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Assembly
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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43rd Parliament

Thursday
25 April 2024

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43^e législature

Jeudi
25 avril 2024

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 April 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 avril 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALLIED CONTRACTORS (KITCHENER)
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Mr. Fraser, on behalf of Madame Collard, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr32, An Act to revive Allied Contractors (Kitchener) Limited.

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

Second reading agreed to.

ALLIED CONTRACTORS (KITCHENER)
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Mr. Fraser, on behalf of Madame Collard, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr32, An Act to revive Allied Contractors (Kitchener) Limited.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BONGO STUDIOS INC.
ACT, 2024

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

Bill Pr34, An Act to revive Bongo Studios Inc.

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

Second reading agreed to.

BONGO STUDIOS INC.
ACT, 2024

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

Bill Pr34, An Act to revive Bongo Studios Inc.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WINCHESTER DESIGN BUILD INC.
ACT, 2024

Ms. Bell moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr35, An Act to revive Winchester Design Build Inc.

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

Second reading agreed to.

WINCHESTER DESIGN BUILD INC.
ACT, 2024

Ms. Bell moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr35, An Act to revive Winchester Design Build Inc.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

EASTERN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL
CONGREGATION ACT, 2024

Mr. Pang moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr36, An Act to revive Eastern Children of Israel Congregation.

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

Second reading agreed to.

EASTERN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL
CONGREGATION ACT, 2024

Mr. Pang moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr36, An Act to revive Eastern Children of Israel Congregation.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

DOREEN SCOLNICK INVESTMENTS
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Ms. Smith moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr37, An Act to revive Doreen Scolnick Investments Limited.

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

DOREEN SCOLNICK INVESTMENTS
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Ms. Smith moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr37, An Act to revive Doreen Scolnick Investments Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.
Third reading agreed to.

THE SIX BREWING COMPANY
INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Hogarth moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr38, An Act to revive The Six Brewing Company Inc.

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

THE SIX BREWING COMPANY
INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Hogarth moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr38, An Act to revive The Six Brewing Company Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.
Third reading agreed to.

1082472 ONTARIO LIMITED
ACT, 2024

Mr. Byers moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr39, An Act to revive 1082472 Ontario Limited.

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

1082472 ONTARIO LIMITED
ACT, 2024

Mr. Byers moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr39, An Act to revive 1082472 Ontario Limited.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

LUSO CANADIAN CHARITABLE
SOCIETY ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2024

Mr. Cuzzetto moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr42, An Act respecting the Luso Canadian Charitable Society.

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

Second reading agreed to.

LUSO CANADIAN CHARITABLE
SOCIETY ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2024

Mr. Cuzzetto moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr42, An Act respecting the Luso Canadian Charitable Society.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: At this time, no further business.

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

The House recessed from 0911 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm so happy to be saying this today. This past Friday, I was pleased to announce almost \$2 million in new funding to support primary care in Windsor–Essex. This—

Interjections.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Yes, incredible news.

This funding will connect almost 8,000 more in our community with new services in primary care much closer to home.

Part of this funding will create new practitioner positions at the community health centre based at the Canadian Mental Health Association Windsor–Essex branch. More health human resources will mean more patients can access the roster of services available.

Part of this funding is also expanding the mobile medical support team, a mobile health care clinic that can truly go anywhere in the moment. Through episodic care,

preventive care or wraparound services, our vulnerable, high-risk, underserved areas can more easily be helped.

Building on the \$424,525 in support of the Essex County Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic just announced a few weeks ago in Kingsville, bringing more care to 1,200 county residents; the Windsor-Essex regional acute-care hospital; the mental health in-patient bed expansion at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare; among many, many other investments, our government is investing deeply in health care in Windsor and Essex county.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Jones, our government's additional \$546 million over three years for inter-professional primary care teams will connect 600,000 people with primary care closer to home.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, London tenants got some good news last month, when the city of London moved closer to joining Hamilton in preventing bad-faith renovations.

My office hears regularly from London West tenants about unethical landlords who use illegal renovations to remove low-income tenants and jack up rents. In the face of a dire shortage of affordable housing options, the renovation notice can be devastating.

