadership of Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal Liberal government, supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and her Ontario Liberals, who still continue to say that the people of Ontario and the people of Canada are better off with this horrible carbon tax than they would be without it.

The NDP: While some of them have supported us in the House, Jagmeet on the weekend was trying to walk back his demands to have a carbon tax or not. He is supportive of the carbon tax again, but that's typical of NDP policy. They don't know which way to go.

We're with the people of Ontario. The opposition parties are against them, particularly on energy costs.

1120

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. We've learned a lot about the impacts of Bill 7—hundreds

of families forced from their communities, cancer survivors fined \$400 a day unless they follow the Premier's orders to leave their families. We didn't learn of Bill 7's impact because of transparency from this government; we learned of it from the hard work of reporters.

Now the government is refusing to tell the public how much they're fining seniors. Will the minister stand up today and tell the public how much money they have fined seniors for the crime of wanting to stay close to their families?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: What Bill 7 has allowed hospitals to do is to actually ensure that they have beds available for people who need them in an acute way. The treatments, the ongoing rehabilitation that happens outside of a hospital setting is made available because of the ability for hospitals to ensure that alternative-level-of-care patients are being looked after in different places, whether it is in community, whether it is in our long-term-care homes.

I'm proud of the fact that we've had over 2,000 individuals have a home in their community because we've taken the time, working with our long-term-care partners, with our hospital partners, to make sure that they have the appropriate care in the appropriate place—a home.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: As expected, there's no transparent answer from the minister—whatever one decides to answer.

Look at the actions of this government. First, they say they're not aware of anyone being fined under Bill 7. Then, when shown the actual bills sent to the patients, they come clean and tell us that seven patients have been charged. Now, after daily requests, the government refuses to tell the media how much they've fined seniors. It sounds like the Conservatives are really proud of their legislation.

If the Premier thinks Bill 7 is such great legislation helping seniors get into long-term care, why won't you tell the public how much you're fining seniors?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, as the member opposite just clearly showed, it is such a small number of individuals who've been billed by the hospitals, that we've actually been told.

We have a legal opinion that says putting out those numbers would put at risk individuals' identity—to be identified. We're protecting patients to ensure that doesn't happen.

We have ensured that such a small number had to be billed by their local hospitals. We want to make sure that the work is at the hospital and the community, working with the most appropriate placement, and we will continue to do that.

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. The housing crisis is getting worse. It's like a forest fire

raging out of control. But the government's new housing bill is like bringing a garden hose to put out the fire.

After wasting six years putting wealthy, well-connected insiders ahead of building homes that people can actually afford, it feels like the government is admitting defeat, begging municipalities to bail them out, when the Premier says no to building homes that people can afford in the communities they know and love.

Will the Premier stop saying no to an entire generation of young people who just want a home they can afford, and say yes to legalizing gentle density and mid-rise housing across the province, as-of-right, so we can start building homes people can afford now?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I love the passion from the member, but when it comes to building in his own community, an as-of-right four community, a sum total of zero have been built, Mr. Speaker. Do you know why that is? Because the city of Guelph needs infrastructure. They need sewer and water capacity. I hear it from the mayor constantly. I had a wonderful conversation with the mayor, when we were providing a Building Faster Fund cheque, who identified the fact that his additional assistance through the Building Faster Fund would go to building more sewer and water capacity so that he could build even more homes.

The opposition can focus on policies that do nothing because it makes them feel better. We saw that from the Liberals for 15 years: announce all kinds of things, but don't accomplish anything. That's all that they care about.

We'll build the sewer and water capacity so that we can build, not hundreds, not tens, not 70 fourplexes in Toronto, zero in Guelph, but millions of homes in every part of this province, Mr. Speaker, because that's how we will tackle the affordability crisis.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, this government has been in power for six years, and the housing crisis gets worse. They've spent more time in the last year reversing their housing policies than actually putting forward bold solutions to the housing crisis. As a matter of fact, it was this government that took infrastructure money away from municipalities in the first place.

The government's failure to fix the housing crisis is making life in Ontario unaffordable. The Premier says no to gentle density, no to mid-rises, no to missing middle, no to rent protection, no to federal funding for homes. It's time to say yes to housing in this province.

The government has the power to say yes to six- to 11-storey buildings along major transit corridors, to say yes to multiplexes. Will they do it now so we can get building homes in this province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, in the provincial policy statement and the provincial planning statement, which was released at the same time, it does just that. But you can't do any of that unless you have infrastructure that allows that to happen. It allows it to happen.

This is the fallacy of what you hear from the Greens, the Liberals and the NDP: They get up in their place and they fight for policies that they know won't build homes. What we're doing is putting in the infrastructure that is needed to build a home.

But you know what else we're hearing, Mr. Speaker? We're hearing that the high-inflation policies of the federal Liberal government—a carbon tax, which has led to high interest rates—are stopping people from getting shovels in the ground. More importantly, it is stopping people from being able to afford those homes. So why don't the members opposite work with us to get the federal government to eliminate the carbon tax, reduce costs, bring down red tape, bring down all costs, bring down interest rates and we will meet our challenges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Ottawa South, come to order.

The next question.

IMPOSITION

M. Anthony Leardi: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises. Depuis sa mise en place par le gouvernement fédéral libéral en 2019, la taxe sur le carbone génère des revenus provenant des petites entreprises. Les libéraux avaient promis qu'elles pourraient recevoir des remboursements. Cette promesse a été formulée il y a cinq ans.

Le gouvernement fédéral libéral admet qu'il doit 1,3 milliard de dollars en remboursements aux petites entreprises, mais il n'y a aucun plan de remboursement à l'horizon. Le gouvernement fédéral libéral retient donc 1,3 milliard de dollars de remboursements.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la ministre associée peut nous expliquer quels sont les impacts de cette situation sur les entreprises ontariennes?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Parliamentary assistant and member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Merci à mon collègue le député d'Essex d'avoir soulevé ce problème auquel sont confrontées les petites entreprises de l'Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, depuis le début, le premier ministre Ford et notre gouvernement se sont tenus fermement aux côtés des petites entreprises ontariennes qui travaillent fort contre le gouvernement fédéral pour abolir la taxe sur le carbone.

Il est inacceptable qu'après cinq ans, le gouvernement libéral n'ait pas tenu sa promesse d'offrir des remboursements, retenant des sommes colossales de 1,3 milliard de dollars dues aux petites entreprises de notre province. Il s'agit d'argent qui aurait pu être réinvesti dans leurs entreprises, leurs personnels et nos communautés locales partout à travers l'Ontario.

1130

Par conséquent, nos entreprises—qui sont ceux qui créent des emplois—ont été forcées de supporter le fardeau financier d'une taxe inefficace qui augmente les coûts, sans aucune alternative viable.

Monsieur le Président, contrairement aux libéraux et au NPd de l'opposition, nous sommes à l'écoute des entreprises ontariennes et nous continuerons de demander à Ottawa d'abolir cette taxe.

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

M. Anthony Leardi: Merci à l'adjoint parlementaire pour sa réponse. Le gouvernement fédéral a laissé tomber les petites entreprises de l'Ontario, au niveau des remboursements de la taxe sur le carbone. Cet enjeu dépasse largement la question des remboursements. La Fédération canadienne de l'entreprise indépendante nous informe que plus de la moitié des entreprises sera forcée d'augmenter des prix. La dernière chose dont elles ont besoin, c'est une nouvelle hausse de la taxe libérale.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que l'adjoint parlementaire peut nous expliquer de quelle manière notre gouvernement provincial appuie nos petites entreprises à l'heure où la taxe libérale fédérale sur le carbone menace leur survie?

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Merci à l'excellent député d'Essex. Mon collègue a raison de souligner les effets dévastateurs que la taxe fédérale de carbone a sur les petites entreprises et les familles de l'Ontario. Le coût se reflète sur tout ce que les propriétaires de petites entreprises achètent, rendant l'équilibre budgétaire de plus en plus inabordable sous le poids de cette politique de taxation sur tout.

Qu'il s'agisse d'une augmentation des coûts pour les producteurs, les agriculteurs, ou d'un transport plus coûteux des marchandises jusqu'à nos marchés, les effets négatifs sont indéniables pour tout le monde, sauf pour le gouvernement libéral fédéral et provincial obsédé par cette façon de vouloir toujours augmenter les taxes.

Notre gouvernement se tient au côté des entreprises et travaille fort pour s'opposer à cette attaque pour réduire les coûts.

Contrairement à la chef du Parti libéral, Bonnie Crombie, qui est en faveur des taxes sur le carbone encore plus élevées, nous continuerons à lutter—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

The next question.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. Autour de 500 lettres de permissions temporaires pour l'enseignement en français ont été remises dans la dernière année. Le droit des francophones d'avoir un niveau d'enseignement égal à la majorité anglophone est bafoué.

Madame la ministre, expliquez aux francophones pourquoi vous ne mentionnez aucun montant au budget pour régler la crise des enseignants en français.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député de l'opposition pour sa question. Il sait très bien que notre gouvernement travaille très fort sur la stratégie de recrutement et de rétention pour les enseignants en français. Nous avons notamment augmenté—nous avons doublé le nombre de places pour les enseignants à

l'Université de l'Ontario français l'année dernière pour remédier à ce problème.

De plus, monsieur le Président, avec la croissance de l'intérêt des parents d'avoir une éducation en français pour leurs enfants et des francophones qui ont droit à cette éducation, nous avons investi depuis 2018 plus de 240 millions de dollars dans les conseils scolaires francophones, pour la construction de 18 nouvelles écoles et des investissements dans 16 additions à ces écoles.

Nous savons qu'il y a beaucoup plus à faire, et c'est pour ça que je travaille en étroite collaboration avec le ministre de l'Éducation pour nous assurer que les francophones de l'Ontario aient accès à des professeurs et des écoles francophones.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça doit être pour ça que ça va si bien dans les conseils scolaires, puisqu'ils actionnent le gouvernement de l'Ontario sur les services en français.

Encore à madame la Ministre : environ un francophone sur deux choisit d'être servi en langue anglaise lorsqu'il s'inscrit sur la liste d'attente pour un médecin de famille, en espérant que ça soit plus rapide.

Madame la Ministre, expliquez aux francophones pourquoi vous ne mentionnez aucun montant au budget pour régler la pénurie de médecins de famille offrant des services en français.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Notre gouvernement a été le premier gouvernement en trois décennies à moderniser la Loi sur les services en français en Ontario. C'est à tel point nous savons que c'est important d'accroître l'accès aux services en français.

Nous avons présenté aussi une stratégie globale pour le recrutement et la formation de main-d'oeuvre francophone pour nous assurer que nous avons des travailleurs en santé pour donner accès aux francophones en Ontario à des services de santé. Ça inclut des infirmières et des médecins, monsieur le Président. Nous travaillons avec l'Hôpital Montfort et avec l'Université d'Ottawa et La Cité et les collèges à travers la province de l'Ontario pour nous assurer que nous avons ces travailleurs en santé. Et de plus, monsieur le Président, nous avons fait beaucoup de travail auprès du gouvernement fédéral pour leur tenir à leur promesse d'avoir un corridor en immigration pour des travailleurs en santé qui nous viennent de l'extérieur.

Monsieur le Président, ce n'est pas un problème que nous allons remédier tout de suite aujourd'hui, mais nous travaillons depuis plusieurs années à remédier ce problème.

TAXATION

Mr. Aris Babikian: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. The federal Liberal government raised the carbon tax by 23% on April 1. As Premier Ford has warned since day one, this tax is raising the cost of everything. It increases building costs and makes it more expensive to construct long-term-care homes. That's not fair.

The Liberals, led by Bonnie Crombie queen of the carbon tax, continue to remain silent on this topic. Unlike the Liberals, our government will continue to speak up, continue to fight for our seniors and continue to deliver real affordability.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what our government is doing to build more homes and support seniors in our province?

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, this government has a plan. Let's contrast that plan with the plan that the Liberals—or lack thereof—had since 2003, 21 years ago. They held that power until 2018. In that time, when they exited government, 611 net new beds to show for their efforts. That's not enough for an aging population. This government knows that.

That's why, since assuming office, we introduced the largest capital expansion plan in this country's history to build and redevelop 58,000 spaces for our great seniors in this province of ours. To date, 18,000 spaces have been built or are under construction. However, we are facing challenges indeed, thanks to this carbon tax and the 23% increase on April 1. In fact, that's why this budget introduces over \$155 million to help our government continue to build Ontario's long-term-care sector, an additional \$200 million that homes can use towards capital development.

We have two minutes and 25 seconds until we vote on that budget. It's never too late to do the right thing. I hope the Liberals vote in favour.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the minister. My constituents will be pleased to hear how our government is building new long-term-care homes and is standing up for Ontario seniors.

Our seniors deserve to receive the care that they need and enjoy the high quality of life that they deserve in a long-term-care home. But the carbon tax is increasing the price of everything, from the costs of building material and transport to the day-to-day operations of the long-term-care homes.

Our government will always support Ontario families and ensure seniors can stay in the communities they helped build, close to their loved ones.

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

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, this government is doing a lot, but do you know what would help our efforts? If the Liberals sitting to the left of that fine member would call their buddies in Ottawa and tell them, "Get rid of this tax." There's federal MPs doing the same for the Liberal Party. Why can't the MPPs in this Legislature do the same?

To the member's point: a 40.5% increase in construction costs in that member's riding. That is a severe challenge to getting these spaces online and we know that we need it. I know that member's riding. I have visited that member's riding. It is a diverse riding. People come here

from all over the world, and what we all have in common is that somewhere in our lives, we have a senior who built our lives as we know it, who gave us the opportunities that we have in this great country of ours.

Stand with us, to the Liberal Party over there. Stand against the queen of the carbon tax and say to axe this tax. Let's get shovels in the ground. Let's take care of our seniors in this great country.

NORTHERN AIRPORTS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Ministry of Transportation operates 27 airports in Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory. The First Nations rely on these airports for critical goods and services. The waiting areas are substandard; unsafe facilities for passengers and pilots alike. The airports in Kiiwetinoong still need runway extensions and modern navigational aids to improve the flight access.

Speaker, when will the waiting areas in these airports be held up to standard and make sure that these runways are extended? When will these standards be brought up to standard, just like any other airport in Ontario?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our teams have been working with many of the airports in those northern communities, and I can assure the member that we'll continue to work with them, as the province has provided a commitment to 100% of the remote funding on an operational side: \$14.5 million every single year.

We'll continue to ensure those issues that have been raised by that member with respect to some of the flooding are taken care of and that we work together to ensure that those are fixed so we can continue to support that vital piece of infrastructure in our north. I look forward to working with the member on that specifically.

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

WOMEN'S WORLD HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara Falls has a point of order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks for allowing me to say a few words. I just want to congratulate the Canadian national women's hockey team, who last night defeated the United States of America 6-5 in a thrilling overtime victory in Utica, New York. I can tell you that half the fans were from Canada, cheering on our women's hockey team. So congratulations to our women's hockey team.

DEFERRED VOTES

2024 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on government order number 76, that this

House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

On March 26, 2024, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved, seconded by Mr. Ford, Etobicoke North, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Anand, Deepak | Hogarth, Christine | Quinn, Nolan |
| Babikian, Aris | Holland, Kevin | Rae, Matthew |
| Barnes, Patrice | Jones, Sylvia | Riddell, Brian |
| Bethlenfalvy, Peter | Jones, Trevor | Sabawy, Sheref |
| Bouma, Will | Jordan, John | Sandhu, Amarjot |
| Bresee, Ric | Kanapathi, Logan | Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh |
| Byers, Rick | Ke, Vincent | Sarrazin, Stéphane |
| Calandra, Paul | Kerzner, Michael S. | Saunderson, Brian |
| Cho, Raymond Sung Joon | Khanjin, Andrea | Scott, Laurie |
| Cho, Stan | Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia | Skelly, Donna |
| Clark, Steve | Leardi, Anthony | Smith, Dave |
| Coe, Lorne | Lecce, Stephen | Smith, David |
| Crawford, Stephen | Lumsden, Neil | Smith, Graydon |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy | MacLeod, Lisa | Smith, Laura |
| Dixon, Jess | Martin, Robin | Smith, Todd |
| Dowie, Andrew | McCarthy, Todd J. | Surma, Kinga |
| Downey, Doug | McGregor, Graham | Tangri, Nina |
| Dunlop, Jill | Mulroney, Caroline | Thanigasalam, Vijay |
| Fedeli, Victor | Oosterhoff, Sam | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Flack, Rob | Pang, Billy | Tibollo, Michael A. |
| Ford, Michael D. | Parsa, Michael | Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. |
| Ghamari, Goldie | Piccini, David | Wai, Daisy |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Pierre, Natalie | Williams, Charmaine A. |
| Harris, Mike | Pirie, George | Yakabuski, John |

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

Nays

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Andrew, Jill | Gretzky, Lisa | Sattler, Peggy |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Harden, Joel | Schreiner, Mike |
| Bell, Jessica | Hazell, Andrea | Shamji, Adil |
| Bourgouin, Guy | Hsu, Ted | Shaw, Sandy |
| Bowman, Stephanie | Karpoche, Bhutila | Stiles, Marit |
| Brady, Bobbi Ann | Kernaghan, Terence | Tabuns, Peter |
| Burch, Jeff | Mamakwa, Sol | Vanthof, John |
| Clancy, Aislinn | Mantha, Michael | Vaugeois, Lise |
| Fife, Catherine | McCrimmon, Karen | West, Jamie |
| Fraser, John | McMahon, Mary-Margaret | Wong-Tam, Kristyn |
| French, Jennifer K. | Pasma, Chandra | |
| Gates, Wayne | Rakocevic, Tom | |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 72; the nays are 34.

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

It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

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

Bill 172, An Act to improve energy affordability through distributed energy resources and deep retrofits / Projet de loi 172, Loi visant à rendre l'énergie plus abordable grâce aux ressources énergétiques distribuées et aux rénovations majeures.

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

The division bells rang from 1152 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On April 11, 2024, MPP Tabuns moved second reading of Bill 172, An Act to improve energy affordability through distributed energy resources and deep retrofits.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Andrew, Jill | Gretzky, Lisa | Sattler, Peggy |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Harden, Joel | Schreiner, Mike |
| Bell, Jessica | Hazell, Andrea | Shamji, Adil |
| Bourgouin, Guy | Hsu, Ted | Shaw, Sandy |
| Bowman, Stephanie | Karpoche, Bhutila | Stiles, Marit |
| Brady, Bobbi Ann | Kernaghan, Terence | Tabuns, Peter |
| Burch, Jeff | Mamakwa, Sol | Vanthof, John |
| Clancy, Aislinn | Mantha, Michael | Vaugeois, Lise |
| Fife, Catherine | McCrimmon, Karen | West, Jamie |
| Fraser, John | McMahon, Mary-Margaret | Wong-Tam, Kristyn |
| French, Jennifer K. | Pasma, Chandra | |
| Gates, Wayne | Rakocevic, Tom | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Anand, Deepak | Hogarth, Christine | Quinn, Nolan |
| Babikian, Aris | Holland, Kevin | Rae, Matthew |
| Barnes, Patrice | Jones, Trevor | Riddell, Brian |
| Bethlenfalvy, Peter | Jordan, John | Sabawy, Sheref |
| Bouma, Will | Kanapathi, Logan | Sandhu, Amarjot |
| Bresee, Ric | Ke, Vincent | Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh |
| Byers, Rick | Kerzner, Michael S. | Sarrazin, Stéphane |
| Calandra, Paul | Khanjin, Andrea | Saunderson, Brian |
| Cho, Raymond Sung Joon | Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia | Scott, Laurie |
| Cho, Stan | Leardi, Anthony | Skelly, Donna |
| Clark, Steve | Lecce, Stephen | Smith, Dave |
| Coe, Lorne | Lumsden, Neil | Smith, David |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy | MacLeod, Lisa | Smith, Graydon |
| Dixon, Jess | Martin, Robin | Smith, Laura |
| Dowie, Andrew | McCarthy, Todd J. | Smith, Todd |
| Downey, Doug | McGregor, Graham | Surma, Kinga |
| Dunlop, Jill | Mulroney, Caroline | Tangri, Nina |
| Fedeli, Victor | Oosterhoff, Sam | Thanigasalam, Vijay |
| Flack, Rob | Pang, Billy | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Ford, Michael D. | Parsa, Michael | Tibollo, Michael A. |
| Ghamari, Goldie | Piccini, David | Wai, Daisy |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Pierre, Natalie | Williams, Charmaine A. |
| Harris, Mike | Pirie, George | Yakabuski, John |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 34; the nays are 69.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Matthew Rae: I would like to introduce a couple of visitors I have here today. I have Andrew from the tourism association of Ontario, I have Sara and Derek from the OFA and from the great riding of the Perth–Wellington, and I have Melinda and Kevin from Farm Fresh Ontario—and it is also Kevin's birthday today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL
POLICY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 162, An Act to enact the Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, 2024 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 162, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur la protection contre les taxes sur le carbone et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GROWING AGRITOURISM
ACT, 2024LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE L'AGROTOUTISME

Mr. Rae moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to limit the liability in respect of agritourism / Projet de loi 186, Loi limitant la responsabilité à l'égard de l'agrotourisme.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, thank you for that opportunity. The bill enacts the Growing Agritourism Act, 2024, an act that applies in respect of agri-tourism activities that are carried out as a part of a farming business that has an annual gross income of \$7,000 or more.

Agri-tourism activities are defined as agriculture-related educational, entertainment, historical, cultural, limited accommodations or recreational activities, including you-pick operations or farm markets, conducted on a farm that allows or invites members of the general public to observe, participate in or enjoy that activity.

The act provides that if an agri-tourism provider includes warning language set out in the act in signs at or near the main entrance of each agri-tourism activity or in every contract entered into with each participant in respect of the agri-tourism activity, no cause of action arises against an agri-tourism provider for any harm a participant sustains during an agri-tourism activity if harm is a result of a risk inherent in an agri-tourism activity.

The act also provides that agri-tourism providers are not required to eliminate risks inherent in an agri-tourism activity.

PETITIONS

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the people of Wilmot, who are very upset, for good reason, that their prime agricultural land is being expropriated without transparency or without due process.

It reads, "Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pause all plans to expropriate and rezone lands in Wilmot—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member for Waterloo and remind all the members that standing order 42 prohibits members from reading the petition. They must make a statement summarizing the contents of the petition and they can indicate the number of signatures attached but shall not read the text of the petition.

Member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So now all of us are mad. I'm just joking. I thought I could read the "therefore" part, not the "whereas." I mean, what the hell is going on? Okay.

People in Wilmot are very angry for good reason. They are expropriating their land without good cause, without good rationale. I support the people of Wilmot and sustainable farming practices in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Waterloo. I didn't write the standing order, but I have to enforce it, and the House passed it.

Petitions?

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I always enjoy presenting petitions and sharing the voices and concerns of people

across the province. In this case, I received a letter explaining that the petition that I am presenting to the House has 985 signatures, and that's in addition to the almost 7,000 that they have submitted before on an issue close to my heart, in support of Bill 15, which is the Fairness for Road Users Act.

These folks have highlighted that they would seek stiffer penalties for drivers involved in fatal accidents where people were killed or catastrophically injured. Of course, I have stood by bikers' rights organizations and others, especially those road safety advocates, in moving this bill forward. It is my bill. I support them and certainly we want this government to do right by these folks.

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

CANCER SCREENING

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is in support of a Toronto local hip-hop artist and battle rap pioneer, Bishop Brigante, who at 45 was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. He wants to lower the minimum age for colonoscopies from 50 to 30 years of age, so we can have quicker detection. He's trying to raise public awareness around colorectal cancer. The current age, for anyone who doesn't know, for an asymptomatic cancer screening is 50, and we want to see that age lowered so we can help save lives.

There are many people in the arts community, in the film and TV community and, of course, in the health community who are speaking out about this. Bishop, Jully Black and many other artists are coming out in large numbers. I just want to tell them thank you and also say that I agree and support this petition and I'll be affixing my signature to it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present the following petitions on behalf of Dr. Sally Palmer, professor emerita at the school of social work in the faculty of social sciences at McMaster University. Now, to Dr. Palmer: Unfortunately, we're not entitled to read directly the words from petitions within the Ontario Legislature due to recent changes by this government, so this will be my summary.

The petition is titled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." The petition points out that Ontario's rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line. It also points out that a letter was sent to the Premier and to cabinet ministers, and it was signed by over 230 organizations, and it recommends the doubling of these rates. It points out that people who are on social assistance are unable to afford food, they are unable to afford rent, and that the government of Canada even recognized this with its CERB program, that the basic income of \$2,000 per month was a standard support.

I fully support the petition to double social assistance rates, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Simon to the Clerks.

1310

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It is my honour to present the following petition entitled “Support the Gender Affirming Health Care Act.” Within the petition, it points out that two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex communities have a great deal of difficulty when it comes to receiving the health care that they need in Ontario. Within Ontario, people should not have to fight for a health care that understands and recognizes their identity.