Tenant advocacy group ACORN reports a 300% increase in renovations between 2017 and 2021. Those numbers continue to grow, just like the average cost of rent. Meanwhile, vacancy rates in London are at record lows.

Municipalities like London are stepping in with bylaw protection because, unlike the Ford government, they recognize that illegally forcing low-income tenants out of their units when there is nowhere else for them to go is both inhumane and bad public policy.

According to ACORN, London ranks fifth in the province in the number of renovation notices, but it's not only renovations that are squeezing London tenants. Above-guideline increases, or AGIs, also create huge pressures for tenants with low or fixed incomes, and London ranks fourth in the province in the number of AGI applications, typically made by big corporate landlords.

Speaker, almost one third of Londoners are renters. Why is this government doing so little to protect them?

KHALSA AID

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I rise today to commend Khalsa Aid Canada for their remarkable humanitarian efforts, embodying the Sikh principles of selflessness and equality. As a non-profit organization, Khalsa Aid extends its support globally, exceeding religious boundaries to aid all those in need.

They are currently organizing a food drive in which they aim to provide over 200,000 meals for local food banks within the GTA. This stands as a testament to their impactful contributions to the community. In a time marked by economic challenges, initiatives like these are

invaluable in addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity.

In April, as we recognize Sikh Heritage Month, we are reminded of the profound teachings of our gurus, emphasizing courage, selflessness and equality. Khalsa Aid embodies these teachings and promotes the values of the Sikh religion through acts of seva, which is giving back to the community.

Members of the community who can and want to drop off donations can at select GTA gurdwaras, including Ontario Khalsa Darbar, Guru Nanak Sikh Centre, Dasmesh Darbar and Nanaksar, until April 30, to help Khalsa Aid in their goal of distributing 200,000 meals.

1020

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, gave us three principles to live by: naam japna, remembering God; kirat kamao, earning an honest living; and vand keh chakko, sharing with the less fortunate. It is truly inspiring to see Khalsa Aid living by these principles and making such a positive impact within our community.

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm wearing my grandfather's tie this morning, from the Clan Davison. It's part of my family's heritage. I've never sought permission to wear this tie in the House, however; and I know other members with Scottish roots have worn tartan garments, too. But there was a time when the tartan was banned. For 40 years after the Battle of Culloden, as British soldiers pillaged and cleared the lands of my ancestors, the crown banned the wearing of the tartan. That insult to my ancestors no longer exists.

But sadly, Speaker, I believe that today we are carrying a similar insult to Palestinian Canadians, Arabs and Muslims when we ban the wearing of kaffiyehs in this House.

The kaffiyeh is a symbol of rich cultural history. I am told it represents the fishing nets, olive trees, and ancient trade routes of Palestine. I believe we should be celebrating that culture in this place and not banning it.

The ban on the kaffiyeh in this House, in my opinion, only contributes to the rise of dehumanization, polarization and hatred that we are seeing. It divides us, precisely at the moment when we should be doing everything among all of us to bring our people together in the broader cause of peace.

I am not Palestinian; that's true. But when the civil liberties of Canadians are under threat, I believe it impacts every single person in this building. It is a stain on the fabric of this House. We can, together, remove that stain if we stop the banning of kaffiyehs in this place, and I encourage us to do it right away.

FESTIVAL OF THE MAPLES

Mr. John Jordan: Speaker, this year marks the 48th anniversary of the annual Festival of the Maples in Perth, Ontario. Since 1976, Perth has celebrated a legacy of

liquid gold against a backdrop of heritage architecture on the banks of the Tay River.

Hosted by the Perth chamber of commerce, the Festival of the Maples embraces all that Lanark county has to offer, with artisans, vendors, musicians and award-winning maple producers.

Some of our smaller emerging producers were recipients of recent funding through this government, in partnership with the Canadian government. My thanks to Minister Thompson and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, 15 successful applicants in the Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston riding received a total of just over \$239,000 to support the productivity and growth of their maple syrup businesses.

Speaker, Lanark county is hailed as the maple syrup capital of Ontario, and at this time of year, visitors are hiking our sugar bush trails, touring award-winning multi-generational sugar camps, and heading home with some of the finest maple syrup in the world. Throughout Lanark county, you'll find maple syrup featured in restaurants, bakeries, coffee roasters and distilleries, all eager to embrace the sweet taste of spring.

I extend a warm Lanark county welcome to the 48th Festival of the Maples, this Saturday, April 27, in heritage Perth. I hope to see you there.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, the Ford Conservatives' planned service reduction of the Union Pearson Express, which they walked back in less than 48 hours, reminded me that since forming government, Conservatives have been forced to reverse their decisions, multiple times.

The cuts to the greenbelt—the Auditor General reported that a small group of connected developers stood to gain \$8.3 billion from increased land values, and that led to an RCMP investigation.

Bill 124, which capped public sector wages to 1%—reversed because they lost in the courts twice.

Who can forget the “notwithstanding” clause suspending charter rights and freedoms, used to strip education workers' right to fair bargaining? The Conservatives faced a general strike.

Dissolving Peel region without first finding out the cost and the impact on public services—the region didn't dissolve, but it still cost taxpayers millions.

Massive retroactive cuts to public health, only paused after pushback—it took a pandemic to realize that cuts to public health are a terrible idea and put everyone at risk.

And some just downright foolish—like introducing the blue licence plates that were not visible at night and having to discontinue them.

Speaker, I only list a few, but you see the pattern. The Conservatives have a habit of making obvious bad decisions and reversing them. The Premier says it's because he's open-minded and listens to the people. If that's true, then don't hand over public lands at Ontario Place in a secret

95-year deal; stop privatization of our health care system; stop interfering with the Ontario Energy Board and independent regulator on behalf of Enbridge. Prove it.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Last week was volunteer appreciation week, and I was honoured to attend the volunteer service awards in my riding. Volunteers are the backbone of Ontario communities, and I was honoured to recognize more than 40 outstanding volunteers in Burlington. These volunteers have committed from five years of service to 45 years of volunteer time to our community. That is truly amazing. Together, they have accumulated over 700 years and thousands of hours of their time volunteering for various organizations.

The work volunteers do allows children and youth to participate in recreational and community activities, and helps people to experience culture and the arts. Volunteers also support seniors in our community as they participate in activities, and provide supports to various religious and service organizations. Their selfless dedication and commitment make a significant and positive impact on society.

Congratulations to everyone who received an award at this week's ceremony, and thank you for the many hours of volunteer service in our community. Your dedication, kindness and support embody the very best of the Ontario spirit and help to bring communities together, inspire others and foster a sense of inclusion and connection.

CANCER SCREENING

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, yesterday we had the opportunity to meet with the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network here at Queen's Park. During their all-party cancer caucus, they stressed the necessity of cancer care as part of Ontario's health care system. One thing that they stressed was the importance of screening and early intervention to increase the likelihood of treatment and remission in individuals.

This hit home for me. Right now, communities like Wawa, Hornepayne, Chapleau and White River are not scheduled as destinations for the Screen for Life mobile cancer screening bus. Screen for Life is a vital service for rural communities that do not have regular access to cancer screenings such as mammograms, pap tests and tests for colon cancer. Without access to a mobile diagnostic service, residents in these communities will have to travel upwards of 250 kilometres one way—and that means they won't travel and they won't get caught early.

Speaker, I share the concerns of residents who have reached out to my office about the loss of access to cancer screening and early intervention. We must ensure that rural and remote communities in northern Ontario are not left behind in our efforts to treat cancer across our province.

My office will continue to work with the cancer care programs in northern Ontario to make sure that services to

all these communities are returned so that people can once again get timely access to cancer screening close to home.

CROSBY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL VISIT

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm excited to share the heartwarming experience of my recent visit to Crosby Heights Public School. The eagerness of the grade 5 students to understand the workings of the provincial government and my role therein was truly inspiring.

As I engaged with these young minds, their curiosity and enthusiasm were encouraging. They asked insightful questions and displayed a genuine interest in the legislative process and its impact on their lives. They also wanted to know what my roles are, what do I do at Queen's Park, and how I can represent them as their voice. It was a reminder of the importance of fostering civic engagement from an early age.

This visit beautifully aligns with my community event, the April Monday Matters initiative that was just organized recently. We strive to connect with our constituents and address issues close to their hearts.