So this petition is to pass the gender-affirming health care act, something that I believe everyone, if they're listening to their conscience, should pass, should support, and I hope that this government will finally decide to listen to its conscience once and for all.

I support this and will deliver it with page Armaan to the Clerks.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is my distinct pleasure to present a petition that I'm not allowed read but focuses on the crisis in mental health across this province, in particular the experience of the Roth family, where they were denied access and timely care and their daughter Kaitlyn died by suicide. We can do better in the province of Ontario. I fully support the alternative destination locations for care instead of emergency rooms.

With that, I'll be affixing my signature to the petition that I cannot read.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING RED TAPE TO BUILD
MORE HOMES ACT, 2024LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
AFIN DE CONSTRUIRE PLUS
DE LOGEMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 11, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm pleased to be rising here today to speak about Bill 185, the government's latest housing bill, called Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024; I always love your titles.

This bill was also introduced at the same time as the government introduced an updated provincial policy statement for comment. These are pretty significant developments when it comes to the housing file, and I'm going to spend a bunch of my time today talking about what's in

the bill, as well as a little bit about what's in the provincial policy statement, and then read some of the comments that have come in from stakeholders and also express some of what I like, what I have some concerns about and what I think is really not so great.

To summarize, this government has given us a bill that I would call a grab bag of half measures that reverse some of the really terrible housing mistakes that you've made in previous bills; notable is Bill 23. Some of the measures that you've introduced will also spur construction of new homes. I can see that. We do have a red flag that some of the homes that will be built will be single-family homes on farmland—sprawl. Sprawl is very expensive, and we have some concerns that this bill will really double down on that very expensive housing type.

Every time this government introduces a new bill, I really like to go through it and see what's in it, and every time there is a new bill, I always see some flip-flopping. The government has attempted to cut back on development fees, and now we see that a lot of the development fee charges are back again. This bill also has flip-flopping as well.

What does this bill actually mean for people in Ontario who are struggling to find and keep their home? In the near term, it's not going to help people find a home they can afford. It's not going to lower the rent. It's not going to address the homelessness crisis. It's not going to make it cheaper for people to buy their first home. That, I think, is a shame, because that is what housing affordability and the housing crisis is about: It's about making homes affordable. When I look at this bill, there really isn't a lot in the bill that's going to address that critical issue of affordability. This government is cheap, and it's people that suffer as a result of it.

I want to talk a little bit about the state of the housing crisis today. You just have to open up the newspaper, go to CBC, and every week, there are new, scary statistics and evidence and stories showing how bad it is out there—especially if you are lower-income or middle-income, you are really struggling to find a home to keep.

I'll give you some examples. When it comes to the homelessness crisis—these are people who just can't afford to find a home—we know that encampments in the city of Toronto have doubled; they're at pandemic levels. We know that there are encampments in towns and cities all across Ontario, and that is new. It didn't exist in the same way six years ago.

We know that the Auditor General, over five years ago now, said to this government, “You need to have a plan to address homelessness, because currently you don't have one.” And six years later, this government still doesn't have an effective plan to address homelessness. You would think, in a housing bill, that there would be a chunk of that bill that's geared to addressing homelessness, but there isn't. There's nothing in this bill on that.

Then, I think about renters. There are 1.7 million renters in Ontario today; it used to be 1.4 million, but it's going up because people can't afford to buy a home. And when I look at the renter crisis and whether this bill addresses people who rent, I don't see anything in there.

Your offices and our offices regularly get calls from people who are being illegally evicted, who cannot find a home, who are struggling with an above-guideline rent increase, who are being demovicted because their building is being converted into a condo. These people are worried. They're scared. They don't know if they're going to be able to afford to live in Ontario anymore. What they want to see and what we want to see are strong measures to protect renters. We want to see strong rent control, including vacancy control, so there's a cap on how much the rent can be raised between tenancies.

We want to see an effective Rental Housing Enforcement Unit. If a renter has an issue, like their washroom is not working, or they have mould that's exacerbating their allergies or their asthma, and their landlord isn't doing anything about it, they should have a number to call; they should be able to speak to a bylaw officer. There should be enough staff in that unit to respond, and the bylaw officer should have the enforcement tools and the capacity to take action, which means they should call up the landlord or the property manager and say, "This is the standard. Your renter is concerned. There's evidence to show that you're not doing your part as a landlord. If you don't fix it, there will be consequences to that." That's what renters want. They want a level playing field. They want their home to be properly maintained. There's nothing in this bill that's going to help those renters—and this isn't a one-off thing. When I canvass, I'll go into building after building after building and I'll speak to renter after renter who will say to me, "This place isn't properly maintained." It's standard operating procedure, and that needs to change. We need to lift the floor to ensure renters can live in good homes.

And then the final piece, where I really see the housing crisis getting out of control—homelessness, renters—is for the first-time homebuyers who want to get their first home. If you are a first-time homebuyer in Ontario today, you are in a very tough situation because it has never been more expensive to buy a home and to pay off the mortgage of that home, with rising interest rates or high interest rates and the high cost of a home.

The National Bank of Canada's recent statistics tell us that we are in the worst housing crisis for first-time homebuyers that we have seen in 41 years. That's this government's legacy. You've priced people out of the dream of home ownership. You've had six years to fix it. And under the six years this government has been in power, it has gone from bad to worse. That's why people are saying, "I'm taking my skills and my talents with me, and I'm moving to Alberta." Not good.

So the state of housing in Ontario today is really not great on all levels.

There's so much that's not in this bill that should be in there. There is no commitment to affordability. There is no fourplexes as of right. There is no commitment to increase density near transit stations or along transit corridors. There is no commitment to inclusionary zoning to require developments to do their fair share and build some affordable homes in big new developments. It makes

sense. A lot of cities have done it. New York has done it—lots of cities. But we can't. Why not? I don't know.

1320

There's no rent control or vacancy control to stabilize rents and keep renters housed. There's no improvement to the Landlord and Tenant Board, even though there are over 53,000 people waiting for a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board to get their disputes resolved in a fast, fair and efficient way—not happening here in Ontario.

There are no measures in this bill to stop illegal eviction, to curb AGI abuse and to stop bad-actor landlords who fail to properly maintain their homes. You would expect to see that in a housing bill, but it's not there.

There is no plan in the bill to curb speculation to help first-time homebuyers buy their first home, even though we see CMHC data telling us very clearly that investors are buying three, four, eight, twelve homes and they're pricing out first-time homebuyers.

There is no plan to increase investment to end or seriously address homelessness. There is no serious plan to build affordable homes or supportive housing. There's none of it.

This government has chosen to put all their eggs into the basket of building more homes, especially homes on farmland, and I've got a lot of concerns about that. Nor does this government take any serious effort to address the question of who are we building homes for and how much are they going to cost—a lot missing.

When I look at what this government is doing, I often look at what the BC NDP government is doing and I like to do a compare and contrast. This government likes to say, "Well, we're going to just build our way out of the housing crisis. We're going to build so many homes, you won't believe it. We're going to build 1.5 million homes and it's going to make everything affordable." But, even going by your own benchmark of building more homes and ignoring everything else, you're falling short. In Ontario, housing starts are going down month over month. You can see the CMHC data. It is very clear: Housing starts are going down.

The Conservatives like to say, "Well, it's all the federal government's fault. It's all the Bank of Canada's fault. It's everybody's fault but ours." The reality is that other provinces have found a way to build in this tougher housing environment, and it is the BC NDP government where housing starts are going up. They went up 11%. What are they doing right and what is the Conservative government doing wrong, and why aren't some of the things the BC NDP government are doing right in this bill? I don't get it.

I'm going to give a little bit of a summary of what the BC NDP government is doing, and hopefully, for the MPPs opposite, you'll introduce these as amendments in committee.

The government in BC is legalizing more affordable housing options, including semis, townhomes, multiplex apartments in all neighbourhoods, and they're increasing density along transit corridors. That makes a lot of sense

to me. I would like to see an amendment in committee that would allow that.

The BC NDP government is allowing taller apartments and condos near transit stations. That also makes a lot of sense. It's smart, sustainable urban planning. This government has had two years—two years—to approve increased density near transit stations in Toronto. You've had over 104 requests from the city of Toronto to do that and you can't bring yourself to do it. I don't get it. It makes a lot of sense.

The BC NDP government is also bringing in what I really like to see, which is that they're investing money into building and buying housing. What that looks like is, they've established a fund, \$500 million, and they're giving it to non-profits, land trusts and developers to buy and build non-market housing. It makes a whole lot of sense. It's much quicker, it's cheaper, and it makes a whole lot of sense. It keeps people housed. I would like to see this government move ahead on an initiative like that.

They've set up a renter protection fund and they're also looking at taking very practical measures to address speculation. I'm not exactly surprised that this government doesn't like to touch investor-led speculation, given who your donors are, but I think it's pretty important that you do so because it is a very effective way to stabilize housing prices, help first-time home buyers and renters.

The BC NDP government, for instance, has brought in measures to restrict Airbnbs in investment properties. We can convert Airbnbs to long-term rentals and increase long-term rental stock so our health care workers and our construction workers, our supermarket workers can afford to find a home and keep a home that's a rental. They can save up and buy their own home. It makes a lot of sense.

They've brought in a vacant home tax. If you are an investor who doesn't pay your fair share of taxes in BC, or you leave your home vacant for more than six months of the year, then you're required to put a chunk of money—give it to the government so they can build affordable housing. You can either rent out that property, sell it or contribute your fair share to affordable housing. It's a vacant home and speculation tax. It's incredibly popular. It has raised over \$80 million for affordable housing and it has motivated people who have a vacant home to rent it out or sell it. It's win-win-win.

This government—I hear them every year say they're going to look into bringing forward a vacant home tax. Fall economic statement, latest budget—they always say it, but the details never arrive. The legislation never arrives. The regulation is never posted. You talk about it, but you don't act on it. I think it's really important that we act on it.

The BC NDP government is also bringing in real estate transparency, beneficial ownership. No longer can an individual set up a numbered corporation or a real estate investment trust and buy properties anonymously, often for the purposes of tax evasion or fraud. It's a huge issue in BC. We know it's a huge issue in Ontario. We know it's driving up housing prices. OREA supports it; stakeholders support it; we support it. The federal government is looking into it. It's very practical.

I would like this government to move forward on a practical measure like that. It's the kind of measure that I would like to see in a housing bill. It's not there yet. Maybe it will be in the next one. Maybe I'll be pleasantly surprised, and it will be introduced in committee.

So that's what the BC NDP government is doing right.

There are some things in this bill that aren't bad. Then, there are some things in this bill that really are terrible. Then, there are a whole lot of things that should be in this bill that aren't. I'm going to spend a bit of time going into the bill itself. I'm going to go step-by-step, for those who are listening.

The first measure that I'm going to look at is a schedule where the province can compel the city of Toronto to provide assistance directly or indirectly to a specified manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise. Currently, municipalities are banned from offering special discounts and incentives to one industry over another. It's to stop a Hunger Games mentality where municipalities compete with each other. So this would give the city of Toronto the power to do that, and it will enable the province to compel the city of Toronto to do that, too. I'm curious to know if the city of Toronto asked for this power, or if they're wanting it. I'm curious to know what specific industry will be getting that special incentive, tax break etc. I have those questions.

The second piece of the schedule that is a little concerning is this government is going to ban third-party appeals to the land tribunal, which will mean that residents will not be able to go to the land tribunal to contest a development, be it a condo or a quarry. The government brought this change in with Bill 23, where they banned third-party appeals. But then, there was all this backlash and concern, so they backtracked a bit. Now, it seems that you want to reintroduce it again.

When we are thinking about the land tribunal, it's very clear the land tribunal does need to be reformed. There are some frivolous applications to the land tribunal that are stopping very worthy projects, such as a hospital expansion or an affordable housing development. What comes to mind is the affordable housing development in the member for Willowdale's riding. It's 59 modular homes that will be built near a transit station to house people who need supportive housing. That project—city of Toronto was fair, and they put supportive or affordable housing projects in every riding in the city of Toronto. But Willowdale just couldn't bring themselves to say yes, the member for Willowdale couldn't bring themselves to say yes, and two years later, that affordable housing project is stalled. Those modular homes are sitting in a warehouse somewhere—we think it's Parry Sound—wrapped in shrink wrap. The city is spending upwards of \$50,000 a month in rent for these modular homes to sit empty when they should be in Willowdale, housing people.

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When I think about people who hold up useful, needed developments, I always think of the member for Willowdale and his decision to hold up affordable housing in his own riding.

It makes a lot of sense to bring in land tribunal reform so that projects that are of the public good and have affordable housing requirements are not needlessly held up in the land tribunal. But to say that nobody can bring an application to the land tribunal I think is bit much. Municipalities and residents deserve to have a say over what happens in their community. It makes sense for the provincial government to work with municipalities to ensure that they can meet their housing targets and to develop official plans that enable them to do so and that the land tribunal becomes a tribunal not of first resort but of last resort because projects are being approved and built, following an official plan that says yes to density. I believe that would be a better way.

This bill is looking at making changes to the building code to allow 18-storey mass-timber buildings. We are hearing from stakeholders that this is a good thing. We agree. It makes sense to build using timber. We know that it is structurally sound, and it is good to see that this change is in this bill.

What we would also like to see in this bill, given that we're talking about the building code, is a commitment to mandate electric-vehicle charging stations in new developments so that we can do the sustainable thing and transition, be a leader in moving to an electric-vehicle-led province, where we not just build electric vehicles in Ontario but we make it easy for people to buy a vehicle and use a vehicle and get from A to B in an electric vehicle. But that's only going to happen if it's easy for people to charge the electric vehicle, because if you can't charge it, you can't drive it and you're not going to buy it. I've had residents approach me and say, "I would love to buy an electric vehicle, but I have nowhere to charge it, because I don't have my own driveway." It's stopping them from making that choice, which we know more people should be encouraged to make. So it would be good to see that change in the building code.

We've also heard from stakeholders, given that we're opening up the building code, that the building code needs to be enforced, which means that when new construction is happening there are competent and qualified building inspectors that go to that site to ensure that the builder is doing everything they need to do to meet code—because what we don't want is an individual moving into a home, spending a million dollars buying that home and then finding out that that home is defective, that there's mould after 18 months, that they have flooding, that the heating and cooling system doesn't work very well even though the building is new. We are getting these calls from residents who have moved into new condos, spent upwards of a million dollars on that new condo, and they're finding that the building is defective. It makes a lot of sense that we make sure that the building code is enforced.

We're also hearing from stakeholders about the building code and the need to lift the building code floor so we are building energy-efficient, resilient and well-made homes. We know the building code is being reviewed right now. There are conversations that are happening to align the building code provincially with the building code

federally, and what we hear again and again and again is that the provincial government wants to keep the building code at the bare minimum when we know we need to lift the floor so when people buy a home they're getting a well-maintained home, and that means improving the building code. We would like to see these changes in the bill.

The next change I'd like to discuss is the move by this government to no longer require parking in a development near transit. That is a move that we think makes sense. Stakeholders, environmental groups, planning authorities have said that it is time to do that.

There are a few caveats that I want to point out, however. The first caveat is that, if we are looking at building big buildings with less parking, then it's essential that we make sure that the public transit that services that building is very good.

The second thing is that—we just did a briefing on this, this morning, and we had some residents say, "Well, what about accessibility? What do we do if I need a caregiver who is going to come in, they drive and then they care for me and then they leave?" Maybe it's a personal support worker or it's someone who has accessibility challenges who needs their car to get around. That's a good point, and it gave me pause, and I think it's upon us as a Legislature to think of useful ways to ensure that we can reduce parking minimums and eliminate parking minimums but also take steps to ensure that accessibility requirements are kept. So I would be curious and interested to know what measures and ideas you have, and I'm going to think of my own as well, because I'm sure it's a challenge that other municipalities and provinces have addressed and solved.

The government is bringing in a use-it-or-lose-it law that gives municipalities more power to motivate a developer to build a development, once they've been given the approvals to do so. I would like to personally thank the member for Niagara Centre, who is sitting right here next to me. Let's give him a round of applause. The reason why is because the member for Niagara Centre has been advocating for quite some time now for municipalities to have the power to bring in a use-it-or-lose-it policy. We are pleased to see a use-it-or-lose-it policy in this bill.

Essentially what this is: If a developer applies to build but then they don't build, then they could lose the right to build. The reason why this is so important is because we have a housing crisis. We need to build more homes and we are not in a situation where we can allocate planning staff to approve permits, going through all that process, and then having developers sit on that land—maybe because they want to make more profit later on; maybe because they want to sell it, because once it's rezoned, it's worth more money, and for them, it's really about a flipping opportunity and not a building opportunity. That's not what we want. We want construction to take place. So this is a good move.

The government is giving municipalities the power to move forward on a use-it-or-lose-it policy by giving them a few new powers. One, they can reallocate sewage or

water capacity from one development to another if this developer is not building in a timely manner, and they're also giving municipalities the power to set expiry dates for site plan and subdivision approval. So if a site plan is approved and, in two years' time, the developer hasn't built it, then the site plan approval could be withdrawn. This all makes sense to us. If we hear something different from municipalities, we'll let you know, but that actually makes sense to us.

This government is looking at putting more guardrails on the ministerial zoning orders—controversial ministerial zoning orders. These have been controversial for some time because the province essentially gave themselves the power to exempt a development from local planning and provincial rules, and also to impose their own rules on a development. We know that it created a two-tier planning approval process, where, if you were maybe giving money to the PC Party, were friends with a minister, then you can use the MZO process and get your development approved very quickly. That meant that everyone else, all the other developers, had to go to the back of the line and use the more traditional, mainstream planning process.

So it was really a two-tier system, and a lot of developers were very upset by that process, as well as residents who said, "What about us? We want to have a say," and municipalities who said, "We want to have a say in how things get planned in our neighbourhoods and our cities." So it was very controversial.

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Once again, you're looking at rewriting it. This rewrite means that an applicant—so the developer—has to explain why it's necessary, maybe get local municipal appeal for the project, and the government has said that we will post it on the Environmental Registry if it's non-urgent. So if it's an urgent MZO, you don't have to post it on the Environmental Registry, but if it's a non-urgent MZO, you do. That's our assessment of it right now. We're a little concerned about what this means, but we do appreciate that there are some additional guardrails compared to what it was before.

The government is looking at changing development fees again. You remember Bill 23. Bill 23 was an absolute disaster when it came to development charges. The government made the decision to radically change how development fees were collected. Municipalities were no longer able to be collect development fees for affordable housing, and that remains true, as well as for parkland charges, and that the development fees had to be phased in. It was a lot of changes.

A lot of municipalities came to us, including AMO, and said, "Because of this, we are going to be losing \$1 billion a year in infrastructure revenue, because you're hampering our ability to collect developer fees from developers to just partially pay for infrastructure"—it just partially covers the cost of infrastructure. And this government, at the time, chose to ignore those calls.

Time went on, and what we found is that a lot of municipalities had to dramatically raise property taxes to cover the cost of the infrastructure: 5%, 8%, 10%—that's

on you. I want to call that a Ford tax. What we also found is that municipalities no longer had the money that they needed to pay for the infrastructure to allow development to happen. And in some regions, municipalities were saying, "We actually can't even approve that development because we don't have the money to pay for the infrastructure to connect those new homes to the sewage and the roads and the water that they need." It actually hampered housing construction. It also threw planning departments into chaos.

I am pleasantly pleased to see that with Bill 185, there is some rollback on that. There is an acknowledgement from this government that municipalities matter, that their development fees matter and that funding for infrastructure matters. So that's a partial step in the right direction. I don't know why we had to waste two years or more for the government to realize what everybody else knows, but we did. Meanwhile, the housing crisis continues.

This is what concerns me. I've read through what some of our stakeholders are saying, and I'm going to spend a little time reading what AMO has said, because they did take a deep dive into the development charges piece. AMO said, "AMO will continue to highlight the need to reinstate both housing services and the cost of land as eligible DC costs." So you've partially returned some powers, but municipalities are still out some money. And they give an estimate. They say, "Together, these changes are costing municipalities around \$4 billion over a 10-year period and will have a material impact on municipalities' ability to invest in community housing."

So what AMO is telling you there is that even though there have been some modest rollbacks of the development charges framework, municipalities are still not able to collect developer fees for affordable housing. They're still not able to do it. In the middle of a housing crisis, they still cannot collect development fees for affordable housing and shelter. I think that is a shame and I think that does need to be changed because every municipality I talk to is telling me they have a homelessness crisis. They have a wait-list for people who want to get into community housing or supportive housing. They can't meet the need. So that is a problem.

There have also been some changes around how development fees are collected and whatnot. Municipalities are no longer required to refund application fees if they don't get a development approved within a strict time frame—good. The government brought this change in with Bill 109. We kept hearing from planning departments that it actually slowed the process down, because municipalities will say, "We don't have the capacity to get this approved within the 90-day time frame that you want it approved by, that we're required to get it approved by, so we're going to make you do all this pre-work in advance, before you can even submit an application." They couldn't get it done within the time frame.

We also see here in this bill that the government is looking at banning municipalities from telling developers to do work before they've officially submitted a development application. That's one way of trying to solve the

problem. The challenge with that is, we're already hearing from cities that are telling us, "That's a concern because we are not able to get an application approved where there is even just some kind of public consultation"—we're talking about one meeting—"with the time frames that we have."

This bill is also looking at taking away the right for some regional municipalities to be the leaders in planning responsibility. It looks like Halton, York and Peel regions will be losing their ability to plan, and that Waterloo, Durham, Niagara and Simcoe—their ability to plan will also be restricted in some way in the future, on proclamation. What we worry about here is that downloading the right to plan to local municipalities could create very chaotic and haphazard planning, because it affects a region's ability to plan well and to plan efficiently. It could create a very piecemeal planning process. So we've got some concerns about that. We are talking to municipalities to see how it affects each municipality in particular, because it seems like some municipalities have different perspectives on it.

A Waterloo resident is pretty concerned about how this decision to eliminate planning responsibility from the region and download it to local municipalities could affect the Waterloo area. He says it could affect our water supply, which is a huge concern. He's worried that if the Conservatives continue down this watch, we could have another Walkerton, which is also very concerning. He's also very concerned about how this decision to remove planning authority from the region could affect environmental protections and farmland in the area, including greenbelt land. So there are some concerns there that I urge this government to look into.

This bill is also going to be exempting student housing from the Planning Act, which would give universities and colleges more latitude to build more student housing, and it would enable them to build student housing more quickly.

Let's be very clear: Building student housing is absolutely essential. Some of the worst housing shortages and housing affordability crises we have in Ontario are in towns that have a big student population—we're talking Ottawa, Kingston, Waterloo, Kitchener, Toronto, London, Hamilton. It is a problem.

In my riding, I have the University of Toronto. We regularly work with students who cannot afford to pay the rent or who are living three, four people to a bedroom—or having people sleep in a lounge room because they can't afford to have a home to their own or to share a home with one person.

When you look at the price of student housing—honestly, I was flabbergasted. To rent a dorm—so you're sharing a room—at the University of Toronto can cost you a minimum of \$2,300 a month, and it could go up to \$3,000 a month. That's a lot. That's more than any student I know would want to spend, and it's more than most parents I know would want to spend.

When we're thinking about building more student housing, it's a good thing. But what I would urge this

government to do is to also address the issue of affordability. Are we building student housing so that universities can drain even more revenue from people, because they're not being funded properly by the provincial government? Or are we building student housing that's affordable for students? I fear that this government is going to be moving down a path where we're building student housing that's not affordable for students.

1350

It is also concerning to me that student housing is exempt from the Residential Tenancies Act. If you are a student, you don't have protection from illegal eviction. You're not protected by rent control. You're not protected by price gouging if your university wants to charge you an excessive amount of money for a food plan. There's not much you can do if you have an issue with maintenance. You can't go to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's difficult for you.

I think it makes a lot of sense to have a conversation, do some consultation to think about we can integrate student into the Residential Tenancies Act so that student housing is tied to enrolment at the university but students also have protections that they deserve to have, especially rent control. I think we can do both, and I urge this government—I've raised this issue with the Minister of Colleges and Universities, and I think it's something that this government should be doing as we're looking at building more student housing.

This bill is also looking at moving ahead with providing standardized pre-approved home designs. I like the proposal. This makes a lot of sense, and we like this proposal because it will enable us to build more homes more quickly. It will enable us to do modular housing so we build housing off-site in a unionized factory and then move those homes to where they will actually be located. It's a sensible idea, and I hope that this government would be interested in working with us and stakeholders and unions to ensure we can get good unionized jobs out of this process so we can build the economy here and solve our housing crisis at the same time. Let's turn this good idea into a great one. I'd like to see that.

This bill is looking at bringing in enhanced regulatory authority to allow a second or third home on a property by removing barriers that can be thrown up by municipalities such as restricting the number of bedrooms that can be in a home or mandating that there need to be three parking spots for each unit. There are a lot of things municipalities can do to really throw up roadblocks. I think this is a good idea too. We like it.