1030

I'm grateful for the opportunity to interact with the future leaders of our province, and I look forward to continuing our efforts to promote civic education and engagement in our community.

EDDIE MATTHEWS

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's wonderful to rise here today to recognize the outstanding work of the general manager of the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce, Eddie Matthews. He recently announced that he will be retiring from the chamber. I've had the privilege of working with Eddie in his capacity as general manager during my time as a member in this assembly for Perth–Wellington, and even before I arrived in this place.

Eddie is a diligent and hard-working individual who always has the best interests of our business community at heart.

Eddie has been with the chamber for the past five years, and during his time as general manager, he endured tough challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, completely reworking the chamber, how they ran their key events, and he was there for our small businesses as they dealt with those challenges. He was there to support our local businesses in good times and bad. He has played a key role in expanding the chamber of commerce membership beyond Stratford and into the area of West Perth and St. Marys.

Speaker, before Eddie was even general manager of the chamber, he had a long and successful career in radio. And I know in whatever he does next, he will succeed again.

I would like to sincerely extend my gratitude to Eddie for all of his service and leadership to our community.

I wish you all the best in your next chapter with Lori.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Dave Smith, Lynn Blaxley and Ms. McCall from Toronto East Residents for Renewable Energy. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm so happy to welcome, for the first time, my constituency staff, Paul de Roos, Marisa Patricelli and Melody Watson, as well as East Gwillimbury town councillor Susan Lahey. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: They're not here yet, but they will be joining us very soon—grade 5 students from Fern Avenue public school, with their teacher, Lisa Nave.

Welcome.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: She's really upset with me for doing this, but I have to. My daughter Lily is here today. She has a dance competition, so she has to come to work with me this morning.

We want to wish all Dancercise dancers good luck.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to introduce to the House Deani Van Pelt, president of Edvance, and Tim Bentum, director of leadership for Edvance.

Welcome to the people's House.

Mr. Rick Byers: It's my pleasure to welcome Monica Singh Soares to the House today. Not only is Monica an outstanding councillor from the municipality of Southgate in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; she's also, more importantly, the mother of page Bella-Sitara, who has been with us the last three weeks.

Welcome, Monica.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'd like to welcome back to the House my friend from Ottawa and member of the Ontario Autism Coalition Kate Dudley-Logue.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome the family of Lyra, our page from Kitchener Centre: Bob Cutler, Sue Cutler and Matty Hayes. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome the terrific Toronto East Residents for Renewable Energy, TERRE, to the House today.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Minister of Health.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health announced a further expansion of for-profit clinics, sealing the deal for a two-tiered health care system in Ontario. Hospitals all over Ontario are being starved, with funding slashed, deficits rising, and operating rooms left empty. The Minister knows the expansion of private clinics is draining resources and staff from our public hospitals, so my question is, is this deliberate?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: First and foremost, over the last two years, on average, our hospitals have seen a 4% increase in their operating budgets.

For a decade, under the Liberals, supported by the NDP, they underfunded the health care system, closing hospitals, closing hospital beds, creating lengthy wait times, firing nurses, and cutting medical school residency spots.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is making record investments in our health care to provide a system responsive to the needs of Ontarians. Since 2018, we've increased our health care budget by 30%, investing \$85 billion into our publicly funded health care system this year alone.

Our bold and innovative action has seen Ontario have the shortest wait times for surgeries in Canada, with 80% of all Ontarians now receiving surgery within the target time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize; I have to stop the clock. The member will take her seat, please.

It has long been the established practice of this House that members should not use props, signage or accessories that are intended to express a political message or are likely to cause disorder. This also extends to members' attire, where logos, symbols, slogans, and other political messaging are not permitted. This Legislature is a forum for debate, and the expectation in the chamber is that political statements should be made during debate rather than through the use of props or symbols.

I'm going to ask the member for Hamilton Centre to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I must warn the member for Hamilton Centre.

Sarah Jama, you are named. You must leave the chamber.

The member is currently not eligible to be recognized in the House pursuant to the order of the House adopted October 23, 2023. As a result of being named, the member, for the remainder of the day, is ineligible to vote on matters before the assembly; attend and participate in any committee proceedings; use the media studio; and table notices of motion, written questions and petitions.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll recognize the leader—no, we're not doing points of order during question period; I apologize. But you have an opportunity to place a supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent, Speaker, from the members opposite.

1040

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay, I'm going to make this a supplementary. I'll make this question to the House leader. This is outrageous that we are seeing one of our members removed from—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's not the same subject as the original question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So, for those who are watching, you'll understand now that I have to continue my questions on the issue of health care, but I'll be returning to this issue in my next question.

Other provinces have tried private clinics and have been forced to walk it back as wait times got longer and the quality of care got worse.

Opening up more for-profit facilities will mean fewer nurses and health care workers for public hospitals, where we have emergency rooms and the capacity to do the most complex procedures.

Why is this minister ignoring the lessons from BC and Alberta, who saw their health systems worsen with privatization?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: In this year's budget, we invested \$743 million into health human resources, to be able to stabilize the resources of our hospitals.

Our plan is adding thousands of hours of MRI and CT scans and more procedures, including hip and knee replacements, closer to home, all accessible with your OHIP card, not your credit card. Our plan has already reduced the surgical backlog to pre-pandemic levels. We've added 14,000 additional OHIP-covered cataract surgeries annually and added 97,000 MRIs and 116,000 CT operating hours.

But we know more needs to be done.

That is why we're expanding our community and surgical diagnostic centres to deliver more convenient care closer to home.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, people out there don't want to see private equity firms and hedge funds running our health care system. It's as simple as that.

When businesses, which are motivated by profits, enter the health care system, it's patients who have to pay the price. We've already seen this happen with cataract surgeries that cost two and three times more in for-profit surgical clinics than in the public hospital.

Back to the Minister of Health: Does the minister like corporations making money off of sick people?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Our government will not tolerate clinics taking advantage of a loophole that was created by the federal legislation. That is why the minister wrote to Minister Holland asking to close that loophole. We will work with our federal counterparts to ensure that that loophole is closed, that people of Ontario are not charged for OHIP-insured services.

Speaker, the people can always go to protect-publichealthcare@ontario.ca and report any incidents of being overcharged for our publicly funded health care.

Ontario will continue to ensure that we have the best publicly funded health care when and where the people need it.

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Ms. Marit Stiles: We've already seen a member in this Legislature, in this assembly, silenced, which I think

members on our side of the House in the official opposition strongly opposed. Today, we are seeing a member removed for wearing a sign of her culture and community. I am appalled, and I think I speak for everyone here on this side of the House—and I actually believe I speak for many on the other side of the House, as well.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Really?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Wow, that's interesting. Well, you should tell your Premier.

Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Will the Premier stand behind his words and compel his caucus to support the freedom to wear cultural attire here at Queen's Park?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Leader of the Opposition is, of course, speaking of a member of her caucus whom she removed from her caucus.

Having said that, I think the Premier has been very clear on where he stands. It's a decision that the Speaker has made.

At the same time, Speaker, I am quite concerned that the Leader of the Opposition continues to suggest that the members of her caucus or any caucus should be compelled to make a decision. That is not the way this place works. I am somewhat concerned that the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that she's compelling her members to make a decision.

We will continue to follow the rules, as established by this House, until those rules are changed.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontario is a place where we celebrate different cultures. We work to uphold the values of diversity, and we understand the pain that communities feel when they are not represented. We observe truth and reconciliation day to acknowledge the impact of colonial oppression and the erasure and, at times, criminalization of cultural symbols.

I have never seen a government more willing to divide than this government here today, and we've seen it for months and months. At a time when we should be bringing people together, they want to remove people.

So will the Premier support the freedom of cultural expression and stand with thousands of Ontarians who want to see the reversal of this kaffiyeh ban?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, let me be very clear to the Leader of the Opposition: The government does not have a ban. That is very clear. What the Leader of the Opposition is doing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: What the Leader of the Opposition is doing is dividing people by suggesting that the government of Ontario has a ban. That is not the case.

I speak very directly to the people of the province: The government of Ontario has not banned anything. In fact, it was this government and this Legislature, led by that Minister of Transportation, who, in the last Parliament—

Interjections.

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

Member for Ottawa Centre, come to order. Leader of the Opposition, come to order. Member for Brampton North, come to order.