In Bill 23, this government made the decision to allow three homes as of right on a residential lot, and now, in this bill, the government is removing some of the barriers that some municipalities throw up to stop that from happening. We think that's a good idea. What I wish was in this bill was fourplexes. I know a lot of the Conservative MPPs like fourplexes, and I bet there is this internal conversation that's happening within your party, when you're looking at each other and going, "Oh, my God. We're being called NIMBYs. I can't believe it. How can they be calling us

NIMBYs? They're the NIMBYs. I don't get it." I would really like it, in this bill, if in committee all the Conservative MPPs that I know support this idea had their conversations with the Premier and you introduced an amendment to allow fourplexes as of right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We'll support you. We've got your back.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We'll support you, yes. We've got your back. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: All of us together—so, all hands on deck.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. I think we can do it. And why wait till the next bill? It will probably be in the next bill. Why wait? You can bring it into committee. I am hopeful.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ever an optimist.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I am optimistic.

What I would also like to see, if we're talking about increasing density, is to move forward with allowing increased density along transit corridors, those apartment buildings along transit corridors that would provide more affordable options for people, especially if we mandate that a percentage of those units are more family-friendly in size, because we're not going to solve the housing crisis by building 500-square-foot units or 4,000-square-foot mansions on sprawl. We need a mix, and what's missing are those family-friendly-sized apartments, those 1,200-to-1,600-square-foot apartments, those starter homes. I would like to see that.

And then the other change that is in the bill is the decision by this government to consult on changing the building code to allow three-to-six-storey homes to have only one stairwell instead of two. I think consultation on this is a good idea. The reason why I think this is a good idea is because, if we are going to move ahead with moving to just one stairwell, we need to make sure these homes are safe, and that means doing proper consultation with fire marshals and fire departments, looking at the evidence to ensure that if there is a fire in these buildings, people can get out quickly.

The reason why I say that is because we have had residents in our riding who have died in fires. We had one on Shaw Street, and an individual on the top floor did not get out in time. It was awful. And then we had William Cachia, who lived in a rooming house in the Danforth area. There was a fire in the early morning in a rooming house. He didn't get out on time and he died.

It is often lower-income people living in poorly maintained homes who are the people who died in fires—it is. And, tragically, these buildings, both of them, did not have working fire alarms—they didn't. But I also think that we need to build in redundancy when we're ensuring that people are safe, because there are always going to be some places that don't have working fire alarms because the building isn't properly maintained. So I like the idea of this government doing consultation on this to make sure we get it right.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the provincial policy statement. The provincial policy statement is not directly included in this bill, but it's

complementary. There's a reason why you introduced it on the same day. Unfortunately, unlike some of the grab bag of some good things in this bill, I'm very worried about what's in the provincial policy statement.

For those that are listening: The provincial policy statement is a short document that provides guidance to how planning happens in Ontario. It provides direction to municipalities. It provides a summary of where we build and how we build. It's a short document and it's a very important document. When I read this document, the take-home message I get is that the provincial policy statement is green-lighting more single-family homes on farmland—very expensive sprawl. I have some concerns with that because that kind of development is very expensive and we know that this government's own Housing Affordability Task Force told this government that we can build the homes that we need, we can meet our 1.5-million home target, by building in areas that are already zoned for development. We know that.

So when I read the provincial policy statement, what I see is that it wipes out settlement area boundaries and municipal comprehensive review processes that prevent unnecessary low-density sprawl on farmland. So now what can happen is the developer—let's say they bought land just outside the municipal boundary, and they bought it cheap because it was farmland and it was just zoned for farmland, okay? They got it for a steal. Well, now, what they can do is they can go to the municipality and say, "I want you to rezone this land to allow for development."

Now, typically, the process of expanding settlement boundaries could only happen after careful review. Municipalities needed to explain that it was necessary, and it could only happen every five years or so. It was a very careful, well-thought-out process. Now it can happen at any time. If a developer wants their land rezoned, they just have to go to the council and get it approved. That is quite a problem.

I was just on a briefing call and Environmental Defence's Phil Pothen was on this call, and he said, "This is a breeding ground for corruption. I'm very worried about this—I'm very worried about it." So that's one thing I have concerns about.

The other thing is about the appeal process. How this government wants to change it is—let's say a developer says, "All right, I want you to rezone my land," and if the municipality says yes, then no one can appeal it. But if the municipality says no, then the developer can appeal. If the municipality approves sprawl, you can't appeal, and if the municipality denies the sprawl, then the developer can appeal. You're basically saying, "We want sprawl and we're going to change the rules around the land tribunal so that it can only say yes to sprawl, it can't say no." I have some concerns about that.

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I also have some concerns around the provincial policy statement's decision to get rid of minimum density requirements. It's crazy. I can't believe it. It's 2024, and we're getting rid of minimum density requirements. So now there is no requirement to meet density in any area;

it's advisory—we recommend it—but it's not required. I think it's bananas. I can't believe that's there. My hope is that those members in the Conservative Party who know that this is a really crazy idea will speak to their colleagues and we'll get that changed in a future bill. I'm hopeful.

Member for Waterloo, are you hopeful?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not as hopeful.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Wrong person. I shouldn't have asked you.

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. The member for Niagara Centre is hopeful.

I want to talk a little bit about what some stakeholders said, with the remaining time that I have.

I talked a little bit about what AMO said. They're cautiously happy about the development fee charge changes, but they are concerned that they don't go far enough. They're concerned about the MZO framework; so are we—although it is better than what it was before.

The Ontario Real Estate Association also sent in a statement. They're happy about eliminating parking minimums; they're pleased that it will be easier to build more garden, laneway and basement suites; they're good with permitting mass-timber structures up to 18 storeys; they support standardized designs to reduce delays and costs for modular homes—so are we. Some of this stuff is good. But what they're concerned about is this government's real reluctance to say yes to upzoning along major transit corridors and this government's outright refusal to allow four units as-of-right province-wide.

I honestly think you folks are the last ones left who can't bring yourselves to say yes to fourplexes. It's so interesting. I wonder when you're going to cave. I'm guessing six months. That's my prediction. Six months, and then you're going to cave, but we'll see—I'm hoping it's less.

Environmental Defence have a lot of concerns around the provincial planning statement. They wrote: "Together, the new law and the proposed provincial planning statement would effectively wipe out the protective" municipal boundaries that protect farmland and the greenbelt, wetlands and wildlife. They've got a lot of concerns about that. They're also concerned that Bill 185 would remove any expert Ontario Land Tribunal oversight over multi-billion dollar decisions by municipal council around approving sprawl. They wrote: "It's hard to think of a more enticing target for corruption than unchecked municipal decisions to approve sprawl." Strong words. "By rubber-stamping an application to needlessly extend a settlement boundary and bulldoze farmland or wildlife habitat, a small-town councillor could confer hundreds of millions in windfall wealth upon a real estate speculator who bought up farmland at a low price." It's concerning, because once we pave over farmland, we're not getting it back. If we're talking about making sure that Ontario's economy thrives, we should be doing everything we can to preserve, protect and expand our farming sector. It is a huge growth generator, and it needs land.

This came from Bill 23, but it's still relevant today—this is from Carolyn Whitzman, an expert adviser with the Housing Assessment Resource Tools project. The reason I like Carolyn's work is because when she's talking about the housing supply crisis and the housing affordability crisis, she talks not just about how many homes we're building, but who we're building for. She breaks it down, and she concludes that for upper-middle-income people—they usually can find a home. That's not where the shortage is. But when you're looking at people who are in the 50% to 80% of household income, they're short—we need to build about 160,000 homes for them; they're more affordable homes. If you're looking at people who earn 20% to 50% of the average household income, we need to build about 483,000 homes that are affordable for this demographic. And then, for people who earn up to 20% of the average household income—these are people on Ontario disability, Ontario Works—we need to build 85,000 homes to meet their needs. And I really don't see in this bill a serious effort to look at who we're building homes for and who is missing out, because people who are middle-income, working class, on social assistance, they are not finding homes that can work for them, that they can afford, and they're also having difficulty keeping the home they've got, because they're being renovicted or demovicted, pushed out, moving to Alberta.

I want to conclude by talking about what we see as solutions to our housing affordability and our housing supply crisis. I want to be clear: I want a home. I want everybody in Ontario to have a home that they can afford to rent or buy. That's what I want, and in a province as rich as ours, we can do it. It's not an issue of money; it's a lack of political will.

I don't want encampments, because I want people who live in encampments to be offered a permanent home, offered a supportive home so that they can rebuild their lives, live good lives. I think we can do that too.

I want people who move to a big city, go to school, start a career—I want them to find a home that they can afford to rent, have enough money at the end of the month to go out for dinner and save. I think that makes a lot of sense.

When many of you were younger, that opportunity was available to you, but it's not available to young people today. I want an Ontario where, if people save, they can afford to buy a home; maybe it's a condo, maybe it's a starter home. Right now, that dream is just completely destroyed for so many people.

And I really don't buy this argument that people love to rent. When you poll people and you ask them, "If you could afford to buy a home," most people say, "Hell yes, I would love to buy a home," and I think that's important. Home ownership matters.

Our party, what we support is building 1.5 million homes. We agree with the government on this target. We do need to build 1.5 million homes, and we need to make sure that the homes that we build will actually address the housing affordability crisis and the housing supply shortage. That means building homes on public land. That means buying up purpose-built rentals and converting them to non-market housing. It means making it easier to

build homes in areas that are already zoned for development. It means saying yes to four-plexes.

We shouldn't dismiss—we need as many measures as we can approve. There's no one measure that's going to solve the housing crisis, so we do need to approve fourplexes, we do need to allow increased density along transit corridors, we do need to make it quicker and easier to build multi-family homes. We know this, it's important, and it will require not just changing zoning rules; it's also going to require investment. It shocks me that this government is choosing not to invest in affordable housing. We need it; it's important.

It is essential, if we want to make housing affordable in Ontario, that we focus on renters too. The 1.7 million people who rent—I'm sure some of them are contacting your office. They have it so hard. Unless you're earning two six figures in your household and you're renting, you have it hard. It's hard to find a place, it's hard to keep a place, most people living in constant fear of eviction. Many people in my riding have these constant above-guideline rent increases. I think we can do better for renters. It is time for vacancy control in Ontario. It existed before, it stabilized rent; it's time for that again.

It's also time to bring in strong renter protections so that if people do have an issue with their landlord, they have a number to call, they have a bylaw officer that can investigate, they have a Landlord and Tenant Board that can hear their case promptly, and by that, I mean 30 days, not two years—30 days. It makes sense. Tribunals are so efficient compared to the court system. I think we can do the right thing on that.

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Then, it is also essential to address the supportive housing crisis and the homelessness crisis we have in Ontario. We can do it. I know we can. I urge this government to move forward on expanding the homeless protection funding that you have. I urge this government to reinstate municipalities' power to use development charges for affordable housing and shelters. I urge this government to come and present an affordable housing plan to the federal government that includes more than just building 1,187 homes so that we can get that federal government money. People's lives depend upon it.

We have encampments in our riding. It is so hard for those people who live in those encampments. It is so hard. They don't want to be there. People don't want to live in an encampment, but when they're offered the option of moving to a hotel for three weeks in Scarborough, having to get rid of all their belongings and then knowing that they're going to lose that hotel in a short period of time, that's not an option. We need to provide real options to people so that we can end homelessness. Other countries have done it; so can we.

I look forward to committee. I look forward to the amendments that I hope will be introduced. I look forward to hearing from stakeholders that will come in and give their opinions. I will be introducing amendments; I always do. I thoroughly enjoy it. I hope they're taken seriously and listened to. And, yes, I want to see this bill improved.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: The member for University–Rosedale speaks of the fact that she admits that there is a housing supply crisis, a housing affordability crisis, that we need to be on target for building 1.5 million homes. Yet, she sits among members who supported the previous Liberal government in the 40th Parliament.

Steve Del Duca, the current mayor of Vaughan, has admitted that that housing affordability crisis of which the member speaks began under the Liberal government. It began when the member for Waterloo arrived with the mayor for Vaughan. They arrived together in 2012, and in 2012, 2013 and 2014, the NDP and the Liberals were together politically. They had the political will to do something, and they did nothing.

Will the member opposite, the member for University–Rosedale—now having admitted the housing affordability crisis, knowing that this goes back to the NDP supporting the Liberals—support this bill and engage in forward thinking for the good of Ontario?

Ms. Jessica Bell: [*Inaudible*] question. Thank you to the member for Durham. I would like to think about moving forward right now. When I think about moving forward right now, I think about this bill and what we can do to improve this bill, because that's what we're debating.

I would like to see in this bill an amendment to allow fourplexes as of right in towns and cities across Ontario. I would like to see in this bill a commitment to allow increased density along transit corridors. I would also like to see a commitment in this bill to allow municipalities to collect development charges for affordable housing and shelters so we can deal proactively with the homelessness crisis and the housing crisis we have in our towns and cities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from University–Rosedale gave a very balanced, I felt, and fair critique of Bill 185. She touched on some of the many changes, the flip-flops, the concerning proposals which will likely create even more confusion and chaos and may even worsen the housing crisis, because this is a government that is lurching from bad policy decision to bad policy decision, removing planning authority from regional levels of government, creating even more chaos at the local municipal level, especially when it comes to infrastructure—because this government just woke up to the fact that you can't build housing unless you have the infrastructure.

I just wanted to give you an opportunity to sort of drive home the point to this government that clarity of policy and consistency are what's needed right now in Ontario, that actually puts Ontarians at the centre of that discussion, not developers.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We've wasted a lot of time on laws where there was consultation with only one stakeholder: developers. There was no consultation with municipalities or with conservation authorities. As a result, we got Bill 23, and the backlash from Bill 23 was considerable. It

resulted in us not doing what we needed to do to build the housing that we need to build.

When I talk to municipalities, I hear again and again that their planning departments are completely overwhelmed because they have to transition to these new rules and then the rules change and then they have to transition to other rules. It's a problem; they only have so many staff. It's a problem. A stable planning environment is key to building the homes that we need to build.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. John Fraser: You probably heard me speaking last week or so about the gravy train that's in the Premier's office right now because he's more than doubled his budget. But that's not where the gravy train started. It started with the greenbelt—the greenbelt gravy train, where speculators, insiders and friends were going to benefit. Now, that greenbelt gravy train got derailed, but there were still the MZOs. Well, the MZO gravy train got derailed, too. So did the urban boundaries.

Do you think, if the government hadn't wasted their time trying to enrich friends and insiders, that they would be further ahead?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, I do. I do actually think they would be further ahead. What worries me about this bill is that there are still elements of the gravy train in this bill. We see, with the municipal process to approve developments just outside municipal boundaries, that this government has made it very easy for those developments to be approved without proper oversight or due diligence. I worry that that's going to create a situation where a developer says, "Hey, council, can you approve this development? We bought it cheap. Now we want to build a whole lot of single-family homes. Can you just approve it?" Even though it isn't the wisest thing to do or the most sensible thing to do.

So, I have some concerns that this gravy train greenbelt derailment issue is still here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Rob Flack: I would remind my honourable friend across the way that, in the last 10 years of the Liberal government, they averaged 68,000 starts per year. We've averaged 87,000 starts per year. Our population has doubled. We have a supply crisis; there's no question about it.

So the part that I'm finding frustrating—I understand your passion; we all are passionate about getting more homes built—is the biggest factor to not getting homes built in this province is infrastructure. We've added \$3 billion: \$1.2 billion to the Building Faster Fund; \$800,000 to the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund—new infrastructure dollars. What part of the \$3 billion we're going to invest in the province don't you want us to invest in?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member opposite. You know full well that's a shell game. Bill 23 cut a billion dollars a year in infrastructure funding, and now you're giving it back in dribs and drabs and giving them fancy

titles. But the end result is that municipalities have less funding for infrastructure than they did two years ago. That's a fact. And if you want to disagree with AMO, be my guest, but that's a fact.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for a very balanced presentation about the current housing crisis within our province. It seems this government could benefit from a little bit of balance, whether it's balancing books or balancing ideas, for heaven's sakes.

My question to the member, though: The member has pointed out that if a municipality approves sprawl, you can't appeal, but if the municipality denies sprawl, you can appeal. What are some of the Pandora's box of issues that that opens up?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. That's exactly what this bill and the provincial policy statement propose to do. The concern we have is that, when we move ahead with low-density, single-family development, we are moving ahead with development that is incredibly expensive to service. It costs municipalities a whole lot more to service that development than building homes in areas that are already zoned for development.

It's also not wise from a sustainability point of view. It impacts our farming economy because they have less land available to them and it creates more unsustainable transportation patterns because people have to drive further to get to their destination, be it work or school. There's a lot of concerns that we have with it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

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Mr. Mike Harris: It's always a pleasure to hear the member from University–Rosedale get up and speak. She's always very passionate about her community and I always enjoy the Australian accent.

But on a little bit more of a serious note, with Bill 185, we've had a lot of debate here today, and one of the things that I've heard from the member is that it seems like—and I'm going to give her an opportunity to clarify—that she's in favour, Madam Speaker, of development charges being levied against not-for-profit and shelter housing.

I just would like to give her an opportunity to clarify that because I know that the organizations that I've spoken with, including ShelterCare and House of Friendship in Waterloo region, are very excited to see that they're going to be able to build and make sure that people have shelter without having that added expense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick response.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga. I'm pleased that I can clarify remarks.

We are calling for the reinstatement of developer fees for affordable housing and shelters. When it came to Bill 23, we voted to remove developer fees that non-profits pay. So, they're two different things. They're two different

things. We want developer fees to go towards affordable housing.

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I do appreciate this opportunity to participate in second reading debate this afternoon of Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act.

As the minister and my colleagues have made very clear, this spring red tape reduction package follows on the tremendous progress made by our government to reduce regulatory burden to better serve the citizens of Ontario.

Over the past four years, this government's efforts to reduce the burden of red tape has saved Ontario businesses and the broader public sector over \$958 million in gross annualized compliance costs and have helped create the conditions for people and businesses to thrive. I believe all members of this House will agree then that this proposed legislation makes great strides and will continue to have a profound, positive impact as we work hand in hand to build Ontario's bright future tomorrow and to do it together.

Our new proposed legislation aligns strongly with this government's excellent record of common-sense changes that help hard-working Ontarians.

Speaker, I am proud of the work being done day in and day out across our government and within my ministry, the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, to fulfill our mandate to the people of this province.

On December 4 of last year, this House unanimously passed a landmark piece of legislation, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023. The new Consumer Protection Act, once enforced, will make it easier for businesses to comply with consumer protection rules in our increasingly digital-first marketplace.

Furthermore, earlier this year on February 22, the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2024, was passed by this House, also unanimously. This prohibits underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging fees for locates. Now, providing locates free of charge is consistent, of course, with a long-standing practice that exists across Canada and the United States, and increases public safety while minimizing damage to critical infrastructure from the construction process.

These are just a couple of examples of how the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery continues to update legislation and regulations and takes concrete action to enable the citizens and the residents of Ontario to thrive while our businesses prosper.

Reducing red tape is a key part of building a stronger economy, and under the leadership of the Premier, we are continuing to bring forward additional packages that are saving businesses costs and time and reducing burden.

I would like to provide an overview of the initiatives that the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery is proposing in this package. Our government is putting Ontarians first by making it easier and more convenient for businesses to find the information they need to operate across Ontario.

For decades, Ontario businesses have been frustrated by red tape and drawn-out processes. They called for better access to the information they need when they need it. Consistent and predictable timelines are needed to plan projects and to ensure success. We have heard from Ontario business owners who face difficulties in finding information online about permit and licence services as well as the timelines for obtaining these items.

That is why, two years ago, our government, in the 42nd Parliament, introduced, and this House passed, the At Your Service Act, 2022. That was part of that year's spring red tape reduction package.

The act established a single website to access authoritative information and services that businesses need to become both functional and successful. Through the Ontario.ca/business website, our government is making it easier to both start and to grow a business.

This resource was the first step toward creating a single window for businesses, reducing the administrative burdens for business owners and for not-for-profits. By taking the confusion out of completing necessary paperwork and permits, we have enabled entrepreneurs to better focus on growing our economy and serving our communities. We are working together with businesses to continuously improve the website so that Ontario businesses can focus on what matters, and that is starting, running and growing their operations, creating well-paying jobs and spurring our communities forward to success.

Our vision is to provide a best-in-class online experience. This is for businesses and for entrepreneurs. This is the goal rather than what we have had in the past: fragmented experiences that businesses cannot cope with and should not have to cope with. Businesses should be able to easily navigate multiple websites across ministries. While this is a work in progress, we are continuously taking important steps to make it a reality.

The At Your Service Act, 2022, set the stage to provide businesses with realistic public-facing service standards for various approvals, permits and licences, with services added on a regular basis. It confirms once again that this government is constantly focused on business growth in Ontario. Business growth in Ontario and the conditions that create it are what lead to more jobs, better-paying jobs, prosperity for all and revenue to fund core public services such as health care, education and social services and the ability to make investments in the future to build Ontario.

That is why the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery is proposing a regulation under the At Your Service Act, 2022, to require ministries to develop service standards for permits and licence services delivered to businesses and to report on those standards publicly, thus improving transparency and accountability.

Having a clear understanding of the length of time it takes to obtain permits and licences would help Ontario businesses understand how long they can expect to wait for a decision about a permit or licence they need to get to work and to plan accordingly. This government is committed to reducing administrative burdens for those seek-

ing permits, for those seeking licences and for any information that is sought with respect to any other type of government approval. This government seeks to improve the overall user experience so, again, businesses are able to get down to work, to be successful and to make plans accordingly in a rapid fashion.

Updating service standards for permits and licences would help businesses plan and be more efficient so that they can spend more time on their priorities and spend less time navigating through red tape. Fundamentally, then, business initiatives should never be hampered by government backlog or government uncertainty.

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Speaker, Ontario is open for business under this government. We need to support and ease burdens that stifle those building Ontario's future. For far too long, ambitious projects have been stalled by delay after delay while entrepreneurs attempt to secure permits with little to no clarity on timelines. This is unacceptable. There must be transparency and clear public communications regarding service standards for permits and licences delivered to businesses. Accountability built on clear outcome-based performance measures is essential to the government playing its role to foster competitiveness and growth throughout Ontario.

As part of this single-window approach, we are also working on our evolving permit tracker which will allow businesses to track the status of their applications, starting with select high-volume services for the Ministry of Transportation. Those permits are related to highway corridor management permitting, including sign, entrance, encroachment and building and land use permits that are required on Ontario highways across the province. We will provide easy-to-use information online about the status of permits, applications and filings.

Speaker, this government has listened to the feedback that Ontario businesses have provided, and we are providing tools and transparency so that businesses understand how long they can expect to wait for a decision about a permit or a licence that is needed. The setting of business standards, together with the permit tracker, are crucial steps in our ongoing efforts to establish a one-window-for-business approach. That one-window-for-business approach must be the way forward to working with government in order to reduce administrative burdens and end uncertainty and unnecessary delays. This is the way forward to achieving our priorities for the future and to empower digital government through best practices.

We will continue to work tirelessly to provide an integrated digital experience that will make it easier for businesses to access the information and the services they need to get up and running, create new jobs, grow their businesses and grow the economy as a whole, while supporting essential government services with the revenue that all of that generates. That's what we mean when we say that a Progressive Conservative government, led by this Premier, creates the conditions for success all around, both in the private and the public sector.

And I would like to highlight another way this government, under the leadership of the Premier, is improving

services with standardized and streamlining processes: modernizing the administration of transfer payments to improve service delivery. The Transfer Payment Ontario system, or TPON, is the single digital enterprise-wide platform for administering transfer payments by the Ontario public service. Payment systems currently used run across 26 ministries, and these administer annual program funding of over \$12 billion.

This helps to ensure a common approach to transfer payment programming, and it simplifies program administration by streamlining access to funding and by reducing the administrative burden for recipients. The Transfer Payment Ontario system eliminates duplication and eliminates unnecessary reporting requirements for transfer payment recipients, but it also improves user experience and makes it easier for people and organizations to interact with government.

Now, another change regarding streamlining our government's cash flow is our proposal for a regulation that would allow us to accept modern forms of payment from debtors who may owe money to the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund, MVACF. My colleagues may know that the MVACF is the payer of last resort in the context of uninsured motorist claims in the province of Ontario. If one is involved in a car accident where no private automobile insurance is available to respond to the claim, that person may be eligible for compensation from MVACF, or the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. When MVACF pays a claim on behalf of an uninsured driver or vehicle owner, the fund obtains a judgment against that uninsured party.

After all, under the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act, it is required by law to have insurance; all motorists must do so. Of course, it's an offence when there is no insurance in place. But the reality is, those who are injured by or harmed by such a motorist—uninsured and in breach of the law—their remedy would not be available, in terms of compensation, if there was no other backup funding; hence the payer of last resort, MVACF. So the party against whom a judgment has been obtained, because that party is uninsured, becomes a judgment debtor to the province. The judgment debtor is then required to pay MVACF back for the value of the judgment, which, at a maximum, could be as much as \$200,000 plus legal costs. The current regulation requires that the payment can only be made by cash, bank drafts or money orders. We are proposing, by a proposed regulation, to expand this to include digital forms of payment. This is the sort of common-sense modernization effort that my ministry continues to move across the finish line.

I would like to take a moment to speak about an announcement in January of this year that relates to our mission of finding ways to make processes much easier for all Ontarians.

The tragic legacy of Indian residential schools continues to be a tremendous source of pain and suffering within Indigenous communities. We can never forget that more than 150,000 Indigenous children were removed from their families and their communities and sent to Indian residential schools between 1870 and 1996.

This government has been working tirelessly with Indigenous partners to support meaningful reconciliation and a broader understanding of the legacy of residential schools. To date, our government has committed millions to support the identification, investigation, protection, and commemoration of burials at former residential schools across our province. This commitment was taken even further with an additional \$25-million allocation announced in the 2023 budget. The funding will provide resources for community coordinators, researchers and technical experts to engage with survivors, mental health supports, archival analysis, and deployment of ground-scanning technologies.

As we continue to advance meaningful reconciliation, the province is also making it easier and more affordable for Indigenous community members to access both services and records. We now have a streamlined process that eliminates the need to request death searches from two offices—that's the Archives of Ontario and Service-Ontario's Office of the Registrar General. As part of this process, it is this government that is providing financial relief for impacted Indigenous communities; that is, fees are being permanently waived for death registration searches, death certificates, and certified copies of death registrations. Fees are also being waived for a delayed registration of death for children who attended Indian residential schools.

We are also removing fees to support residential school survivors and their families who are seeking to reclaim traditional names that were changed by this archaic system. This initiative was one of the 94 calls to action put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and it is fully supported by this government and, indeed, I believe, by every member of this House.

We are also making it easier for Indigenous persons changing their name to a single name to reflect their traditional culture, including on birth and marriage certificates, at no cost.

Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to explicitly allow for a birth to be registered with a single name or for a person to change their name to a single name.

This is our commitment—just one of many demonstrable commitments to meaningful reconciliation.

The Archives of Ontario is the primary source of information about the history of our province, and I'm also proud to say that it is the largest one of its kind in Canada, and I'm proud that York University is building and has built and maintained a pristine facility that plays host to all of those important documents that pertain to the history of our province.

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Since 1903, the archives has collected, preserved and made available documents that are available and essential for educational purposes and historic purposes. The staff are second to none in ensuring that records that date back to the 16th century, and that include handwritten letters, books, maps, architectural drawings, photographs, artwork, films and sound recordings, electronic documents and more—this leadership in record-keeping, access and

privacy to the public service, provincial agencies and the broader public sector is essential.

There has been a fee for the archive facilities of \$6,300 for third-party vendors to film. This inhibited filmmakers. We propose to abolish it, and that is because these organizations may not have the financial means to cover such a substantial fee. We're eliminating that fee—or we propose to do so. We want encourage filmmakers and organizations who wish to develop content inside of the Archives of Ontario to do so.

These are practical measures that reduce burden, that reduce cost, that reduce red tape and regulation, and this is one of a series of bills that this government has introduced to this House. We encourage all members listening and those who will vote on this at some stage in the near future to support this bill for its practical effect, for its wide-spread effect and for the fact that it helps to create a better province for all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Durham. We just did a briefing where we had representatives from Canadians for Properly Built Homes speak, and their biggest concern was that not enough is done to ensure that builders abide by the building code when they're building a new home or a condo. It's resulting in people buying a home that's just not up to snuff, where there are major defects and their dream has turned into this horror show.

What is this government's plan to ensure that builders follow the building code when they're building new homes?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Of course I have great confidence in our community builders, the home builders who build the homes for the families and the individuals and the seniors—not one size fits all. But to the member's point, our plan in this proposed bill is to reduce the cost of development so that higher costs are not passed on to consumers, and also to reduce delay. We can reduce delay by up to 18 months just by eliminating the Planning Act third-party appeals.

What happens, to the member's point, unfortunately, is that the third-party leverage associated with these appeals can make demands for modest but unnecessary changes, such as reduced height, footprint and setbacks, in exchange for not filing an appeal. We happen to believe that that kind of blackmail, so to speak, that procedural bureaucracy associated with the appeal process, is unnecessary. Some 67,000 housing units were tied up with that. We want to eliminate that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from Durham and the wonderful Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery for that presentation. We know that regulatory burden is a key deterrent to business investment and economic growth. We also know the members opposite don't, because, in 2018, when our government was first elected, Ontario had the highest regulatory costs in the nation. Businesses were spending \$33,000 annually on red tape alone.

Can the minister please outline the government's efforts to reduce red tape to help create a more competitive business environment in Ontario?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for the thoughtful question.

It is about getting out of the way. When this government was first formed in the 42nd Parliament in 2018, there were so many obstacles in the way of growth and prosperity.

Again, as we've said many times in this House on behalf of this government, it's not that this government creates jobs, it's not that this government manages things directly, but it creates the conditions for prosperity. It creates the conditions for job creation and well-paying jobs.

So what we've done is, over the past several years, with a series of red tape reduction bills, including this proposal now—but even without this proposal—we have reduced the burden of red tape and saved Ontario businesses and the broader public sector over \$958 million in gross annualized compliance costs. This creates the conditions for success and prosperity and for building the Ontario of tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question of my colleague from Durham. He and I have the privilege of sharing Oshawa—his part and my part.

I have been meeting with stakeholders from the energy and automotive industry, the business community, about a specific building code change. So, here is—we're debating this and talking about opening the building code to update it.

I would have to ask the member about the government's stated position on the inclusion of roughed-in wiring for electric-vehicle charging stations in new homes. It had made it into the building code. This government right away ripped it out, and now they're doubling down and saying that's not a good idea. And yet, that's what I'm hearing from community and business partners—that the want is there on behalf of people in the community. So, how does this member feel about saving Ontarians money?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Oshawa for the question, and I am very pleased to be able to share representation of Oshawa with the member opposite. Like her, I speak with our mayors regularly. I say "mayors," plural, because she only has one mayor and I have the mayor of Oshawa, the mayor of Clarington and the mayor of Scugog or Port Perry, and they applaud this government's track record on removing red tape and regulation.

But to this specific question about the building code, the 2024 edition: The proposed next edition of Ontario's building code would become 12% more harmonized with the national construction code. Our government harmonizing the building code will help build more homes by helping to standardize supply chains across the country, especially for modular home building. The new building

code will reduce red tape by over 1,730 provisions; that's good news for the future and for building Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Our government has taken over 500 actions to save people, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals time and money.

If passed, this bill will build on the actions Ontario has taken to cut red tape, to date saving people and businesses over 1.5 million hours and \$1.2 billion every year. These are remarkable achievements. Can the member explain the process by which the government is able to achieve these results?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Yes. I thank the member for that thoughtful question as well.

Speaker, the way it is done is, first of all, by listening—by listening to the people who sent us here; by listening to all the people and especially the small business owners. What they've told us time and again is that government is large enough and there are many unintended consequences of big government. That is this reality of red tape, regulation, high fees.

And so, a previous PC government had a red tape commission. We've taken the next step: A full ministry is devoted to red tape and regulation reduction. That is a track record of our government in this 43rd Parliament. This is one of a series of red tape reduction and regulation reduction initiatives—it's one in a series.

The conversations began in 2018. They continued through the last Parliament. They're continuing in this Parliament. We're going to keep going with these conversations and get it right and create the conditions for success and for growth.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Schedule 7, of course, is the repeal of the Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution). Now, it's going to be referred to as "restructuring." An interesting part that the member did not address is that this schedule 7 broadens the act's existing immunity provisions to block lawsuits related to any amendment or repeal of the act. Some of these acts include misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust, or breach of fiduciary obligations. These new provisions apply retroactively.

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What we heard from Peel was the complete disaster and chaos that this government imposed on that region at great cost. They lost 500 staff members because people didn't know if they would have jobs. They didn't know where the future of Peel would be happening. There was a lot of pomp and pageantry around the Hazel McCallion Act, but at the end of the day, the government had to withdraw. But you've still put these provisions in to protect yourselves.

Even when the Liberals tried this, when you were the official opposition, you acknowledged that your actions have consequences.

Why have you walked back your obligation and your responsibility, as a government, to Peel?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for the question.

There are 15 schedules in the act, in total, and all of them are about making sure that we ensure that obstacles that are unnecessary are removed. I haven't been here as long as the member opposite—only 22 months and counting—but in my former life as a litigation lawyer, I saw; as a deputy judge, I saw; as an individual acting for plaintiffs—I did counsel work, appeals, trials—and for the defence, I saw much unnecessary litigation, what we call vexatious litigation, tying up the courts at the expense of those who deserved access to justice. So I happen to have been on the ground much more than the member opposite has, and I applaud that aspect of this act—that particular schedule and all 15 schedules—as removing red tape, regulation and unnecessary obstacles, and making sure that when it comes to access to justice, litigants who are entitled to it get that access.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: With the House's indulgence, it's my honour to rise today. I would like to take a moment to recognize the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Calgary and some of the winners from London.

Winning gold was the London Blazers floor hockey team. They overcame illness and injury. They even played short-handed in the semifinals. I'd like to congratulate Chris Lauzon of London as well as Zack Griffith of St. Thomas.

Head coach Todd DeSilva said, "They played like nobody's business and the results speak for themselves. I'm so unbelievably proud to coach them and help them achieve their goals."

I want to give congratulations to London Blazers teammates Dylan Baughman, Jesse Clifford, Kodi Cronk, Jonathan Figg, Christopher Freeman, Mike Hitchcock, Richard Horner, Kevin MacMullin, Sam Samwell, Scott Tenant, Jacob Thomas and James Walker, as well as these Londoners: alpine skier Ben So, who won two gold and one silver; speed skaters Cameron Banerjee, who won one gold and one silver, Sara Albers, who won a gold and two silvers, as well as Jackson Tomlinson; and bowler Kathleen Mills, who came in fourth in singles and fifth in team play. Congratulations to all of the athletes.

Speaker, as we take a look at Bill 185, it's almost as though this government wants to stack up and rack up as many red tape bills as losing lawsuits. I believe this is their 13th red tape bill.

When we look at the government's intention—I always begin with the intention of legislation, and according to this government, their stated intention is that they want to build more housing; they want there to be more housing. The very simplest answer to this question, if indeed this is their intent, is to build more housing. And yet, this government chooses not to build. They choose to do everything but actually get into the business of building housing—it is strangely ironic—despite the number of titles that we have to this effect.

What is needed right now in this province is a wartime effort to make sure that people who are currently deprived of housing—people who are unable to start in life, and seniors who are at risk of becoming homeless—are guaranteed safety.

Post-World War II, the government recognized its moral and social responsibility for the veterans returning from World War II, so they provided very reasonably rented homes—those strawberry boxes, those simplified Cape Cod designs—to make sure that we would look after the greatest generation.

What happened as a result is those returning veterans were able to then purchase those homes, and it realized the tremendous economic potential of the baby boomer generation. That is something that could be realized within the province right now, yet this government has chosen to vote against NDP proposals to have the government get back into the business of building housing, which is such a shame.

Now, if the government's intention was for there to be more housing with Bill 185, they would ensure that there were more types. They would ensure investments in co-ops. They would make sure that there was more RGI. They would make sure that there were as-of-right fourplexes within this legislation. And yet, they have chosen not to. The Canadian Real Estate Association has recommended that there should be more middle housing options that this government should invest in, such as low-rise apartments, duplexes, townhomes, and really include that as-of-right zoning.

This government would, in their NIMBY way, foist responsibility for this onto municipal councils rather than taking a leadership role within the province. Isn't it ironic, Speaker? They talk about building homes; they choose not to build homes. They talk about leadership, and they lead from the back, expecting somebody else to stand up for them.

Additionally, if we want to look at ensuring that there are enough homes, we need to ensure that the people who are currently housed remain housed. We need to do so in a variety of ways. We need to make sure that there is rent control. Yet this government has, through the changes that they have made back in 2018 for apartments first occupied after November 2018—that rent control be abolished whatsoever.

What this government has created is a system of exploitation. They have driven prices up. Analysts from many different industries have looked at that decision and shaken their heads. We can easily say that the cost of housing, to purchase, has also gone up as a result of this. There are fewer people entering the buying market because they simply cannot save money because they're having to catch up continually with ever-increasing rent.

We could also change—and fix—the Liberals' mistake of opening up vacancy decontrol. We could plug that hole. We have NDP legislation on the table right now to make sure that people wouldn't be subject to that horrible, unwritten rule that kicking good, long-term tenants out will allow that landlord to jack up the rent to whatever the

market can withstand. They've created a system of exploitation, and they could end that.

Yet, in the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, this government has made more barriers. They've wrapped tenants in red tape, in actual point of fact. And yet, they don't protect people who are currently housed because we still see demovictions, we see renovictions, we see AGIs. Those really unethical, wealthy, corporate landlords are simply able to apply for an AGI without even proving that they need to. And who bears that cost? The people who bear that cost are the tenants.

If this government really wanted more housing, they would actually ensure that we are building in areas that are suitable for housing—where it's easiest to make sure that those developments can happen quickly, can happen effectively, with the infrastructure necessary, and make sure people can get in as soon as possible. And yet, this government, instead, is really working against that.

It was our housing critic, the member for University–Rosedale, who has quite accurately pointed out the glaring gap that this government has created in this very strange way that, if a municipality approves sprawl, you can't appeal, but if the municipality denies sprawl, you can appeal. That seems contrary to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who have really warned this government that we are losing 319 acres of prime farmland every single day, and yet this government would still include measures such as this, with Bill 185 and the provincial policy statement working in tandem to create yet more sprawl.

This government, as well, would be wise to take a look at instituting a vacancy tax. That would make a great deal of sense. We see in many communities, post-pandemic, that there are office spaces that aren't used. We see land banking, where people are simply just sitting on available land and available office space that could be redeveloped to address the homelessness crisis that we have within all of our communities, and yet we see nothing.

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I wanted to point out a presentation that was made to this government during the pre-budget consultations, and it indicates that downtown commercial vacancy has created a domino effect. Higher vacancy has led to less foot traffic, and it's created so many more issues with safety, vandalism, unclean environments, decreases in economic activity.

We need to make sure that we are revitalizing our city cores by making sure that there is more and more and more housing within them. If landowners aren't going to develop their commercial properties that they're sitting on, then they need an incentive in order to do so.

I also wanted to point out that—and I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre for his advocacy in making sure the use-it-or-lose-it policies would finally be recognized by this government. That is something we do see within Bill 185, and I'm very thankful for that. However, this government simply does not go far enough. We don't see measures for affordability. We don't see measures to keep people housed. We don't see measures to really crack down on short-term rentals such as Airbnb and others.

The question I have for the government is, why are they so afraid of building? Why will they choose and continue to choose not to do so? But further, when we look at Bill 185, some of the questions I have are, why is this government so ideologically against people who rent? Why do they create policies and create situations where people are exploited simply for needing a safe place to call home?

When we look at rent control itself, this government has an ideological opposition to it. It is beyond belief that during the time of an affordability crisis, that the Premier would get rid of rent control altogether, as I've mentioned, on buildings first occupied after November 2018. It makes little sense. It's like pouring gasoline onto an affordability fire.

Ricardo Tranjan of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said, "You could drive a very large truck through the loopholes in our rent control system."

Recently, the CCPA has reported that over the last decade, landlords have increased rents by 16.5%, and average rents have actually increased by 54.5%—54.5% over the last 10 years. That is an obnoxious number, an obnoxious number that this government should be taking seriously.

In this scenario, as I've said, it's a system of exploitation. People are being taken advantage of. David Hulchanski, who is a professor of housing and community development at U of T, says, "The market isn't functioning properly because landlords are taking advantage of a scarce resource—rental units. The state has to step in and do something."

It's not a matter of simply creating more units without controls because that has actually, in a very strange way, driven up the cost of everything else because vacancy decontrol still exists. We have not plugged that hole. So it's allowing everyone within that market to keep squeezing and squeezing and squeezing people until they can't take it anymore.

When will this government act? When will this government listen to all of the people within your communities who you know are being exploited right now because of this system you've created, the system you have neglected, the system that you have ignored? It's absolutely disgraceful.

What I also find rather strangely ironic, and possibly, darkly ironic by the way in which this government operates, is Bill 185 reverses a number of different things that this government has previously brought into law. It reverses many of the changes that were within Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, which is a very strange thing when you think about it because, quite ironically, they're actually building homes slowly. In fact, I believe that in order to meet its own targets, this government, if it wants to build 1.5 million homes by 2031—news flash, it is not going to happen—it needs to build at least 125,000 homes annually. And, in the 2024 budget, there will be about 88,000 housing starts this year. We are not on track and it is not going to happen—certainly not under this government who refuses to get their hands dirty and won't get shovels in the ground.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada has quite rightly pointed out—that's another thing that could

happen within this legislation: We could see investments in co-ops, making sure that we are including housing of all types—“As the province continues to development policies surrounding the provision of government-owned surplus land,” they encourage the government to take an “affordable-housing-first” approach; “focus on getting the maximum long-term public value out of these lands. Non-profit, affordable housing offered in perpetuity gives the province better value for money over the medium to long term, compared to the one-time cash provided by sale at market value.” That’s something the official opposition NDP fully agree with. We need those investments within our co-ops.

If we look, historically, at what has happened in housing over the last number of years, it was a Conservative government that got out of the business of building housing. Had they continued at the rate that was happening, we would have somewhere near 1.3 million more affordable homes. What’s the stated deficit? It’s 1.5 million.

The Ontario Big City Mayors also wanted to point out, “We also made it clear that development charge exemptions will continue to make a significant impact on municipalities. We have always operated on a ‘growth pays for growth’ model, and by moving away from that, any financial burden shifts to the property tax base. We continue to call upon the province to sit down with municipalities for a municipal fiscal review, which includes how they will address their commitment to keeping us whole.”

Again, we see this government engaged in sleight of hand, in this shell game, where they don’t want people to pay attention to what is actually happening. They’ve gone and removed the ability for municipalities to charge development charges with Bill 23, costing municipalities around a billion dollars per year, according to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and then they have their community water and infrastructure fund changing things around, and, yet, again, we see them backpedalling with Bill 185. It’s like they don’t really have a solid plan. They keep coming forward piecemeal; one step forward, two steps back. This is just another example of a government that really doesn’t understand what it’s doing.

The CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association, someone who’s well known to this House, Tim Hudak, said, “Finally, we are disappointed that two key recommendations by the province’s own Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF)—strongly supported by Ontario realtors—have not been included in” this “bill. We need to build more homes on existing properties and allow upzoning along major transit corridors if we are going to address the housing affordability and supply crisis in our province.”

Hudak goes on to say, “The province is making significant investments in transit and passenger rail, and building more home along those lines is common sense.” And then states, “Eliminating exclusionary zoning and allowing four units, as-of-right, province-wide is an essential key to unlock affordable home ownership, and

several municipalities, including Toronto, London and Barrie, are already leading the way.”

Yet, this government doesn’t even listen to people who are in its universe. They don’t listen to their own task force, they don’t listen to their own people. They’re blundering ahead, probably creating more legislation that they’re going to have to backpedal in the medium-to-not-too-distant future.

If this government was truly serious, and serious not by way of naming of legislation without actual action, but serious in thought, word and deed; if they wanted to have more housing in the province of Ontario, they would, number one, build more housing. They would engage in the war-time effort that is necessary. They would ensure that they’re supporting people who will create more types of housing, including co-ops, not-for-profits in municipalities. They would expand rent-g geared-to-income housing. They would have as-of-right fourplexes within our city, and they would make sure that there were entry-level houses being built within our communities. They would listen to experts like the Canadian Real Estate Association and the Ontario Real Estate Association. They would listen to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. They would also protect the people who are in housing right now. They would re-establish rent control for buildings first occupied after November 2018. They would pass NDP legislation to make sure that current renters are protected from renoviction, from demoviction, from AGIs and from all the systems of exploitation that they have fostered and created with their haphazard and half-witted approach to renter rights within Ontario. They would also plug the hole of vacancy decontrol opened up by that Liberal government, who did not care about people who are renting within this province.

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They understand this issue. They understand it’s a problem. It’s time for them to act.

But they would also crack down on short-term rentals. They would make sure that there is a vacancy tax so that people are incentivized to provide that housing. The government is the largest landowner in the province and has the opportunity to provide that land at cost to non-profit housing providers and co-op housing providers, to provide that stability that people want, the stability that people need, allowing them to start a life, start a family or allowing them to retire in dignity in a place that is safe, not having the axe hanging above them with the fear of their building being sold, their building being demolished or having some unscrupulous landlord who has just decided that no matter how good they are as a person they’ve just lived there too long.

Speaker, it’s unconscionable. It’s something that this government—it is incumbent upon them to act. We are here to support you. We could pass NDP legislation that’s on the table in laser speed, in lightning speed. So let’s get it done. Let’s work harder.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche):
Questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member opposite for their presentation. Our Minister of Housing often talks about the process, the driving forces of housing prices based on infrastructure and also—it's a process. In my previous life as a municipal councillor, I've seen through my eyes that processes took so long to put the shovel in the ground.

I ask the member, I was with the municipal stakeholders at the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. We heard from numerous local governments, including municipal councillors, that across the province a use-it-or-lose-it policy would help build homes in their communities. Does the member opposite agree with these locally elected officials?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Markham–Thornhill for his question. I am pleased to see that within Bill 185 the government has recognized the mistakes that it has made. It realized that with Bill 23 they were stepping on municipalities, that they were insulting municipalities, that they weren't working as true partners with municipalities. They were instead transferring money over to people who don't need more money. They were transferring money over to wealthy developers by allowing them to not pay development charges, and, really, who is going to pay for that? Who is going to pay for all of that missing money? That will be shifted onto the tax base. That will be shifted onto everyone paying taxes within Ontario, and that is the reverse of Robin Hood. It should make absolutely no sense to them.

But I do want to point out that municipalities should be treated as partners. This government's words don't go far enough. Many housing stakeholders are calling upon the province to engage in that dialogue, engage in those meetings.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To my colleague, I'll just let you continue on with that thought process. AMO has estimated that the changes that were in Bill 23, together with some of the other changes, are going to cost "municipalities around \$4 billion over a 10-year period and will have a material impact on municipalities' ability to invest in community housing."

So now we hear, it's like all of a sudden, the government finally has understood that, guess what, we need water and waste water. Now, they're creating a big foofaraw about issuing these big, giant Happy Gilmore cheques back to communities, but it's their own money. Had they not been taking this away in the first place, do you believe we would be further ahead in building the housing that people need?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. You're absolutely right. We, as a province, ought to be respecting the municipalities that make up that province. Ontario's Big City Mayors had called for a meeting with the province to engage in that municipal fiscal review, because it's very clear that this government can't manage the books

very well. They keep running deficit after deficit. They're not getting value for money.

Instead, they're transferring wealth over to people who don't really need more money. They're privatizing health care, but through Bill 23, they're giving shovelfuls of money to wealthy developers while forcing regular taxpayers to pay for that infrastructure. It's disgraceful. It's unconscionable. It actually strikes at the heart of true fiscal Conservatives. They should be more wise with their money. They should be spending money in homes, not-for-profit housing, where there's that long-term economic viability.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a question for the member regarding schedule 8. Just in case he hasn't had an opportunity to take a look at that, it's on page 14 of the proposed Bill 185. I'm looking specifically at section 4(2), where it says:

"When the clerk of a municipality is notified under subsection (1), the clerk shall serve notice, in the prescribed form,

"(a) on the owner mentioned in subsection (1), the adjoining owner and the occupant of the land of the adjoining owner."

That's what I want to concentrate on, "the occupant of the land." In the previous act, the occupant did not get official notification. But under this act, the occupant will get official notification. As an individual who has dealt with this type of thing in rural areas before, I think that's a very important change. Does the member agree, and will he vote for it?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for Essex for really pointing out schedule 8, because I do think—you know, I am not a person who is fond of absolutes. My father used to always tell me, "If you run into somebody saying, 'Well, it's black or white,' then run the other way," because humanity is very much within shades of grey.

This legislation itself is not completely awful. I will say with schedule 8, it's pretty benign in a lot of ways, but it is updating something that is really archaic. I think it modernizes language that's actually there, things like "forthwith," that I don't know that many people—maybe the member from Essex likes saying "forthwith." It's not something we hear very often in modern speech in the vernacular.

But I think there are also a lot of opportunities within this legislation that this government has missed. Number one is making sure that renters are protected, that people who currently have homes will remain in those homes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question. I'm trying really hard not to use the word "forthwith," and now it's the only word I want to use because I've been told I'm not supposed to.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'll get to the point forthwith.

Speaker, I am glad to ask a hopefully thoughtful question on behalf of the tenants and small community landlords in my community that are just struggling to provide housing, to find housing, to keep housing. When there are disputes, when things go sideways, they are just left in limbo because the Landlord and Tenant Board is in such a state. It's in such shambles.

My question is, when we look at this piece of legislation that says it's going to cut red tape to build more homes act and whatnot, folks don't have the homes they need, and they certainly don't have the ability to resolve disputes. Is there anything in this bill for small landlords and tenants?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Oshawa for an excellent question. I think it's incredibly important. I was speaking with a friend of mine just the other day who happened to have purchased an investment property, I believe—pardon me, her son did—and had indicated that her son had actually rented to a friend. Unfortunately, that friend became addicted to some very serious drugs and stopped paying rent, so the son was really facing financial ruin in the very early stages of their life because this person was no longer a friend, was choosing not to pay rent and was actually damaging the property. But because the Landlord and Tenant Board—due to this government's inaction of not appointing adjudicators back in 2018 and really neglecting that situation—has allowed this to go on for far too long, small landlords are absolutely losing their shirt. Nobody is receiving any justice whatsoever from the Landlord and Tenant Board. It is a scenario that is not working for anyone.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Just a follow-up question, again, on the Line Fences Act, which is extremely important for people in Essex county. I want to, again, draw the member's attention to page 14, and if he looks at the bottom at section 9(2), which says, "Where the lands of the adjoining owners are situated in different local municipalities, a clerk under subsection (1) shall, immediately upon the deposit of an award in their office, send a copy which they have certified to the clerks of all the other municipalities in which the lands are situated"—or, in other words, when one clerk in one municipality gets the information, that clerk has to share it with the other municipalities.

I think that's important because what might have happened is the other clerks might be unaware and then not be able to adjust accordingly in their own municipality. Does the member agree that's important and will he vote for it?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Again, thank you to the member from Essex. I'm glad that they're bringing forward the concerns from their area. I think that's incredibly important. I think it's also important that we note that, within Bill 185, it does not address the concerns of northern Ontarians in a very effective way. In fact, Greater Sudbury ward 10 councillor and planning committee chair Fern Cormier said that they haven't seen anything in the

proposed legislation that will dramatically affect the city. And in North Bay, Mayor Peter Chirico says that "a lot of that legislation is directed at the GTA and high-growth areas.... We don't have a lot of development that's just sitting. When they have the opportunity, developers in northern Ontario go forward with it...."

So I don't believe that this government has actually adequately consulted on this legislation. There is so much more that needs to be in there and actually address the situation.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: It's always a pleasure and an honour to rise in this august chamber to discuss the issues and the challenges that are facing Ontarians that they are struggling with the most. Many will know that I come from a clinical background. I'm an emergency doctor, but for many years, I've also had a number of leadership roles in homeless shelters here in the city of Toronto. And so, I've seen first-hand the critical importance of addressing housing affordability, making sure that we've got supportive housing environments and ensuring that we do everything possible to get housing right in this province, lest people end up having no choice but to turn to shelters.

Over the course of my remarks this afternoon, I'm going to touch a little bit on the scale of our crisis right now, what we really needed and were looking for in this legislation, what we actually got, my reaction to that and then where to go from there.

Currently, as I alluded, we have a housing and homelessness crisis. The scale of the suffering is difficult to describe. We have people sleeping in tents. We have fully employed personal support workers who cannot afford rent or a home to call their own, so they go to sleep in shelters. We have hospitals that have gone into the game of development because as they try to attract nurses, they don't have anywhere for them to live. In our colleges and universities, we've got students living 25 people to a home because they can't find anywhere else to live. And we have a massive out-migration from our province because young people cannot afford to live here after they finish their education.

Now, amidst that background, we have a government that purports to be ambitious. It says it will build 1.5 million homes by 2031. My first question is, is that even the right number? Mike Moffatt came out last week with a study saying we actually need 1.7 million homes. Regardless, even if we accept that "1.5 million homes" number as gospel, the government is failing even to keep up with that number. They're falling thousands of homes behind on an annual basis, so much so that they're forced to scramble to redefine what a house is in order to save face. We've got dorms and long-term-care beds now that are getting redefined as new housing construction—anything to distract from mismanagement and to pad the numbers.

Call it incompetence, call it self-interest, call it cowardice—call it what you want, but at the end of the day, housing starts have declined for the last three years in

a row, missing provincial targets by 70,000 in 2022 alone. For six years now, we have had a government that has been driving in reverse. What we have needed is one that takes serious action. Instead, this is what we got.

Every few months, this government comes out with a new piece of housing legislation that usually walks back something that was in the last piece of legislation. Take it for the greenbelt, urban boundary expansion, development charges, and then, outside of housing, even looking at Bill 124 and Bill 28. Even if some of those ideas were good—and to be clear, there have been many bad ideas that have deserved to be walked back—within the context of housing, how are builders and municipalities supposed to have any confidence or ability to plan their construction whatsoever?

And so, with so much incompetence and inaction, you can imagine my excitement when a new housing minister was announced. Some of you may not know, but last time, the housing minister stepped down as a result of the greenbelt scandal.

Hon. David Piccini: I'm sure you were thrilled.

Mr. Adil Shamji: No, I was. I was. I respect him.

The Premier tasked a single staffer, who quickly and quietly started removing lands from the greenbelt owned by his developer friends, and the housing minister—the last one—says he didn't notice. So now he faces an RCMP criminal investigation, and that housing minister was forced to resign.

Now, thankfully, with this greenbelt giveaway, the people of Ontario were able to stop that. They looked at the evidence. The evidence showed they could build the homes that were needed without threatening our greenbelt, and here we are. So, a greenbelt flip-flop—with so many other flip-flops and failures, we have been left billions of dollars in the hole and years behind.

Anyway, thankfully, we have a new housing minister, and I am genuinely very excited. This was an opportunity to right some wrongs, to get things right. But regrettably, we have been let down. This bill could have been a shining debut, a moment to introduce landmark legislation to leave an indelible mark on the future of our province. But instead of courage, we have cowardice; instead of ambition, we have apathy; and instead of foresight, we see failure.

This is the kind of bill that could have been forgiven if it was in year 1 of this government's mandate, not year 6. For all the talk about housing supply actions plans, this is being touted as a red tape reduction bill, and that's not surprising because this government has never been about action. Two years—two years—after their own Housing Affordability Task Force report came out, they're still talking, essentially kicking the can down the road so that they can say they're doing something without actually.

I'm going to take some time now to reflect on the bill within the broader context of many of the other housing announcements that have come at the same time. I want this government to be successful because my constituents in Don Valley East and Ontarians across the province need it to work.

This bill purports to cover four areas, euphemistically titled as follows: building homes at a lower cost; prioritizing infrastructure for ready-to-go housing projects; improved consultation and greater certainty to get homes built faster; and building more types of homes for more people.

I'll dive into each of those four pillars, if you will.

Let's start with building homes at a lower cost. This section includes things that indicate just how out of touch the government actually is. For example, it purports to remove minimum parking restrictions around major station transit areas. But if you listen carefully to municipalities and the building and developer network, the question that they're asking isn't about minimum parking requirements. The question they're asking is, how much density can go around an MTSA? There is no answer.

Now, I understand that the minister will say that he's consulting and will refer me to the draft provincial planning statement. But why are we still looking at consulting two years after the Housing Affordability Task Force already answered the question of density around MTSA's? And to make things even more infuriating, the government has already been consulting on that recommendation for the last two years as well with municipalities. So yet again, we're repeating an announcement, kicking the can down the road to create the impression of action when none has been taken and there is no intention of doing so.

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But on this, on these repeated talks of announcements that have already been getting announced, already getting consulted upon, this is where life really begins to get even more bizarre.

In related announcements, the government has said they will allow mass-timber construction up to 18 stories. All right, it's not a bad idea. It's good for supporting our forestry sector in our province, allows for more housing options, great, but the development community isn't asking for 18 storeys for timber construction on that kind of construction. Instead, they are clamouring for clarity around restrictions that make it difficult to build that, like guidance around angular planes. None of that is in this legislation.

Similarly, there's a promise to consult fire safety stakeholders about single-exit stairs in small residential buildings, but this was something the last housing minister said he was consulting on two years ago, around the time of Bill 109. So yet again, we're announcing more consultations on things that were deemed to be a priority literally years ago.

The second pillar of this housing ambition was around prioritizing infrastructure for ready-to-go housing projects, and this is where I really begin to feel bad for builders, developers and municipalities: The lack of foresight, planning, and courage of this government has led to an environment in which no one can plan and no one can build.

First, development charges were off the table, throwing municipalities province-wide into chaos, causing property taxes to skyrocket and resulting in developers adjusting

their construction accordingly; now, an unexpected walk-back with no warning whatsoever.

This government is introducing a complete and utter lack of confidence through precisely the kind of circular thinking that leads the housing community to have zero confidence in this government. When hundreds of millions of dollars are on the table, and people don't know what they can expect next month, they cannot get in the business of constructing.

The third pillar of this is improved consultation and greater certainty for more homes built faster. Where do I even start? As I've mentioned, we've already been consulting. The government has already been consulting for the past two years and seems caught up in it as a way of delaying, but they certainly don't consult with these stakeholders when it counts, on things like development charges or whether they're going to walk back on that.

One of the most worrisome elements of all of this is that the bill institutes a near-universal ban on third-party appeals. That is heavy-handed. Make no mistake about it. We do see abuse of the Ontario Land Tribunal. We do see that there are long wait times—of course, it's infected by political appointments—but a blanket ban that ignores the root causes of the appeals process in the Ontario Land Tribunal? That is heavy-handed, and what we need is a nuanced and calculated approach, and the Housing Affordability Task Force gave us that approach. Whereas this government is taking a machete when a scalpel is needed, the Housing Affordability Task Force made some great recommendations to prevent abuse of the land tribunal, like waving appeals on affordable housing, like having to show merit in a case that is intended to be brought to the tribunal, and increasing filing fees.

I want to take a moment to explain why banning all third-party appeals is dangerous. Sometimes developers appeal other developers because one plan can actually stop them from building even more housing. So we need to be careful that appeals, which can absolutely be important—we need to make sure that they are allowed to function in a reasonable manner and, if done so, we can protect our environment and actually increase the number of houses that we have in our province.

And finally, the fourth pillar of this intended legislation and plan is to build more types of homes for more people. And here, one of the landmark elements of that is to exempt universities from the Planning Act to accelerate student housing and put them on a level playing field with publicly assisted colleges. But here's the thing: Colleges are suffering too, and putting them on a level playing field doesn't necessarily solve the problem for universities nor for colleges. What might actually help is funding them properly.

There is much more to be said, but with my time waning and only 90 seconds left, I will reflect briefly on what others have said.

John Michael McGrath points out that this legislation is “broad but shallow, covering many different areas but not pushing too hard in any one place. It does not enough of too much.”

Martin Regg Cohn from the Star points out this collection of anti-climactic legislative proposals made news only because it “codifies a series of climbdowns over screw-ups of the past.”

So how could it have been better? Because I believe firmly we must be, on our side, a group of proposition, not just opposition. Well, in keeping with the legislation I introduced weeks ago, this government could have allowed construction of at least four units and buildings on any residential lot—by-right, province-wide multiplexes, exactly as the Housing Affordability Task Force recommended; introduce minimum height and density requirements around MTSAs; invest in the Landlord and Tenant Board; and require home builders to include at least 20% long-term affordable units as a condition of sale of all provincial surplus lands for housing development, but none of these things.

It saddens me that we have a government so allergic to the concept of real action on housing and on gentle density that they are willing to forgo billions of dollars from the federal government because they are ideologically opposed to fourplexes. We are in a housing affordability crisis. The current situation demands strong leadership and courage, but this government is flying by the seat of its pants. We deserved a bill that would solve our crisis, and we didn't get it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We'll now have questions to the member for Don Valley East.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I listened very intently to the member opposite. Of course, I know he will be reminded frequently by members on this side of the House that it was a former Liberal cabinet minister who agreed that the housing crisis actually started under the previous Liberal government and went before a committee. Of course, the provincial planning statement talks about building around major transit station areas. That is in there. Of course, he lives in a city that has four units as-of-right that has built next to nothing in that category.

But I wonder when the member became such a fierce advocate for density. Because when he was running for office, he was at a community meeting, and he said he would do everything in his power to stop density in his community around a transit station area. So I'm wondering when he converted to being a warrior for building housing in his community, housing that he vowed he would work to stop when he got elected.

Mr. Adil Shamji: It saddens me to hear the minister say that, because I have never made a statement to that effect. I have made statements to the effect that we need—

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's on tape, so watch what you say.

Mr. Adil Shamji: That's great, and I look forward to hearing that. I have certainly made statements to the effect that we need judicious planning, that we need to be careful in how we deploy housing, and within parameters such as the ones that have been discussed within the Housing Affordability Task Force, I have no problems defending those, nor any of my previous statements.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

MPP Jill Andrew: In St. Paul's, we have about 60% or so of folks who are renters, and we know [*inaudible*] track record—namely, removing rent control back in 2018—has certainly made it very difficult for folks to be able to afford to live in our community of St. Paul's and across the province, quite frankly.

So I'm wondering if the member can express to me if Bill 185 addresses the foundation of the affordability crisis. Is Bill 185 providing the kinds of diverse housing options that are needed to keep our folks housed in homes where they can feel safe, where they can feel well, where they can step in with a sense of dignity? Are we seeing more transition homes? Are we seeing more supportive housing being built? Are we seeing real affordable housing in a state of crisis, when folks are really struggling with rent, with food, with the basics? Because in St. Paul's, what we're seeing is a number of demovictions, and we're seeing a lot of folks being really concerned about where tomorrow is going to have them.

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Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you very much for the question. Regrettably, we do not see anything that addressed the root causes of the housing crisis in our midst right now. We do not see anything that will increase affordability for our constituents across the province, nothing to increase supportive housing for people across the province.

While there is a pillar of this plan that purports to build more kinds of housing, the foundation for that simply isn't there. It's merely words and lacking in any sort of substance whatsoever.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: I wanted to ask my colleague from Don Valley East about one part of his speech, and that is the potential exemptions to planning rules given to post-secondary institutions to build housing. The post-secondary institutions that I'm familiar with are not in the business of building a lot of housing. It's not their key competency. They also don't have a lot of capital to invest in starting such a business. I could see a post-secondary institution hiving this off to, perhaps, a private company to take advantage of all the exemptions that a post-secondary institution would get to building housing.

I wanted to ask my colleague if he thought this was a wise or even practical course of action.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you very much to my colleague for the question. This is just another example of passing off the buck to other people when this government is incapable of engaging in the construction themselves, incapable of demonstrating the leadership that this crisis desires. Instead, they propose to allow other people to try and solve the issue for them.

We've already seen—as we face in our health care sector. We have a shortage of health care workers. We have hospitals that are now being forced to go into the business of development, and we have now a government that wants colleges and universities to go into that business as well. If they want and feel equipped for that, that's one

thing, but the reality is that we have an underfunded post-secondary sector right now that is barely keeping afloat, and making this an option for them when they can barely keep afloat is really not fair and will be a drop in the bucket for a major crisis.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member said he doesn't remember saying anything of the sort when it comes to being against housing in his area. This is exactly what he said: "I am moving to use whatever levers we have to stop this incredibly outrageous proposal from going ahead as designed. I join my vocal opposition to this with community organizations. I will use whatever levers I can and relationships that I can here in the Legislature and in the chamber to try and advocate for the more modest proposal as well." This is when the member was talking about building density around transit areas in his community. Those are the exact quotes that he said at a community meeting.

It's just like the Liberals, right? Say one thing there, another thing here. We saw that for 15 years. What part of those quotes and those actions do you not agree with today?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I am immensely grateful to the minister for clarifying my remarks for me because, in fact, what you heard was not a blanket statement that I oppose increased density or construction around major transit station areas. What that was an argument for was a collaborative approach to modest development. I think we can all agree here—

Interjections.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Absolutely. Modest development, gentle density is entirely on par with what I've always advocated for. That is in stark contrast to this minister, who, rather than embracing gentle density, embracing fourplexes as of right province-wide—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw. And he's got to go back to his seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You've got to go back to your seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I know. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Withdraw.

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

Start the clock. The member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Regrettably, it appears as though I've struck a nerve on the other side.

In any case, I welcome the opportunity to work with the other members. Evidently, there's a proposal that needs a bit more review, and I absolutely will advocate for my constituents. That being said, there are many reasonable recommendations coming out of the Housing Affordability Task Force report that I have zero qualms in defending in this chamber to my constituents, because I

know that when build more housing we are building it for our friends, for our neighbours and for our families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the member for his comments. I just wondered if the member could share with the House some of his opinions on the necessity for us to build a lot of non-market housing. It really seems it's the only way we can get that deeply affordable housing stock back into the system. I know, in my city, there's a study that comes from Carleton University—Steve Pomeroy is the author of it—that for every one deeply affordable housing unit we are building in our city we're losing 15, because real estate investment trusts are swooping into our community, buying up aging apartment buildings, barely renovating them and kicking a lot of those tenants out who are paying reasonable rent.

So I'm wondering if the member could share with us some of your thoughts about how this House, this province, could prioritize building non-market housing to keep those people in homes.

Mr. Adil Shamji: The question that's been posed is incredibly important. I think, as a starting point, we would ask the government to demonstrate some leadership and help us understand even what a definition of "attainable," "affordable" or "deeply affordable" housing is in the first place. Only once we have greater clarity on that, which we simply do not, can we begin to answer this important question.

I've been very clear, as I mentioned in my remarks, that one of the really important things that we could be doing is, when provincial lands are sold off for development, that a commitment to 20% and 30% be set aside for affordable housing, once we have clarity on what that definition is. Only if we can do that, ensuring that we have that kind of affordable and supportive housing in place, can we ensure that we get to the root cause of the housing crisis here and help those amongst us who are the most vulnerable here in the province of Ontario.

I would implore the Minister of Housing to do something like that, but I suspect he'll remain with his ideological blinders and all of Ontario will suffer as a result.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There isn't enough time for a question or answer at this point, but thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this chamber and speak to the legislation before the House, Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, the 12th iteration of our government's commitment to reducing burdensome regulations on the people of Ontario and continuing our work, as we've done every year since I was serving in this government, to bring forward legislation to make it easier, to make it faster to build more homes in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to walk through some of the pieces of the legislation, and we've heard some excellent debate already this afternoon on particular components of it. But I feel there have been some parts of the legislation that haven't

been really addressed yet and some of the more nitty-gritty details. So I apologize those who are watching at home; this is going to be a bit more of a technical overview of some of the components of the legislation and not some of the higher-level pieces.

I did want to perhaps just provide some contextualization to this legislation, specifically on the importance of reducing red tape. I've spoken in previous participations around red tape reduction measures about the need to reduce and change the trajectory, the ship of state that's heading in one direction with its ever-increasing amounts of red tape, like we saw under the previous Liberal government, and our decision to take an approach that reduces red tape. We've seen a 6.6% reduction overall in red tape across government through measures reducing a number of those red tape requirements and the regulation count across the board.

I've spoken before about a quote that Alexis de Tocqueville spoke about when he visited North America a couple of hundred years ago now, and when he spoke about the concerns that he had around the potential infringements on people's liberty. I've spoken about this before, and I want to again raise in this chamber to those who haven't had the opportunity to hear what I believe is a really pertinent warning to all of us who have the privilege of serving. He spoke about what kind of tyranny or soft despotism could come if a government failed to recognize its role and failed to ensure that the liberty and the rights of those who it served were protected. He spoke about a soft despotism, saying, "After having thus taken each individual one by one into its powerful hands, and having moulded him as it pleases, the sovereign power extends its arms over the entire society; it covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated, minute, and uniform rules, which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot break through to go beyond the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them and directs them; it rarely forces action, but it constantly opposes your acting; it does not destroy, it prevents birth; it does not tyrannize, it hinders, it represses, it enervates, it extinguishes, it stupefies, and finally it reduces each nation to being nothing more than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

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"I have always believed that this sort of servitude, regulated, mild and peaceful, of which I have just done the portrait, could be combined better than we imagine with some of the external forms of liberty, and that it would not be impossible for it to be established in the very shadow of the sovereignty of the people."

The soft despotism that Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about is really just that series of tiny rules, one after the other, in ever-growing bureaucracy.

In previous debates, I've spoken about this concern that I think we should all be aware of, and members of the opposition have risen to share their concern.

I believe the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas referenced Thomas Jefferson. I think ensuring that

Thomas Jefferson's perspective on this, as well, is considered valuable, so to pay tribute and recognize the members of the opposition, I want to quote Thomas Jefferson. He said, "The ... pillars of our prosperity, are the most thriving when left most free to individual enterprise."

He also said, "A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labour the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government...."

I believe it's very important that all of us in this chamber recognize that our philosophical underpinnings as a government understand the importance of respecting and recognizing the common sense of common people, the hard-working men and women who make this province an incredible place to live, work, play and grow.

With that context, I'm going to speak to some of the specifics of the legislation that we have the opportunity to debate today, recognizing that it comes in the context of a continuous iterative approach to reducing red tape. We know that not any one bill is going to be a one-and-done bill. We know that it's not just this bill alone that is going to get all of the homes built that we need in the province of Ontario, but it continues a legacy towards simultaneously reducing that burden on free enterprise and free people here in Ontario and also ensuring that those people who come to our province—people like Phil and Rose, immigrants I spoke with recently, who have moved to Smithville after having lived in a basement in Brampton for 10 years after they immigrated, and were able to purchase their first home, a brand new townhome in Smithville, and were ecstatic about what this represented for them and their families—that families like Phil and Rose's are respected, and that more and more of those new Canadians and young Canadians, those who may have been born in communities like mine and yet saw that dream of home ownership slip out of their grasp because of the rising costs and the rising supply challenges that we had in Ontario. This is a testament to our commitment to helping them.

The Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act is part of a spring red tape reduction package that will help build a stronger economy. It will help keep costs down. It will save time and improve service delivery for businesses and Ontarians. And the proposed legislation that we're debating today focuses on cutting red tape where it's needed most: on building homes. Red tape is one of the biggest barriers to getting shovels in the ground. The initiatives that we are debating today will take significant action to streamline approvals and increase housing and infrastructure development across Ontario. It will also, through this legislation, include measures to remove unnecessary burdens and foster a strong business climate while ensuring appropriate regulatory oversights are still in place—those that protect the public, that protect workers and protect our cherished environment.

First, we have, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, an important amendment to the Line

Fences Act. We know that this legislation is proposing to modernize legislation that provides a cost-effective tool to resolve fencing disputes between adjacent property owners. We know that the proposed Line Fences Act amendments will remove outdated aspects of the legislation and reduce burden for municipalities.

We are also amending the composition of the board in the Université de Hearst Act, 2021, which will reduce the size of the university's board of governors, following a request by that institution. We know that this change will allow the university to have a board proportionate to the size of their institution, aligning with sector best practices.

We're also making changes to An Act to Incorporate the Trinity College School of 1872. Specifically, we're proposing to remove non-active members from the governing board of the school, such as the chancellor of Trinity College and the provost of Trinity College, to streamline governance and also reduce administrative burden. We know that these board members are not active in governance activities and it's not feasible to have them participating in many future meetings.

We're also proposing to amend Redeemer Reformed Christian College Act of 1998 to reduce the size and simplify the composition of Redeemer University's board of governors, following a request by that institution. These changes would allow the board to operate efficiently and govern effectively, as well as aligning it with sector best practices.

We're also taking a number of steps in the Ministry of Energy. Specifically, we're modernizing leave-to-construct approvals for utility relocation projects. We're proposing a change that would allow for regulations to broaden the Ontario Energy Board exemption from leave to construct for hydrocarbon pipeline relocations or reconstruction. This would include relocations with land requirements, if certain criteria are met, that currently are part of priority transit projects or projects by a road authority.

The legislation would also clarify that for pipeline relocations not needing new land, leave to construct is only required if pipe size increases. This proposal would help reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, delays and costs for pipeline projects to help build more roads faster.

Through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, we are bringing forward a burden reduction strategy for Ontario's producer responsibility framework. We are considering changes to the producer responsibility regulations, which will reduce burden, increase flexibility and also provide better ways to oversee the market.

Ontario will be consulting on a number of changes, including reducing administrative burden and duplication by ensuring that reporting requirements are not duplicative or onerous. We will be clarifying rules for activities that are not shared by producer responsibility organizations, or PROs, such as when they share collection sites. It will also allow more flexibility for how producers and PROs establish and operate collection networks, while ensuring consumers continue to have convenient access to recycling, and also review technical details in the regulations

to make it easier for regulated parties to comply, while also maintaining recycling outcomes.

We know that the changes proposed under this legislation will aim to improve Ontario's competitiveness, support stronger supply chains and make it easier for producers and businesses to work with the government.

In the Ministry of Health, we continue our commitment to ensuring that we are putting patients ahead of paperwork. We're streamlining the registration for internationally educated health professionals. We will be working with health regulatory colleges, such as the College of Nurses of Ontario, to streamline the registration process for internationally educated health care professionals while ensuring that applicants can still provide high-quality and safe work.

This work will make it faster and easier for internationally educated health professionals to start working in Ontario. It will provide greater access to care, choices in care providers, and shorter wait times for patients and the public. This is in addition to Ontario's as-of-right rules, which make it faster and easier for out-of-province physicians, nurses, medical lab techs and respiratory therapists registered in other provinces and territories to immediately start working in Ontario's public hospitals and long-term-care homes without first having to register with one of Ontario's health regulatory colleges.

There are also changes in this legislation, Speaker, to ensure that we are cutting red tape when it comes to assisting, getting more people into the skilled trades.

In this legislation, we are proposing amendments to the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021, which would allow Skilled Trades Ontario's registrar to delegate their duties and powers to one or more Skilled Trades Ontario's employees. This would help prevent delays in service and would support Skilled Trades Ontario in responding to the growing demand we see in so many corners of this province as the government continues to promote the skilled trades as a rewarding career path.

We are also proposing regulatory changes under the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021, to allow notices and documents to be served via email. The proposal would allow ministry inspectors to serve certain notices and documents via email, as well as offer email service as an option under this act in order to streamline processes and save time.

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With the Northern Services Board Act modernization initiative, Speaker, we will undertake consultation with local service boards and the public at large on potential legislative and regulatory framework changes to modernize the Northern Services Board Act to also reduce the burden, streamline processes, cut red tape and promote northern economic and community development.

Speaker, I'm very pleased to also speak about some of the work that the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is doing that is part of this important spring red tape reduction package—again, the 12th red tape reduction package brought forward under this government.

We are committed to advancing reconciliation and making it easier and more affordable for Indigenous peoples to access records and services. We are now bringing in a one-window process to eliminate the need to request death searches from two offices, the Archives of Ontario and ServiceOntario's Office of the Registrar General. As part of this process, fees are being permanently waived for death registration searches, death certificates and certified copies of death registrations. Fees are also being waived to register a delayed registration of death for children who attended Indian residential schools. These permanent fee waivers provide ongoing financial relief for impacted Indigenous communities and families.

The Ontario government is also introducing a regulation under the At Your Service Act, 2022, to require ministries to develop business service standards for permits and licence services delivered to businesses and to report publicly on the service standards. It's a new regulation which will help businesses understand how long they can expect to wait for a decision about a permit or a licence so that they know they can plan for their work. In combination with Ontario's single window for business initiative, this will make it easier for businesses to quickly find information about and track the progress of their permit and licence applications.

Speaker, we are also bringing in a change at the Archives of Ontario. Ontario will no longer be charging fees for third-party vendors to film at the archives. Previously, third-party vendors had to pay \$6,300 a day to film at the Archives of Ontario, and this often inhibited new and emerging artists and creators from considering the Archives as a site for their work. This change will directly reduce financial burden for businesses, for artists, for creators, for organizations, and provide them with easier access to the historical information available at the Archives of Ontario.

Additionally, the Ontario government will change a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund debtor repayment modernization plan to allow the government to accept credit and debit cards and other modern forms of payment from debtors who owe money to the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. Currently, a debtor must repay the government in cash or by certified cheque, bank draft or money order.

Additionally, the transfer payment modernization launched under this suite of red tape reduction changes is the Ontario public service's single digital enterprise-wide platform for administering transfer payments. It helps ensure a common approach to transfer payments. It simplifies program administration by streamlining access to funding and reducing the administrative burden for recipients. In addition, it helps the government make data-driven decisions while making it easier for citizens and organizations to interact with government.

Speaker, we are also proposing to amend the Coroners Act to require the Ministry of the Attorney General to provide additional information, including phone numbers, email addresses and language preferences, from the jury roll to help reduce the time and effort by the coroner when

selecting prospective jurors. This change will improve communications with potential jurors and will ensure that the Office of the Chief Coroner is able to conduct inquests efficiently and effectively.

We are also repealing the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Corporation Act, 2023, by way of an order in council to eliminate a law that is no longer required, as this law was always intended to be transitional in nature.

Speaker, in my ministry—a ministry I am very excited to be working at, tourism, culture and sport, with Minister Neil Lumsden—we are seeking to make changes which would help the Ontario Arts Council, Destination Ontario and Ontario Creates support brand awareness and remove needless complications by matching the legal names with their common publicly recognized names. So the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts will be changed to the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. will be changed to Destination Ontario, and the Ontario Media Development Corp. will be changed to Ontario Creates.

Additionally, we're proposing amendments to the Niagara Parks Act which will remove the requirement for an annual appointment resolution for municipal representatives to the Niagara Parks Board of Commissioners. This change would not affect municipal representation on the board, but it would align the Niagara Parks Act with other similar agency acts that include municipal representation on their respective boards. And to put it very clearly, Speaker, these changes will ensure that instead of having to pass a motion, a municipal motion, every single year for the municipal representatives, they can pass one motion at the beginning of the term of council to ensure that that representative is serving on that board for that period of time.

Under the Ministry of Transportation, in the spring 2022 red tape reduction package, we eliminated licence plate renewal fees for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds, saving vehicle owners hundreds of dollars a year in southern Ontario and \$60 a year in northern Ontario. Now, the Ontario government is proposing changes to the Highway Traffic Act which would allow for the transition to automated renewal of licence plates for drivers in good standing.

Additionally, we're increasing Ontario's collision reporting threshold. Given the rise in the CPI, we are increasing the dollar amount of damages required to report a motor vehicle collision to police. Where the collision involves damage to property only, the requirement is shifting from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Collisions involving personal injuries, property damage exceeding \$5,000, or the door of a motor vehicle coming into contact with a cyclist or a moving vehicle will still need to be reported to the police, but raising the amount for damages for reporting collisions where no one is injured to the police will help reduce the administrative burden on drivers, commercial vehicle operators and police services alike.

Speaker, I don't think I'm going to be able to make it through a substantial portion of the bill, which is all of the

housing components of the legislation, but I think it was important to also shed some light on the number of changes that are coming forward through this piece of legislation that builds on, again, an iterative approach that has been taken by this government when it comes to reducing the regulatory burden on the hard-working people of this province. So I'm grateful for the opportunity to have been able to speak to Bill 185 this afternoon. I look forward to having more debate with my colleagues across the way and in every corner of this Legislature, and I look forward to seeing this bill become law.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Niagara West?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I indeed do have a question to the member from Niagara West. I do enjoy our hallway drive-by chats, so I wanted to comment on you quoting de Tocqueville. You will also know that de Tocqueville, his study on the democracy in America, is what led to that quote that I said to you. He also was very concerned and turned the phrase "the tyranny of the majority." And you will also know that in using that phrase, he was concerned with the impact of a majority government and the well-being and the welfare of minority rights.

I would just like to say to you, your government has a huge majority, and you use it every single time. I would like to share with you my disappointment in the many times—for example, at committee when we or other members bring forward amendments that are there to ensure that everyone has a voice and that bills are reflective of the welfare and well-being of everyone in Ontario.

So I guess my question to you is, what do you think de Tocqueville would think about the fact that you often use this majority to shut out debate or shut down debate on these important issues?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I think de Tocqueville would be very, very pleased to see that the government of Ontario, with a majority that has been granted by the voters of Ontario, is bringing forward policies to ensure that those who were being left behind under 15 years of Liberal and NDP waste and mismanagement here in the province of Ontario finally have an opportunity to achieve the dream of home ownership, have the opportunity to ensure that their lives are getting better, that they have the opportunity to obtain good jobs, that they have careers available in those jobs, that they're able to not have to worry about hundreds of dollars going out the door every year towards licence plate stickers, that they don't have to worry about the incredible increase of red tape upon them and their families as they go about their business.

I'm sure de Tocqueville, when he would look at the measures that are brought forward not just in this legislation but that have been brought forward by every one of this government's bills, that represent what I believe is the founding philosophy of not just de Tocqueville but I know our Premier and our entire party, and it is that ensuring that everything that we do in this chamber, everything we do as a government, is for the best interests of the people—all the people.

1610

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions? The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker. That was the right answer. He wants to make sure I tell his family he's treating me well here, which are great constituents in my riding of Perth–Wellington.

My question, obviously, to my colleague from Niagara West: He did allude to it in his speech, but I know he reads the legislation before this House in great detail, so I will obviously ask a housing question. I was wondering if the member can share with this place what is the number one challenge that your municipal colleagues in Niagara West are finding to get houses built in Niagara West and across Ontario? What is the number one thing they need?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, one word, and it's infrastructure. We had the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing visit my riding recently, coming to St. Catharines and speaking with the mayor of St. Catharines through the Building Faster Fund, and also had the opportunity to meet with officials from the town of Lincoln, who have a remarkable project just shy of 100 acres where there will be 15,000 people able to live on just shy of 100 acres—a really remarkable mixed-use community of density, mixed-use and then also single-family homes. And they spoke about the need to get water infrastructure, waste water infrastructure and how so many of their housing targets have been held back by the need to make sure that those investments happen.

They spoke glowingly about the investments that this government is making in infrastructure, that we're not just listening to our partners across the way in the NDP but really listening to municipal partners, who are actually working day in and day out to get those homes built, working with the partners in the building industry. They said that the game-changing investments that this government is making in our budget are going to supplement many of the actions we've taken and ensure that homes get built.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A while ago, I met with the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, and they talked about how they were engaging with elected officials here in the Legislature and talking about how important it is to keep our existing heritage buildings because they are already buildings that are in stock of housing and it's good for the economy, it's good for the environment and it's good for cultural benefits.

I know the member talked about archives and how it was costing \$3,600 to film historical information. So I want to ask the member: This government has reversed many things on housing. One of the things in Bill 23 is that they're asking municipalities to register heritage properties and designate them by January 1, 2025. We have about 36,000 to be registered and the ACO was asking if this government will extend that extension in order for municipalities to get that work done because staff are so busy because of all the reversals this government has done.

Will the government consider changing that date to January 1, 2030, as per the ACO?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I respect the member opposite, but I would respond to the member opposite that we've debated Bill 23 in the past. It passed in this chamber and became law, and today we're debating Bill 185, so I'm not going to get into a back-and-forth on a debate that I know happened a couple of years ago on another piece of legislation.

This is the legislation we have in front of the House, and this is legislation that is going to be bringing forward one of the pieces that I've heard about from my municipality partners, as well, which is the use-it-or-lose-it component. They want to be able to have some tools to push and prod some of those builders who maybe need a little bit of pushing and prodding in order to get going.

I think, in my riding of Niagara West, when I look at some of the projects that are under way in Smithville, where they're going to be doubling their population over the next 10 to 15 years; in Grimsby on the Lake, where they are expanding a massive number of new projects, intensification around a major urban transit area, I see that these partners speak about the tools that are in this legislation, and I've had a lot of messages, texts and emails from elected officials and those who work with them saying, "This legislation is going to help get that job done and we thank you for it."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for his debate here today. I know, like me, he shares the frustration of seeing red tape that slows down the building of housing, and in particular, infrastructure.

I know the member from Perth–Wellington touched on it a little bit, but I wanted to give the member a chance to maybe talk about some projects in his riding that have just taken so long to come to fruition because of the lack of infrastructure and the lack of availability from the municipalities to be able to participate in this. So maybe I'll give him an opportunity to touch on some great projects in his riding that he's looking forward to seeing move forward.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, specifically, I'm going to go to one that now is completed, but this is perhaps a really good example of how long this could take. There used to be a rail line that went through the town of Smithville called Dunnville Spur; it connected Dunnville, obviously, to some other parts of the rail network—decommissioned 70 years ago. It hasn't been there forever. They took out the rails a very long time ago. Finally, they got rid of the land. There were a number of landowners, as well, around this area. And the composition of the lands that eventually now has become a really lovely subdivision with several hundred homes was started in 2004. They started actually building—their first home didn't go in until 2016, and that's how long it took under the Liberal government to get a project approved. Of course, it wasn't just one particular issue there that was held up; it was one thing after the other. But they would be making progress, and then the Liberals were bringing in another piece of legislation, adding more red tape to that project. This was a piece of land—

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

I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: While we're on the subject of red tape, do you think that the fact that the Premier doubled his office budget in just five years and increased the staff from 20 to 48 on the sunshine list—that that just doesn't add more red tape? I'd ask the member: If he wants to stop the gravy train, it's starting from the Premier's office.

Interjection: Choo-choo.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Well, it's very difficult to take seriously that kind of question coming from a member of a party that doubled the provincial debt in the time that they were in office here in Ontario, ensuring that that cost—hundreds of billions of dollars—is being borne by my generation, borne by the generation that I've been part of, who are not going to be able to achieve the potential that they would have been able without those billions and billions of dollars in provincial—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, the member from Windsor West, the member for Ottawa South, come to order.

The member for Niagara West can finish up.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: So I hope that the member opposite, the next time he stands in the mirror and has to shave, that he takes a good, long, hard look at himself and he thinks about the fact that under his leadership, when he was serving in the government benches, they doubled that debt here in Ontario.

He's going to have to talk to his grandkids, he's going to have to talk to his great grandkids about how their opportunities were throttled by that government when they were in office, and how it's only under the PCs and Doug Ford that we're able to ensure that opportunities, again, exist for this generation, here in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a pleasure to rise today to talk to Bill 185. I'm just going to talk in my 20 minutes about the housing aspect of this bill, which is, I believe, the driving force behind this bill. This is one of the biggest issues I hear about at home, and let me begin—I'm going to zoom in and zoom out in these 20 minutes.

Let me begin by zooming into something very local that happened in my constituency office last Friday. I'm in meetings in the community, and I get a text from my colleague Erica who says, "Joel, there's a guy in our office who needs a pair of shoes." No joke, Speaker: There's a guy in our office who needs a pair of size 12 shoes. He's spending his nights couch surfing with different friends. He can't find a home. He lives on social assistance. Our shelters, as I'm sure is the case with shelters everywhere in this province, are full. The average rent in our city is \$2,000 a month. For someone on social assistance, on Ontario Works, in particular, making an income of less than \$800 a month—brutal. There is a housing allowance that can maybe get you into a home if you time it correctly.

This gentleman has worked with our offices, and a number of times, the timing just never works for him. But last Friday, he ended up in our office, asking for our help for a pair of shoes.

I was across town in a meeting with Professor Carolyn Whitzman—big room—with parliamentary assistant to the federal housing minister, Peter Fragiskatos. I may have mispronounced the parliamentary assistant's last name. But it was a rich discussion about what we need to do for housing in the province, and my phone goes off from a colleague asking some advice about how we find someone a pair of shoes in the course of shuttling around the city, trying to find something other than the couch. So I think that's the zoom-in picture, Speaker.

1620

We have a situation in our community in Ottawa of 45,000 people, according to Professor Carolyn Whitzman, who are one or two paycheques away from homelessness, one or two paycheques away from eviction. And it depends upon the outreach worker from the city recording the data at night, but we have hundreds of people sleeping rough all year round in our city. Our shelters are full. That's the zoom-in context of housing. So when members in this House say we need pieces of legislation to expedite the construction of deeply affordable housing, the answer from my community is, "Yes, yes, yes. What can we do? What can we do?"

I do know that in 2018, the government signed a contract with the federal government that committed the government to build 19,660 affordable housing units. Let's be clear what we mean by affordable housing units, because the federal government has often slid around in its definition of what this means. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., according to housing experts like Professor Whitzman, Steve Pomeroy from Carleton University, Kaite Burkholder Harris from the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, the definition that makes the most sense is 30% of income—30% of income. And it used to be 20% of income in the post-war period, when we built all those victory homes for veterans who were otherwise facing poverty and homelessness after serving our country, making the greatest sacrifice overseas. It was 20%, but it became 30%. But then that definition lapsed.

But that was what the government agreed to in 2018, to build 19,660 affordable housing units—units that cost 30% of income. But how many units have been built in six years in Ontario? It's 1,180. That's barely 6% of the target.

Now, I don't want to hang all the blame on this government particularly. I think we have had a problem for generations because we've put faith in the wrong place. We have put faith in the fact that the housing market, on its own, is going to resolve the issue we have—that I felt in my office, personally, last Friday—of the need for deeply affordable housing. And the market, by any measure, has manifestly failed.

For me, for affluent folks, sure, there are opportunities. They're getting harder and harder to come by in major urban centres. But for the people like the gentleman in my

office last Friday, it has manifestly failed, because we put blind faith in the notion that governments should play no direct role in provision of housing. But it was not always so. It was not always so.

That's why, when I hear the member from University–Rosedale hold forth in this place, it raises my heart, because she has said time and time again that it's time for the public's money to be invested in creating that deeply affordable housing because it is the only way it will ever be created. We have given the private market three decades to pull this off. And at this point in the housing and homelessness crisis, we have people sleeping in tent cities, we have people coming into MPP offices without shoes.

But there was a time, Speaker—and I want to say this for the record—the period of 1989 to 1995 that Professor Whitzman spoke about last Friday was a period in which over 14,000 co-operative homes were developed in the province of Ontario. I had occasion to talk to former Premier Rae about this. I had occasion to talk to former municipal housing affairs minister Evelyn Gigantes, who was the MPP who had this seat for my community. She told me, former Premier Rae told me, that under that government, in that period—there's some overlap there, 1989 to 1990 to the previous government—over 14,000 co-operative homes were created in the province of Ontario.

They were created because there was a program at the federal level that funded, through financial terms, advantageous financing for co-ops to grow quickly. There was a willing partner to get the financing. Cities and provinces worked together. And what was the result? A significant amount of homes. But almost overnight—almost overnight—in 1995, Ontario stops funding the development of affordable housing, co-operative and social and community housing in a significant way.

In 1998, rent control is removed from vacant units. So you have that problem of people moving out of a unit, paying a vastly different rent to the person coming in. And then in 2018, as the member for University–Rosedale said, as other members have said, under the current government, you have a situation that, for any form of rental housing built since 2018—no rent control.

The cost of rent is \$2,000 a month, on average, in my city. In this city in which we're standing right now, that would be a bargain.

So the question is, if we're going to reckon with the evidence—the evidence is telling us that the market has had three decades to solve it and can't solve it. So how do we solve it?

Well, I look, frankly, to the very west of this country; I look to the province of British Columbia, not only because it's an NDP government, but because they're following the evidence. They've created a \$500-million acquisition fund in the province of British Columbia. If older, private rental market housing—because it needs to be renovated; it needs to be repurposed; it needs to be reutilized—is coming up for resale, the province of British Columbia has an acquisition fund to make sure that housing stock can stay in the hands of its current rent providers, and it gets

refurbished and renovated on a not-for-profit basis, and those people who are currently living there get to stay in their homes. What's happening in too many places across this country, and certainly in Ontario, is that large real estate investment trusts are swooping in at that very moment to buy up old, affordable housing, lightly renovate it, kick the tenants out, charge whatever the market will bear.

I want to point to an example from Hamilton—we have some Hamilton members in this room: Kevin O'Toole, interviewed by CBC's *The Fifth Estate*. Mr. O'Toole was talking about the fact that he spent his life working in the service industry as a waiter, and he was talking about the fact that his rent, almost overnight, after light renovations to his building—the building having been bought by a real estate investment trust—was going to double. The landlord was going for an above-guideline increase that was substantial, that would have driven him out of his home. The tenants fought back. They went to the Landlord and Tenant Board. They waited a long time to get there. They managed to cut the rent increase in half. But he is barely struggling, right now, to make ends meet.

Real estate investment trusts are returning dividends to their shareholders that are very handsome indeed. The research that I have available to me is that we're looking at over \$2 billion in profits, in the last six years, being returned to the Blackstones of this world, being returned to the large real estate investment trusts, whose one goal is to buy up these large apartment buildings in municipal areas in Canadian jurisdictions, lightly renovate them, ditch the tenants, jack the rent. Has there been a single law in Ontario to stop this? There has not.

The country of Denmark has literally passed a law to make sure that large real estate investment trusts can't buy up large swaths of the rental stock and throw people out onto the street. There has been an active approach to create that balance between responsible ownership, taking a responsible margin in the rental housing business, but maintaining affordability in the downtown.

I find the lack of action in this place on the creation of non-market housing and the protection of renters to be astounding.

What I know now is that there are consequences if we fail to protect tenants and renters. People aren't just statistics. If in one moment they are a tenant in an affordable unit that they can no longer pay for after their rent has been jacked by who knows how much, they could become homeless. The cost to that person, the loss of dignity to that person in losing their housing is one thing, but there are also the financial implications for the province of what happens when someone is homeless.

In our city, we have something called a portable housing allowance benefit to try to keep people in their homes; we're talking about an expenditure per person of about \$6,000 a year. I remember, when this got proposed, there were more conservative-minded colleagues in my city saying, "This is too expensive. We can't afford it." But if you look at what we can't afford, it's the cost of homelessness. Steve Pomeroy from Carleton University

has told us that the same per-person cost of somebody being homeless is not \$6,000 a year; according to Professor Pomeroy, it is \$53,000 a year—talk to any paramedic, talk to any police officer, talk to anybody working in an emergency room, and they will tell you exactly why. All of those interactions with those critical nodes of community safety in our system are unnecessary if we can find people an affordable home in which to live. They're all unnecessary if we can find people an affordable home in which to live.

1630

So the government wants to build housing quickly. I think it's a fantastic idea. They are reversing some of the decisions they made previously. I like the aspects in this bill that have to do with the rapid construction of timber buildings. I like the idea of telling developers that they have to use properties they have slated for development or lose it. I like all of these sticks, Speaker; I like all of these different carrots and incentives. But what I don't see in the government's bill before us today are specific provisions to deal with the predatory behaviour of real estate investment trusts or specific protections for renters or specific plans about how we're going to build non-market housing.

My landlord back home, of our community office, is the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp. It is the largest non-profit landlord in the province of Ontario: over 17,000 residents, of which our five in our community office are one, on the commercial side. They've had a very particular mandate. Their mandate has been to charge appropriate rents. So the CCOC, Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp., has a stream in their buildings of people who pay rent-g geared-to-income units, but they also have a stream of residents in their system that pay market-rent units. I've always felt that's a much more progressive model of housing. Rather than saying everybody who is having a hard time paying the cost of living, let's have everybody living in one building together—when the goal should be to build diverse neighbourhoods, where we get to live together and get to know each other.

The minister has been to Ottawa many times. I'm sure he's aware of the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp., but if he hasn't met with them yet, I would encourage those interactions now. If we think about how to build housing now—what if Ontario did have, rather like the province of British Columbia, an acquisition fund, a community land trust? What if you worked with community land trusts so we could keep the housing we have, so Mr. O'Toole in Hamilton and others like him aren't thrown out onto the street—another person who may one day show up in my office looking for a pair of shoes.

In the time I have left, I also want to talk about the issue that I was concerned about. I asked the minister a question after his one-hour lead, and he did respond. I know it's an issue that he cares about, and it's the issue of urban boundaries, Speaker. Because overnight in our city, we were told by a previous housing minister that our urban boundary in Ottawa had increased by 654 hectares. Now, that's a big deal in Ottawa, Speaker, because we have literally one of the biggest urban boundaries in Canada.

You could fit the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver inside Ottawa's urban boundaries. We are massive. We're rural, we're suburban, and we're urban. But overnight, our city was told it's going to be 654 hectares bigger. It was quite a shocking thing to learn.

We also learned that there was a farm bought right at the previous fringe of the urban boundary by a group of five gentlemen from the Verdi Alliance group of contract companies for \$12.7 million. It was bought for \$12.7 million, Speaker—a family farm that overnight was massively worth a lot more. The minister, to his credit, responded to letters from city councillors who sniffed something deeply wrong. We're losing arable land that we can grow food upon, but we're also seeing land speculation which did not pass the smell test. Councillor Shawn Menard, for Capital ward, raised the alarm bells. He got 11 people on city council to sign a letter to the minister. The minister acted.

But here's what I'm worried about in the revisions to the provincial plan statement contemplated by this bill, Speaker: I worry we're going to be going back to this kind of chaotic housing development. The ministers often talked about it in this place, and it's a good topic, about how we can build enough water and sewer infrastructure to make sure that the housing that we want to build can be built. It's not just the structures that you see, Speaker: the apartment buildings, the individual homes. It's the services that need to be run to all those communities in order for those homes to be built.

But in this case, of this development, which now won't happen, it would have cost the city massive amounts of money to pipe all of those utilities out to that development. We thankfully won't have to deal with that. We're going to be having the discussion of how we intensify development in the downtown and the suburbs, for which I'm a willing partner. But if we allow smaller municipalities who could potentially be more open to persuasion to these kinds of developments, I worry about the cost of it, Speaker.

I'll point to one that is sadly going ahead. It's the Tewin development in the far south end of the city. City staff actually encouraged the previous city council—not the current but the previous city council—not to green-light this development. Why? Two reasons: The cost of running sewer and water out to that community, given how far south it is in our already large boundary, was—get ready for it, Speaker—\$600 million. That's \$600 million for water and sewer in this community. The federal government has just announced a new program, the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund of \$6 billion. People at home are telling me our likely share is maybe \$180 million. That one project on its own is too expensive for what the federal government is prepared to offer us to build housing quickly.

So my point to the government is, if you're going to be encouraging housing to be built, we have to be thinking about what kind of housing we build. Asking for homes to be built far outside the periphery of existing urban boundaries is expensive, inefficient.

I grew up in rural Ontario. I grew up in Vankleek Hill. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is here; he knows he represents a beautiful community. I grew up there. I love the bucolic countryside. I love that part of our province. But the municipalities of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell are intact units with their own systems that work. If we're talking about major cities like Ottawa and Toronto and we're saying the future development for housing in our communities is pushing outward into arable farmland like what we stopped at Watters Road, we're courting disaster. We're not going to be getting to where I believe we need to go, which is working with allied partners to build the kind of non-market housing.

What Professor Whitzman and Professor Pomeroy tell me: If we do that, we can house people potentially quickly. The one successful program that the federal government has introduced is their—I'm going to forget the acronym here as I speak, Speaker, but it's the rapid housing fund. What it's been doing—rather like our municipal fund of \$6,000 per person helping people pay the rent—is helping people who would otherwise be surfing on couches or surfing in shelters pay the rent that they have to keep them housed. I want to believe this bill that we're debating now could be improved to have some provincial assistance on that front. There is the Homelessness Prevention Program, which I'm aware is doing some of that work, but that's like in the \$200-million region. I'm talking about an ambitious rent bank program that can keep people housed.

It won't just be those 45,000 people in my city who could be potentially homeless that will be happy for that help, it will be all the first responders, it will be people in the emergency rooms, it will be people who will otherwise be dealing with those folks in crisis that will also be happy. There is a multiplier benefit, Speaker—long story short—to keeping somebody housed. We restore dignity to the person, we restore opportunity to that person to contribute back to our society and we avoid spending a lot more money later. I encourage the government to listen to that advice and make changes to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the speech from the member opposite.

I just want to correct a couple of things—or just update, I guess. It was actually the Bob Rae government in 1992 that brought in an exemption for newly built purpose-built rentals. He did that because, after five years of Liberal government, the stock had reduced by so much the NDP government at the time thought that that was the only way—correctly—to get new stock online.

I want to give some of the numbers on the National Housing Strategy just by way of an update: Ontario has actually built 11,000 of the 19,000 units that it had pledged to build over 10 years. We were given a pledge of 26,000 renovations; we have actually done 123,000.

But to do the kind of things that he's talked about with respect to British Columbia would mean that we would have to fire service managers and remove those services from our municipal partners, and I sincerely ask the

member opposite if he thinks that we should move in that direction in order to do the kinds of things that he's talking about and follow British Columbia's lead.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm thankful for the clarification.

What I would say to the minister is, the people of Ottawa that I know well who are housing experts that work for the city, research experts that work for a university—they're ready and willing to work with you. I'm sure you know that already. But we have to get things moving quickly, and the best evidence that I've seen—again, that I tried to offer in the 20 minutes I'm contributing to debate this afternoon—is the more money you can get directly to the person, the more efforts can be made to save the affordable renting stock we have, the more success we can have in this moment right now. Because none of us wants to see the suffering that we're seeing in our cities, I'm sure—no one.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to refocus. You touched on this, but the appeals process: We went through this terrible period when the urban boundary expansion and the greenbelt grab showed no evidence that it was following any rational process and preferential treatment was shown to have been applied. Now, we have an appeals process for any developer that wants to build low-density sprawl on farmland or so forth, that if a municipality says no, they can appeal it—but if they say, yes, no one else can appeal this decision.

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I just want to say that this is really concerning, particularly given what's happening in Wilmot—or that we don't know what's happening in Wilmot. There's a perfect example of a process that is undefined, that is not happening in a rational, predictable way, that could result in us seeing the loss of 770 acres of farmland in Wilmot.

Mr. Joel Harden: When I've heard the story of Wilmot told in this place, there are alarm bells that get raised, given the story I brought up about Watters Road. We have to save our farmland. We don't have to trade off our farmland to make sure that we can build deeply affordable housing in Ontario. We absolutely don't have to do that.

The other thing I would say, Speaker, is that developers again and again tell me—and I run into them all the time back home—they're not in the business of building deeply affordable housing. That's not what they're in the business to do.

There was a time when the province of Ontario and the Canadian government worked together with municipalities and non-profit housers to do that work. We have to commit to do that work again. Thirty years of evidence has shown us that no one is going to do it for us; we have to do it ourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the speaker for his remarks on this bill. He covered a lot of topics, but there are two words that I heard and I want to draw out some thoughts, if I can. One is “infrastructure,” the second is “intensification.”

These words are related. I noted the speaker's comments about, in the city of Ottawa, the need for water and waste water infrastructure to get housing built. While not in this bill, in the budget bill, there is \$1.8 billion to support that effort, a really fundamental, massive injection of capital available to municipalities, small and large, to get that infrastructure built.

I guess my question is, doesn't the member see the measures in this bill consistent with that broad effort to get housing built in the municipal boundaries to intensify housing?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thanks for the question. What I would say my fear is, given what I am seeing from the development community and where investment is being made—it's not that. In the downtown where there is housing being developed, it's not deeply affordable housing. I would direct the member and anybody listening to my comments to the Lansdowne controversy we have, where we have a \$460-million investment from the city of Ottawa in housing—it's fine to have housing, but it's not going to be deeply affordable housing. And where housing is being built and where water and sewer investments are likely to be made are in far-flung areas of our municipality. As I said, one single development that's already been green-lighted is going to cost \$600 million. It's a tremendous outpouring of money.

So I think we do need to work towards the intensification of the downtown. As I said before, you have a willing partner in the people of Ottawa Centre. We want to make sure that happens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to my colleague for his presentation. In this bill we hear about more wood—to allow more building with wood, which is great, in this bill.

But you did mention a lot about non-market housing and building affordable housing and co-ops and supportive housing, and in my riding, of course, there's a lot of those missing. We have homes that could be revamped, and we have people that would like to move from their home to have a transitional home after, because now they say, "Well, we can't afford a big home anymore," or, "We want something more affordable."

Do you think this bill addresses that, and will that fix some of the problems we deal with in most communities up north and in the south, I guess, and in your riding also?

Mr. Joel Harden: I've got to say, when I think about the housing challenges we have in downtown Ottawa, as I've heard northern members hold forth in this place, you're in a whole different ballpark of lack of investment, lack of infrastructure. So I'll defer to you on that.

But what I do know is there's a whole lot of vacant provincial properties all over Ontario that could be repurposed. There's a whole lot of LCBOs, for example, in strip malls upon which there are air rights where we could build housing, for which the province actually can make the decision. The last time I asked the Ministry of Infrastructure this question, my friend, it was 812—812 vacant properties in Ontario owned by the province. Why

can't we repurpose some of that for some usage, even if it's transitional usage and it's not fully outfitted homes? There is nothing stopping us from doing that. And I'm sure that where you live and where I live, there are partners willing to make that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. John Fraser: I've already spoken today about the gravy train in the Premier's office and doubling his budget and more than doubling the people on the sunshine list. But that's not the only gravy train that's happening in Ontario. There's a greenbelt gravy train that got derailed, luckily, thanks to the efforts of so many people.

Do you think if the Premier focused less on the gravy trains that are there for not just his office but for those insiders and friends and those land speculators, there could be a focus on building affordable homes and we'd actually get to the targets that we've set?

Mr. Joel Harden: I think it doesn't just apply to the Premier. I think it applies to all of us in this country.

I remember the Prime Minister getting up at a conference in 2019 and saying, "Well, technically, housing isn't my jurisdiction, but..." We have to stop talking like that. There is a federal Minister of Housing. There's a provincial Minister of Housing. There are people responsible for housing at the municipal level. We can't play a jurisdictional game anymore when it comes to housing.

And I will not accept the argument that there aren't any resources available for us to get people housed right now, because the city of Ottawa, through its housing allowance to people who interact with our shelter system, has proven there's a way we can keep people in their homes if we can get them money to make the rent.

So that's what I would say. We can use the money the province has to keep people housed, and we don't have to blame each other for what we're not doing. We can do something.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question.

Mr. Mike Harris: The member has talked a lot about building deeply affordable units, building not-for-profit housing, and I think this bill seeks to help that happen. We're looking at ways that we can streamline the planning process, looking at ways that we can help those builds go faster.

With the remaining time, I'd like to know whether or not the member is going to support this bill and whether or not he's going to approve of the government's position as to how we can actually help people he has referred to in his speech earlier today actually find a place to live.

Mr. Joel Harden: What I would say to my friend from Kitchener—Conestoga is this: If you want to make not only my life tougher, of supporting Conservative legislation, but the whole group of us over here—let me give you a wish list. If you were to put into this bill rent banks that were meaningful—per person, dispersed to municipalities—so people could get housed right now; if you were to put into this bill a housing acquisition fund at the local level for land trusts; if you were to put into this bill new

financing—because Ontario does have jurisdiction over credit unions. We could authorize credit unions to give very advantageous financing to local co-ops.

There are a lot of things that could be put into this bill that you may see the members over here standing up to vote for.

I encourage both of us to pressure our respective groups so we get the best bill before the House.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise in the House and speak—today, on Bill 185, the government's most recent housing bill.

Speaker, I just want to highlight something that I don't think we need to highlight—but to remind everyone, we are in an unprecedented housing crisis. For the first time, a whole generation of young people are wondering if they'll be able to own a home or if life is actually going to be more affordable and better for them than it was for their parents. We know that this crisis has been a long time in the making. As a matter of fact, in 2018, when I first ran for election, one of the issues I made a top priority was addressing what we thought then was a pretty bad housing crisis, which has actually only gotten worse over the last six years.

It's unheard of, at least in my community, that the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Guelph is now over \$2,000. It would take a minimum wage of \$25.96, in Ontario, for a minimum-wage worker to be able to afford average rent. There is no city right now in the province of Ontario where a minimum-wage worker can afford the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment. As a matter of fact, in Toronto, even two full-time minimum-wage workers cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment that doesn't cost more than 30% of their income. It takes 22 years now for the average young person to save up enough money to be able to afford the down payment on an average starter home.

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Some 16,000 people tonight on any given night in Ontario will be sleeping rough. More people are on the social housing wait-list than the number of social housing spaces that are available. And part of the reason that's the case is that 93% of the deeply affordable homes built in this province were built prior to 1995, when the provincial government, following the federal government, decided to stop investing in deeply affordable homes in the province. So it is a crisis, an unprecedented crisis. It's like a forest fire raging out of control. And when I read this bill, it feels like the government is bringing a garden hose to put out the fire.

There are some good things in the bill but woefully insufficient to address the scale of the crisis that we're facing. After six years of putting well-connected, wealthy insiders ahead of actually building homes that ordinary people can afford, it feels like the government is almost admitting defeat on this file, begging municipalities to bail them out, especially when the Premier joined the NIMBY crowd and said no to housing multiplexes—six- to 11-

storey buildings along major transit corridors—said no along with others in our communities who are fighting housing.

So I want to just quote some of the advocates in Ontario who have been leading the charge to say, “Yes in my backyard,” because we need a “yes in my backyard” campaign in this province. When I was helping community groups say no to opening the greenbelt for development and when I was talking to groups who had signs on their front yards that said, “Premier, keep your promise. Don't open the greenbelt for development,” I also told those groups that, “Also on your yard, you need to have a sign that says, ‘Yes to building a fourplex in my neighbourhood’ so we can actually build the homes we need.”

Here's what More Neighbours, a long-time YIMBY housing group, said about this bill:

“After six years in power, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives are still unwilling to implement the changes needed to end the housing crisis.” The bill “has a few good ideas but largely passes the responsibility for making meaningful change on to others, adding delay and uncertainty, despite the province having full power to act now.... Cutting red tape should mean ... implementing provincial zoning standards.”

Let's talk about another organization that has been advocating for bringing back the dream of home ownership for young families in Ontario, the Ontario Real Estate Association:

“We are disappointed that two key recommendations by the province's own Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF)—strongly supported by Ontario realtors—have not been included in today's bill,” referring to Bill 185. “We need to build more homes on existing properties and allow upzoning along major transit corridors if we are going to address the housing affordability and supply crisis in this province.”

Speaker, I agree with those commentators; there are some good things in this bill, and I'll credit the minister for bringing those good things forward. But small changes, things that we could celebrate, are hard to celebrate when you look at the scale of the crisis we're facing.

And I want to give you one example: Something I've long advocated for is using timber buildings and increasing the use of those up to 18 storeys. To me, that's an example of a good measure in this bill, but as Environmental Defence says, “However, such an amendment to the Ontario building code will have very limited impact unless the Premier reverses his decision to leave in place the municipal zoning bans that make it illegal to actually build these types of homes on the overwhelming majority of ... lots.”

So, Speaker, I'll support things in this bill like standardizing the design to reduce delays and costs of modular homes and panelized homes. I'll support things I've been advocating for, like eliminating parking minimums in transit areas. But as John Michael McGrath, a journalist and housing expert, will say, “None of those items from the government's plan is bad. They're just not sufficient. In the face of a housing crisis that is, every year, driving

thousands of Ontario residents to more affordable communities in other provinces, the Ford government is fiddling with the dials of housing policy, seemingly unsure of what it's doing or even what it's trying to do."

"There's nothing in the bill introduced Wednesday that's going to fundamentally alter the trajectory of the housing shortage in Ontario."

Speaker, I think what is so frustrating is that after six years in power, instead of actually bringing themselves to build homes that ordinary people can afford, the government still seems to be focused on, "How can we break all the rules and roll out the red carpet so wealthy, well-connected land speculators can cash in billions while ordinary people are still trying to find an affordable place to call home?"

I would have thought, after the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal, that the government would have learned the lesson, but instead one of the concerns I have about this bill, especially when you combine it with the changes that have been made to the PPS, is that this bill will actually make the housing crisis and the climate crisis both worse because it's incentivizing expensive sprawl, effectively wiping out the protective settlement area boundaries and municipal comprehensive review processes that prevent low-density sprawl. Allowing land speculators—at any time they could demand that our farmlands, wetlands and wildlife habitat be earmarked for sprawl development by the law allowing them to appeal boundary changes. These problems can be exacerbated by the act's shifting of planning authority away from regional governments and downloading them onto smaller-tier municipal governments.

Speaker, the reason I'm so concerned about sprawl—and it's obvious, as the leader of the Ontario Green Party, that I would be concerned about the climate implications, both in terms of increasing climate pollution but also making it harder for us to prevent things like flooding. It should be obvious that I'm concerned about paving over our farmlands and our wetlands and our forests, but I'm also concerned about the cost of sprawl. It costs 2.5 times more dollars for a municipality to build the infrastructure to service low-density development than it does to service gentle-density, missing-middle and mid-rise housing.

I see the member from Ottawa South is here in the House right now. In Ottawa, there was a study that was done for low-density development. Above and beyond property taxes, it cost the city an extra \$465 per person. By contrast, in gentle- to mid-density areas of the city, after taxes, the city actually made additional revenue of \$606 per person because of the lower cost of servicing those homes—a \$1,000 difference per person.

So, if we're going to talk about sustainable ways, both financially and environmentally sustainable ways, we can rapidly and quickly increase housing supply in the province, we need to legalize across the province as-of-right multiplexes in residential neighbourhoods and six- to 11-storey buildings along major transit and transportation corridors, which I don't think has gotten enough conversation in this House. I spoke with one developer who specializes in mid-rise development who said, "Just your

bill, Mike, to legalize six- to 11-storey buildings along major transit corridors would cut our approval times in half, allowing us to quickly and cheaply increase supply of housing in this province."

1700

Speaker, there are many solutions—there are many solutions we need—but it's going to take a government that actually has the courage to stand up and put forward the bold solutions that will significantly move the needle on housing supply in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for his remarks. I wanted to focus a little bit on transit and its relationship to housing and housing intensification, as the member noted, and come back to the broad commitment this government has to transit: \$70 billion over 10 years, biggest in the history of the province—massive. Certainly, I would think that that does two things that the leader of the Green Party, the member, may be interested in. Number one, it helps the environment—it gets people out of cars, which is good—but secondly, the intensification that's going on in terms of housing around that transit, the transit-oriented communities initiative that has been going on for quite some time.

Doesn't the member think that those initiatives are worthwhile and can be supported with this bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member opposite's question, and I appreciate our shared commitment to building more transit in the province. I would note, it would be nice if the government would help municipal transit operational funding as well and reinstate the 50% operational funding so we can have reliable, affordable transit.

But what I'll say is, in addition to having transit-oriented development and allowing more density around transit nodes, which I support, I would challenge the government to ensure that a certain percentage of those are deeply affordable homes. Because we absolutely need to increase supply, but we also need to increase the supply of homes that people can actually afford. Housing Now Toronto was actually at Queen's Park today for their lobby day, asking us to ask the government to do exactly that as the Ontario Line is built.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I wanted to just focus my question on the removal of the regions in the role of the planning authority. I know that we're very concerned, as are you, that these changes will allow expensive low-density sprawl on farmland and green lands. Also what's at risk, though, would be some of the region's responsibilities for things, particularly in Waterloo region, like source water protection plans. These are important things that the region has done. And the concern that smaller municipalities don't have the planning expertise that is needed, and that they are more vulnerable to developer pressures—the developers, they can arrive with the plan and smaller

municipal councils will not be in a position, necessarily, to challenge or to be able to provide alternatives.

So can you just talk about what is at stake when we're removing regional government from the planning process?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. One of the concerns I have is that when you think of infrastructure and you think of things like waste water, source water supply, source water protection, oftentimes, that's regional infrastructure organized by the regional government. You would want your planning to make sure it coincides with that regionally financed and planned infrastructure so you build in a way that you didn't exceed the capacity of your regional infrastructure.

Two, I'm also concerned because you have a number of regions—and I think Waterloo region is a great example of this—where regional planning has shown how they can meet their housing targets without sprawling onto farmland, for example, which is so critically important to the region's economy—

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

Next question?

Mr. Trevor Jones: This proposed bill contains an ambitious series of changes for the better—and the member from Guelph touched on some of them: our government's proposal to streamline something as simple yet as brilliant as accessible parking permits, the application process. I worked, as a university student a few years ago, actually processing and delivering these accessible parking permits. I thought, how frustrating to have someone with a disability of some sort, a walking impairment, come in with crutches, canes or walkers, like my father uses right now, to get something as simple as—we called them “disabled” parking permits; now “accessible”—parking permits. This proposed bill actually addresses this simple, beautiful, common-sense redesign: have a 30% reduction in form rework to actually issue permits for people from your community in Guelph and mine. So would the member from Guelph not support initiatives like this?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I appreciate the member's shared support for farmers in the province. Like I've said in my remarks, there are small changes in this bill that are supportable. The challenge is, does the bill meet the moment?

We are in an unprecedented housing crisis. And to the credit of some members opposite, they have talked about the need to push back against “not in my backyard” in this province if we are going to address the housing supply crisis. It feels like, with this bill and recent comments from the Premier, the government is backtracking on that commitment. And right now, I believe we would need an all-hands-on-deck, full-on mobilization to say “yes in my backyard,” legalizing fourplexes, legalizing—

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like just for you to, if you would like to, weigh in on the suspicion that what is happening in Wilmot may have implications with what is in the Get It Done bill, schedule 1, where there's an ability

to fast-track the government's expropriation without an environmental assessment. And now what we see here in Bill 185, the concern is, what is happening in Wilmot, and are these changes facilitating that kind of speculative growth by removing countryside lines, by having urban boundary expansions that have not gone through any kind of proper planning process?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I mean, one of the things that makes regional planning so important is you have things like the countryside line in Waterloo region. I don't know what the land assembly in Wilmot is for, but I will say losing 770 acres of prime farmland is deeply disturbing, especially when we're losing farmland at an unsustainable rate in the province of Ontario. So whatever that assembly is for, surely we can find land that's not prime farmland to make available for industrial, commercial, whatever purpose that land is for.

Because let's face it: Farming contributes \$50 billion to Ontario's economy. We need to protect the asset base, which is the farmland that generates all that wealth, while we support the farmers who farm that land.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Dave Smith: The member from Guelph made a statement just a moment ago, a couple of questions back. He said that fourplexes were illegal. I owned a fourplex at one point, before getting elected. I have not seen any legislation anywhere in Ontario that says it's illegal to create fourplexes.

So could the member from Guelph please point to the legislation that says fourplexes are illegal in this province?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I always appreciate answering questions from the member for Peterborough. There are many municipalities in the province of Ontario that don't allow fourplexes as-of-right. You have to go through so much red tape and headache, and blood, sweat and tears to build a fourplex. Let's make it legal. Let's just make it legal to not have to go through all that red tape.

The bill says it's cutting red tape to build more housing. Then let's cut red tape to build more housing by making fourplexes legal in the province. While we're at it, let's go beyond fourplexes. Let's make it legal to build six- to 11-storey buildings along major transit lines as well—two key recommendations in the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force. I don't know why the government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. There's not enough time for more questions.

Further debate?

1710

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It is my honour and privilege to stand to speak about Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act.

Before I start, I want to say to all Ontarians, happy Holi, Lent and Easter, Ramadan and Eid, and Vaisakhi. I hope everyone had a good time with family and friends. And soon we are going to be looking forward to other holidays such as Orthodox Easter and Passover. Only in Canada is it possible to celebrate so many different cultural and

religious occasions. This is the great multiculturalism that our nation has to offer.

Madam Speaker, it's not a surprise that Ontario is the number one destination for new immigrants—for its economic and job opportunities and its diverse cultures, which helps new immigrants to settle.

It's no secret that Ontario is in the midst of a housing supply crisis. Young families, newcomers, and many Ontarians are struggling to find a home within their budget that meets their needs. We have been raising this concern and sounding the alarm since 2018. When demand exceeds supply, prices go up. That's the cause of the present crisis. By the time we came to office six years ago, this had become a main concern that we committed to solving.

Canada's population continues to increase. And many of these new people are coming here to Ontario to enjoy all this province has to offer. These people will need jobs, health care and housing. And while the population of our province has continued to grow at an exponential rate, Ontario's housing supply has not kept up. Because of neglect and failure to act from previous governments, Ontario is facing a critical housing shortage.

To make matters worse, there continue to be obstacles to getting homes built. The average period between a developer acquiring land and starting to sell units is approximately 11 years—and this is not what I'm saying; this is what the president of the mayors' association said at the hearing of one of the four housing bills this government introduced in the past few years. This 11-year period is unacceptable. Red tape and uncertainty are getting in the way of progress.

Let's make no mistake about it: The demand for housing is high. The number of willing developers is high. The conditions are right for growth. Ontarians are ready to put shovels in the ground. We cannot let anything stop that. The governments' job now is to get it done and get out of the way.

That's why this government, under the leadership of our amazing Premier, is acting to cut red tape and get homes built faster. The government has promised 1.5 million homes by 2031, and certainly, we are already on our way.

The bills that this Legislature has passed over the past few years are allowing for housing construction like this province has never seen before. Progress is being made. And it's obvious that those bills we did before, like the last four housing bills, already began showing progress. We are seeing a lot of numbers of new homes that we have never seen in the province for the past 10 years.

In the meantime, there is still more work to be done, still more homes to be built, still more red tape to be cut. We will do everything we can to reach our housing targets. We will get it done.

So I am very happy to be speaking today about Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act. This bill, if passed, will speed up government processes, make expectations clearer and streamline approvals. With less red tape, government will be able to focus clearly on the goal, 1.5 million homes by 2031, including 120,000 homes in Mississauga.

Let's start by discussing Peel region. Last year, we passed the Hazel McCallion Act, 2023. Speaker, as you might remember, the goal of this bill was to find efficiencies in the municipal structure of Peel region and, if possible, eliminate duplication of tasks. We wanted to give municipalities the tools to grow and meet their goals. Consequently, we began the process of studying the relationship between the municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon and, of course, the region of Peel. The transition board has been working hard on this issue, and we have learned a lot. It has become clear that complete dissolution of Peel region is not what the people of Mississauga expect from us. The enormous cost of doing that would have unintended consequences such as tax hikes and disruption of critical services. This is out of the question. Tax hikes would only make the current challenges worse. Therefore, we are going to ensure that all services residents of Peel expect are continued without interruption. We can still find efficiencies and improve regional governance but without the complexity and disruption of a divorce.

Instead of full dissolution, the new mandate of the transition board, under this proposed bill, would be to make the local governments more efficient. The transition board will provide financial oversight and recommendations about the delivery of services such as water, regional roads and waste management. This is a good compromise because it means the people of Mississauga will get all the benefits of the more efficient system of municipal governance without risking tax hikes or service disruption.

As part of this process, the government is moving forward with removing duplication. We know that too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the broth. Likewise, duplication of red tape and government bureaucracy slows things down. For example, when a new development needs approval from both an upper-tier municipality like Peel, for example, and a lower-tier municipality like Mississauga, this delays construction starts, and in some cases, this might even result in projects being entirely cancelled.

This bill would, if passed, ensure that planning responsibilities in Peel, Halton and York are transferred to lower-tier municipalities effective July 1. This would allow municipalities to move efficiently to deliver on shared provincial-municipal priorities like housing—no more duplication, no more overlap. We trust that municipalities would use their powers diligently, responsibly and effectively. Just because there are less steps in the process doesn't mean that the process is any less important. Municipalities will still need to work hard to get housing approved. We can't accept excuses of NIMBYism or bureaucratic delays. But by removing duplication, I'm hopeful that wait times can decrease and construction on important projects can begin sooner.

This brings me to a second point about red tape reduction that will be critical in getting developments started. This bill would strengthen approval timelines by closing a loophole that allowed municipalities to use pre-application requirements to extend the deadlines. In the

past few years, we have seen abuse of this loophole to lengthen timelines and create additional bureaucratic hurdles. Decisions need to be made in a timely manner. This bill, if passed, would stop this unfair practice and ensure applications are approved on time.

1720

Similarly, once an application has been approved, we don't want developers to sit on their hands forever, hoarding municipal infrastructure such as allocations of water and waste water management. In many cases, there is a limited capacity for municipal water infrastructure. This bottlenecks what can be approved. So if developers don't use their allocations, they will lose it. Municipalities can then reallocate infrastructure and approve applications for projects that are ready to build now—no more waiting for projects that never start. If a project is ready to go, let's get it done. Let's get it started.

Another change to get more housing built would be to remove parking requirements near major transit station areas. We know that parking spaces take a lot of land, time and cost to build. Municipalities often have their own complex rules, setting minimum parking quantities. Depending on the project, this can cost between \$2,000 and \$100,000 per parking spot, so when dealing with hundreds of parking spots, that cost adds up very quickly. In some developments, parking alone can be millions and millions of dollars. By removing this requirement, projects could move forward with more reasonable parking allowances, at the developer's discretion, saving time and money for new construction near transit. Thus, more homes close to transit can get built faster and at a cheaper cost. It would be a win-win for everyone.

Likewise, the government is considering policies that would reduce barriers for building additional residential units such as garden, laneway and basement suites. These types of properties have already been encouraged in previous bills, such as when we legalized three units as-of-right in the More Homes Built Faster Act, but there remain practical considerations that have discouraged these types of housing. For example, some municipalities have restrictions about maximum coverage of a lot, preventing these garden units from being built. Bill 185 would give the government regulation-making authority to change those policies, encouraging more of these homes to be built.

On another note, we will soon see an updated version of the building code. The government has announced that the upcoming building code revisions will allow more consistency with national standards, reducing duplication and red tape, and new projects such as mass timber buildings of 18 storeys will be permitted.

If this bill is passed, regulation-making authority will exist to allow pre-approved standardized housing designs such as the catalogues being prepared by the federal and British Columbia governments. This would allow quick construction and even the use of modular construction.

Madam Speaker, I recently visited an Oakville-based business called Ballance Containers. This is an organization that specializes in modular construction, with simple,

quick, and easy-to-build homes. I was impressed to see the versatility, easiness and efficiency of this unconventional technology. Innovative solutions like modular construction is absolutely critical to achieving our goals. I'm glad to see the government supporting it. And I hope we will be able to see even more creative solutions in the future.

Finally, this bill would make it easier for publicly assisted universities to build student housing. This will allow faster and cheaper construction of student residences, with more density around campuses. Students, like everyone else, deserve a home they can afford. By giving universities these additional tools, these institutions will have the authority to take the initiative to build affordable housing options with an easy commute to campus for students.

I also want to briefly mention one more tool that we are giving municipalities so they can continue to grow. This bill is proposing to enable municipalities to provide incentives to specified businesses where necessary to attract investment in Ontario. If the Lieutenant Governor in Council determines that an incentive is desirable in the provincial interest, they would have regulatory authority to permit it. This will allow us to attract even more investments, such as in manufacturing and housing.

We know that good-paying jobs and large investments from businesses are important to keep our economy thriving. Already, the reduction of red tape and the implementation of incentives have allowed tens of billions of dollars to flow to Ontario. Huge investments in manufacturing, such as electric vehicles and batteries, have been made possible because of the work of this government in attracting record-setting levels of investments.

Our thanks go, of course, to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for leading the government's progress on attracting foreign investment.

Therefore, we must continue to attract investments. And if necessary, that means giving municipalities the tools they need to succeed.

With proper oversight, this will be an important tool to help strengthen our economy, attract investments, and continue building our cities.

Finally, let me mention the changes this bill is proposing for streamlining the appeals process for new development projects. In the last two years alone, 67,000 housing units were subject to third-party appeals at the Ontario Land Tribunal because of official plan or zoning issues—this is tens of thousands of homes being delayed. We want to reduce the number of delays caused by unnecessary or frivolous appeals, so this bill would, if passed, focus third-party appeals to key participants such as public bodies and utility providers. This bill would therefore increase certainty for developers, helping them get shovels in the ground at a quick and steady pace. We don't want anything to delay these projects, nor do we want to cause Ontarians unnecessary agony as they wait for months on end for endless appeals. Our goal is to reduce delays, remove unnecessary costs, create standardized and efficient processes so that projects can get under way.

In conclusion, there are a lot of proposed changes packed into this bill. But they all come back to the same goal: Our government wants to reduce red tape, make it easier to grow our cities and build homes. No single solution or idea is going solve the problem. There is no bulletproof solution. But every single one of these solutions is a step forward. And working together, I'm confident we will be able to meet our goals.

At the end of the day, every family deserves a home that meets their needs at a price they can afford. We will do what we can to make that happen, including by cutting red tape and getting the government out of the way. We will get it done.

That's why I fully support Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for your speech here today. One of the things that I would say on this side of the House that we're concerned about is good planning that happens in a transparent way and good planning that puts people at the centre of planning and the outcomes, not developers. One of the things we learned from the greenbelt gravy train, if you will, is that when you put developers at the centre of it, you have to roll back these changes, you've lost trust, you've lost the progress that we will need when it comes to building houses.

Can you tell me why people of the province of Ontario should trust that this government, when they're removing planning from regional governments and when they're allowing developers to appeal directly to the OLT—how is this not going to continue to be a developer-driven planning process in Ontario?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thanks to my colleague on the opposite side for the good question. I think the main goal here is to accelerate the building. We are in a crisis. We need to build more homes, and having the process of going to local government and then regional government, then OLT—this is three cycles to get something judged on or something decided on. We have trust in OLT to be able to look into a bigger picture and make sure that the projects which are in need and have justification to go are a go.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks this afternoon on Bill 185. Speaker, I know the member opposite knows very well, since being here since 2018, we inherited a government that had unbearable regulatory costs. Businesses were literally fleeing the province under the former Liberal government. We brought forward many red tape bills, and we continue to bring forward red tape bills to decrease the costs on our small businesses and on our home builders, in particular, in this legislation.

Can the member please elaborate on why it's important we continue to remove barriers for our municipal partners and our home builders across Ontario?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague for the good question. Actually, it's a very good question. Ontario is expected to grow by more than two million people over the next 10 years, with approximately 70% of this growth taking place in the greater Golden Horseshoe region. To accommodate this growing population, the government has committed to enable the construction of at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. The Building Faster Fund is one of many ways our government is building more housing so Ontarians can build homes. This three-year \$1.2-billion program is designed to encourage municipalities to address the housing supply crisis. The fund rewards municipalities that make significant progress against their target by providing funding for housing-enabling and community-enabling infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to say, do people know that rent in Toronto is \$3,300 for a one-bedroom? In Niagara, it's over \$2,000; 23,600 households in Niagara for core housing needs—what that means is 30% of their income goes towards rent. It would take somebody to work 81 hours at minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom home in Niagara. No rent controls are not working.

So, my question, which I think is fair, reasonable and certainly balanced: Do you believe that we need rent controls on new builds from 2019 forward so people can afford to rent homes in Toronto?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague opposite. I would like to ask my colleague in opposition about the cost to pay the mortgage for this apartment if it's a condo worth, let's say, \$500,000. Why are we attributing that—there is a shortage in the supply. There's high interest rates for mortgages, causing the prices to get—even for the people who are not paying rent, let's be frank here: People who are paying a mortgage now cannot afford paying their mortgage, not to even speak about rental units. So we need—we have been asking for the federal government to look into the interest rates because people cannot afford to pay their mortgage. And of course, rental is linked to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills for that wonderful presentation.

Madam Speaker, our government delivered on a commitment to cut red tape. Businesses like those in my riding—I have 1,800 small businesses in my riding. This is extreme pressure from the competitive global market, and the economic outlook around the world is fragile. That is why it is important that our government continue to take strong action to remove red tape to support our small businesses through direct cost savings.

Can the member please explain what is being done to help our small businesses remain competitive in the global market?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague for the good question. Again, we are trying to draw more investments to Ontario to have more jobs and

grow the economy. With those companies coming in, we have to remove the red tape to enable the housing to meet this growth. It could be immediate growth, if we are talking about St. Thomas, where there is a new Volkswagen site. That's a 16 million-square-foot site, with thousands and thousands of workers who need to move to that location. How can we get that building fast to meet the needs of the workers who are going to run that business?

This is why in this three-year program, \$1.2 billion is designed to encourage municipalities to address this housing crisis and build the infrastructure. We even incentivize them if they reach at least 80% and if they exceed their target—

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

Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We agree that we are in a housing crisis. We've been in a housing crisis for six years and it's getting worse under this government, not better. We see this government's housing starts have gone down by 25% year over year.

What we had expected to see would be a bill that shows a sense of urgency in the crisis that we're facing. Well, we are disappointed, and so is the Ontario Real Estate Association. They literally say, "Finally, we are disappointed that two key recommendations by the province's own Housing Affordability Task Force ... have not been included in" this bill. "We need to build more homes on existing properties and allow upzoning along major corridors if we are going to address the housing affordability and supply ... in our province."

Finally, they said, "Eliminating exclusionary zoning and allowing four units, as of right, province-wide is an essential key to unlock affordable home ownership."

Can you comment on the disappointment of the Ontario Real Estate Association with this bill?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague for the question.

Actually, we have to say that there's no one-size-fits-all. When we talk about the housing crisis, we are talking about homes, townhomes, condo buildings, affordable homes. It's many, many aspects of housing. It's not one type of housing, and each one of them has its own characteristics. As we can see, allowing garden homes, allowing multiple units in one lot is adding. Allowing more density around transportation infrastructure is solving issues. Allowing open heights close to the stations, around the stations of the public transit infrastructure is adding more density. And, of course, affordable homes—we've seen that we removed the developer fees for rental and for attainable homes to encourage developers to build affordable homes to meet those—

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

Further debate?

1740

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House. I'm going to talk about schedule 10 to start off, and

I'm glad my colleague from Niagara West is here because I'm going to talk about Niagara Parks.

I met with Mayor Diodati yesterday at Falls Manor, a great restaurant on Lundy's Lane. It's been there forever. It serves great breakfast, lunch and dinner, so I want to shout-out to Falls Manor. But I met with Mayor Diodati on an issue that I was a little surprised about. I found out that April Jeffs, who is the chair of Niagara Parks, has been replaced. Her term is not up, I believe, until January. She was appointed by the Conservative government, and those that know me—I've been to government agencies; I've been on the committee, I've been off the committee, depending on what mood the government is in, and I don't normally stand up and talk about it, but I want to say that this was an appointment that was done right. April Jeffs has done an incredible job in Niagara Parks. They made more money last year than at any time in their history—David Adames, who is also the chair there that works there; he's the boss there.

It really surprised me that she was taken off. What I didn't understand, quite frankly, is that she was doing a good job, but what she was doing is, everybody in Niagara respected her. It didn't matter whether you were a Liberal, an NDP, a Conservative, a Green, she treated everybody the same. And there's a lot of investments that come into the parks, in particular down by the falls. It didn't make a lot of sense.

So I wanted to say to April: I am shocked that they made this announcement. I wanted to let her know that the Conservatives didn't call me and say, "Is she doing a good job or a bad job? Should we get somebody else?" But I think, from myself and in particular my staff—because April worked really closely with our staff; she actually worked for Tony Baldinelli for a while, who's a PC. Tony's staff and April and my staff worked very closely together, so I just want to say to April today: Thank you very much for a job well done and I'm really, really sorry that they decided to put a new chairperson there, which I'm sure will be announced sometime this week. I just wanted to get that out and say thanks, April. I really do appreciate when you treat people with respect and dignity.

The other one I wanted to talk about is the Fort Erie Lions Club before I get into my comments on the housing. But it's part of it. The Fort Erie Lions have built affordable housing for seniors. They had one that I think went up in 1991 and they want to build another one because there's a crisis in affordable housing for seniors. We know that because for seniors, a one-bedroom apartment in Fort Erie is 10 years; in Niagara-on-the-Lake, it's 12; and seven or eight for Niagara Falls. We currently have 10,000 families on wait-lists for affordable housing, and it's grown by 50% over the last six years. So I just want to tell a little story about Fort Erie and I'm going to read the notes so I get it right. I want to thank the Lions there that have been doing an incredible job in Fort Erie for the last number of years.

But here's what they've done: They work with all the partners; they have the full support of the Niagara region. A CMHC funding grant of \$83,000? Waived. Niagara

region development charges? Waived—\$694,000. Land development charges of \$555,000? Waived. Town parkland fees of \$124,000? Waived. Branscombe Family Foundation: a \$200,000 donation. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities's Green Municipal Fund grant: \$90,000 waived. And the reason why I read those out is it just shows how much support they have for seniors' development. And we said today, affordable housing is needed. It's particularly needed for seniors in our community. That includes Niagara—and I'm including Fort Erie in Niagara; Fort Erie is part of my riding.

In Fort Erie, the local Lions Club has been working tirelessly to get an affordable housing unit built. I was lucky to meet with them last week to discuss this in my office. The goal was to build 62 units at the same location they currently have one: a nine-storey, affordable independent living apartment complex for seniors in Fort Erie. I actually think we should probably do this right across the province. For seven years, they poured their hearts into the work, striving to make life better. They're a not-for-profit, independent living seniors' residence in Fort Erie, but unfortunately, their dreams have been met with roadblocks, their aspirations dashed by the cruel hand of fate.

Recently, an opportunity arose through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative residential allocation program, promising a beacon of hope with a \$5-million grant. Yet once again, they found themselves on the sidelines, overlooked and neglected. Even the Rapid Housing Initiative slipped through their fingers due to a mere technicality.

It's disheartening, to say the least, to witness their project, nurtured by the unwavering support of the Niagara region and the town of Fort Erie, being disregarded time and time again. Their voices, though loud in our community, seem to fade into insignificance when it comes to securing funding in the face of the affordable housing crisis for seniors—quite frankly, in all the Niagara region, not just for seniors. I think it's a shame.

This group has raised a tremendous amount of money and has been supported locally by the municipalities. These are projects that the government needs to be supporting. When people in our community come together to tackle a big problem we face like affordable housing, we as a government should be making it simpler for them, not harder. Their budget right now is a complex mix of grants, incentives, waivers, deferrals, subsidies and loans. We need to support projects like this and make it easier for direct grant funding to flow to get the project off the ground. If we start building true affordable housing again, we can begin to tackle the crisis.

What's interesting about this project—and I know my colleagues would be interested in it; I would think everybody on all sides of the House would be—is that it's shovel-ready. Think about that: shovel-ready, at a time that we've got an affordability crisis. They could start putting the shovels in the ground tomorrow if they get support.

I've asked the Minister of Housing to meet with this group. I think it's the week of May 14 that we have

Niagara week coming here. A lot of people are coming to ask the minister for some help on projects, so I've asked the minister to please meet with this group. They do incredible work. We all know our not-for-profits, our Lions and our Legions and the work that they do. It's volunteer week, by the way, so we should send a shout-out to all the volunteers who give up their time.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, I think we should give them a round, a hand. I agree there.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: So I'm just asking, to the government and to maybe some of the other colleagues on both sides of the road: This is a project that we should be supporting, and I'm hoping that the minister will find some time to meet with them during Niagara week.

I'll go on with a bit of my speech that I have, and I'll see what I can do with this.

When I speak to my staff each week and discuss the issues we're facing in our constituency office, I can guarantee you the one thing that comes up in all our offices—I don't care what party you belong to—is housing. We have a crisis in housing. The one thing we've agreed upon, quite frankly, in this House—my colleagues have said it; I've said it I don't know how many times—is that we have a crisis in housing. We agree that we need 1.5 million homes to be built. We also agree that we probably need two million. We also agree—sort of agree; we agree now. We didn't a year ago. We agree that we can build these houses without touching the greenbelt—although I'm a little concerned that some of the stuff in here may get us into the greenbelt situation again.

Each week like clockwork, my staff will tell me the heartbreaking stories of folks in our community who are struggling to find affordable housing or struggling to stay housed. My colleague from Ottawa talked about somebody coming into his office and needing a pair of shoes. That is not a story that's uncommon to us on this side of the House. I'm sure even the Conservatives will have some come into their office and talk about the fact that they can't pay their rent, they can't buy groceries. Quite frankly, they're going to food banks—all those things. I think that's happening everywhere. But the most important thing is housing. You need a place to live.

Unfortunately, in Niagara, we have some incredible social service organizations and staff at Niagara region who work hard each day to help folks, but sometimes that incredible work just isn't enough. We simply do not have enough affordable housing. The issue of affordable housing has reached a crisis point in Niagara, and inaction of our government has only worsened it.

Let us confront the sobering truth head-on: The wait times for a one-bedroom apartment in Niagara Falls—think about that, colleagues—is 21 years. You heard that right: 21 years. In Fort Erie—which I just mentioned, about a seniors' home—25% of the people who live in Fort Erie are seniors. I don't know if you knew that, but seniors are 25%; 12 years for a bachelor apartment. In St. Catharines, just down the road—my colleague is not here

today, obviously; I think she's in her riding—there's a 20-year wait-list for a one-bedroom apartment.

1750

These aren't just statistics; they are the harsh reality of a system that has failed the very people it was meant to serve. I think we can all agree with that. It's a betrayal of our duty to ensure that every individual, regardless of their economic status, has access to safe and affordable housing.

As if this weren't depressing enough—this one drives me nuts, and it really only happened over the last six years. I know a lot of my colleagues across the row—the Conservatives are talking, maybe not paying attention. But you should pay attention to this: Everywhere you go—and it's in your communities too; not just Niagara. It's in Toronto—encampments. We didn't even know what they were six years ago. Did we have homeless in Niagara? Yes, we would see them in different places. But an actual encampment, living in tents—we never saw that. And look what you see today. It's in every one of our communities. Put your hand up if you don't have an encampment. You can't do that. Even in Niagara West, they've got encampments.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: Even up north.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Up north.

It's a betrayal of our duty.

Encampments, families living in tents, individuals struggling to survive in makeshift shelters—these scenes are unacceptable in one of the richest provinces in the country and in a country that's one of the richest countries in the world. How does this happen?

Is it right for a corporation and the Weston family to make billions of dollars on raising grocery prices when we have people who don't have housing, who can't afford groceries, who can't afford to pay their rent?

Something is wrong with our system, and I'm not just blaming the Conservatives for it. This has gone on far too long. As elected MPPs, we have an obligation to speak out against it. These scenes are unacceptable.

We just heard this morning from the member for Windsor West that the member for Barrie—Innisfil has been referring people without housing to a for-profit encampment—trying to make money on an encampment. Those are the solutions of the government.

They are the harsh reality of our present-day Niagara—a reality that should stir our principles and compel us to act with urgency. I know my colleague said that all day today—there doesn't seem to be any urgency in this bill.

Where is the action from our government? Where are the concrete steps to address this crisis and provide relief to those in desperate need? The silence is deafening, and the lack of meaningful intervention is nothing short of disgraceful.

We know that the solutions are not in this legislation. As the leader of the Green Party said this morning, this is like bringing a garden hose to a forest fire.

Madam Speaker, we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the suffering unfolding in our own backyard. We cannot continue to allow government inaction to stand in the way of justice and compassion. The time for excuses has long

passed; now is the time for action. We must demand accountability from our elected officials—and I'm not just saying the Conservative government; I'm saying all levels of government—and hold them to their promises of serving the best interests of all Niagara residents and Ontario. We must advocate for policies that prioritize the creation of affordable housing and ensure that no one is left behind or forced onto the streets.

Moreover, we must recognize that addressing the affordable housing crisis requires a comprehensive approach that tackles root causes such as income inequality, lack of affordable health care, and inadequate social support systems. It demands bold and innovative solutions that prioritize human dignity above all else. Unfortunately, this isn't it, in the bill.

However, I think it's important to recognize an important policy change that many municipal leaders have been calling for in this province—it's important for all my colleagues to hear on both sides of the House. A use-it-or-lose-it policy has been called on for years from municipal partners—it was even there 10 years ago, when I was a city councillor in Niagara Falls—as they watch the development land sit empty so corporations can flip the land and make a profit.

Non-economical, sensitive land or non-agricultural land that is suited for development shouldn't be sitting empty when we have a housing crisis. When we give municipalities like Niagara Falls a housing build target but allow developers to sit on land without building, it makes it impossible for those cities to hit those targets.

I want to read something from a local mayor, Mayor Diodati, and his council, by the way. But this isn't Wayne Gates saying this; this is the mayor of Niagara Falls, and this is what he said:

“It's the old saying, ‘You can lead the horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.’ Currently, the high interest rates and inflation have put a damper on construction. We're ready to go. We're all ramped up. We brought on extra staff, we put in extra processes to make things go smoothly, but at the end of the day it's up to the developers to get the shovels in the ground.”

And he's right: It's up to the developers to get the shovels in the ground.

Developers are sitting on land without building anything during a housing crisis. It's like having a bunch of food and not sharing it with people who are hungry. It's not fair. Think about it: We have a serious shortage of homes in Ontario. Rents have gone through the roof. I've already said: \$3,300 in Toronto, \$2,000 in Niagara Falls. It's around \$2,000 St. Catharines. Some people don't have anywhere to live. But instead of using the land they own to build houses, some developers are sitting on it, waiting for the perfect time to make more money.

This is where a use-it-or-lose-it policy comes in. It's a simple idea: If developers don't start building on the land they own within a reasonable amount of time, they lose the right to keep it. It's like saying if you're not going to share your food, someone else will get it.

Why is this policy so important? Well, first off, it helps solve the housing crisis. When developers actually build homes on the land they own, it means more houses for people to live in. That's good news for everyone, especially those struggling to find a place to call home.

Secondly, it's about fairness. It's not right for developers to sit on the land while people are struggling. We need to make sure everyone has a fair shot at having a place to live. That means making sure developers do their part. But here's the thing: The government took a really long time to do something about this problem. They knew it was happening, but they didn't act fast enough. It's like they saw the food hoarding but didn't do anything to stop it.

In the end, it's a simple idea: If you're lucky enough to own land, you should use it to help others. If you are not willing to do that, well, you shouldn't get to keep it. It's as simple as that, Madam Speaker.

I want to say—I don't have a lot of time, so I better get to rent control. While promising that the government is finally acting on developers that just sit on the land, there's so much missing from this legislation to help folks struggling to find affordable housing. Let's look at something simple that changes the lives of people right away: real rent controls. This government took those rent controls away, largely helping corporate landlords across the province rip off more and more people struggling to make

ends meet. We need those rent controls back right away, in particular for after 2019. That's when they took them off—on the builds. I want to highlight the importance of extending rent controls to all new builds in Ontario, covering all buildings that are currently under production.

This is a big deal, and something we need to take seriously. Rent control is about making sure that people don't have to worry about their rent going up too much, too fast, and I really want to—hopefully I can get to it. I think in the last 30 seconds, I think we'll talk about renovictions.

Renovictions happen when a landlord kicks out tenants so they can renovate their homes and then charge higher rents to new tenants. It's like getting evicted because your landlord wants to give your apartment a fancy makeover. And let me tell you: Renovictions are a big problem, especially as a long-term critic for seniors in places like Niagara who are living on a fixed income. The folks who have spent their whole lives working hard. Now they're being forced out of their homes because someone wants to make a quick buck. It's wrong, it's not fair, and we should do something about it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It's now 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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| 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 | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé |
| | | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre |
| Jones, Trevor (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Jordan, John (PC) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Ke, Vincent (IND) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC) | York Centre / York-Centre | Solicitor General / Solliciteur général |
| Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs |
| | | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre | |
| Leardi, Anthony (PC) | Essex | |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean | |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Mantha, Michael (IND) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC) | Durham | Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises |
| McCrimmon, Karen (LIB) | Kanata—Carleton | |
| McGregor, Graham (PC) | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord | |
| McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB) | Beaches—East York | |
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor |
| | | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | |
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |

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

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
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| Vaugois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| West, Jamie (NDP) | Sudbury | |
| Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes |
| Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| Vacant | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | |
| Vacant | Milton | |