I think there's still some time. Start the clock.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition really ought to be ashamed for what it is that she is doing here today—suggesting to the people of the province of Ontario that the government has made a decision that it has not done. This is a decision of the Legislative Assembly. If those rules change, of course we will follow those—

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I would say to the House leader that all four leaders of the parties here have agreed and have acknowledged that the ban on wearing the kaffiyeh was unnecessarily divisive. The Premier said that he was going to support a motion to erase that. The only people who I heard say no when we had a unanimous-consent motion before this House were members opposite, members of this government. It's not my job to whip their members.

I am going to say, I am absolutely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Again, I am appalled by this, as a member of this assembly. We have an attempt here again to not only silence a member and remove a member, but we have an attempt by this government to try to further divide Ontarians. This is really appalling behaviour from this government. I don't even know what to say anymore.

I will say, I wish the Premier was here to answer this question—

Interjections.

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

I remind all members that we don't make reference to the absence of any member, because on any given day, one of us might be not here, as we know.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The member for Niagara West, come to order. The member for Mississauga-Lakeshore, come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre, come to order.

Start the clock.

The government House leader can respond.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me again remind the Leader of the Opposition that the member she is referencing was kicked out of her caucus by her. She wasn't kicked out of a Progressive Conservative caucus for the views that she

held. She was kicked out of the NDP caucus because of the views that she held. Perhaps she didn't want to be compelled, like the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that she is doing to the rest of her members over there.

1050

What Progressive Conservatives do on this side of the House is stand up for all of the people of the province of Ontario. We don't sit on our benches, compelling our members. We stand up for everybody, no matter where you come from, no matter what you believe in. We don't use this chamber as a place to divide people. That's not what responsible parliamentarians do. It is what she does and—

Interjections.

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

Members will please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The government House leader, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The government House leader, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is warned.

Start the clock.

The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. New government documents obtained by Global News reveal that this government continues to underfund affordable housing. The Conservatives have cut funding to community housing programs even though the wait-list for an affordable home has ballooned to well over 65,000 people.

My question to the minister: Why is this government cutting funding to affordable housing at a time when the homelessness and housing crisis has never been worse?

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, we're not cutting funding for affordable housing.

Do you know who's cutting funding? The Liberal-NDP government in Ottawa. That is who is cutting funding, by billions of dollars, for the people of Ontario. It's an agreement that they signed in 2018 with the previous government, that we have honoured. We have overachieved, thanks to the actions that we have taken and our partnership with municipalities across the province of Ontario. Speaker, 426% of renovations have been completed under this government—because we inherited a mess from the others—11,000 of the 19,000 units that had to be built over 10 years were already there. But unilaterally, the NDP-Liberal government in Ottawa has decided to cut billions of dollars from the people of the province of Ontario for affordable housing.

I ask the member opposite—they have an opportunity to call their federal cousins in Ottawa to say that they will not support the federal budget unless the federal budget includes the restoration of the billions of dollars in funds that were unilaterally removed from affordable housing in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The minister can spin all he wants and deflect blame, but documents reveal that this government is spending less on community housing and is making the homelessness crisis worse. The goal should be to prevent homelessness, which is better for people and costs less in the long run.

Will the minister do the right thing and restore community housing funding?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Honestly, I do not have a clue what they are talking about, Mr. Speaker. In the member's own riding, a 33% increase in housing funding—in the member's own riding. Do you know who has done that? This government has done that. Do you know who voted against it? That member and that caucus. I guess they were compelled to vote against all of those initiatives. That's what happened.

There's one—one—government that is opposed to affordable housing funding, and that is the federal Liberal and NDP government, who unilaterally decided to cut funding to the province of Ontario. They didn't cut funding anywhere else, just Ontario. And do you know who's staying silent? It is the NDP in Ottawa. They have an opportunity to vote against the federal budget or to say, "Add the funding back in for the province of Ontario and then we will support the budget." But they'll stay silent, because they're just like the NDP here: irrelevant.

TAXATION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Energy. People across this province and in Whitby are struggling with out-of-control costs due to the federal carbon tax. This tax is punishing hard-working families and costing them hundreds of dollars more than the rebates they receive.

Speaker, it's unfair that the federal Liberals are making everything more expensive at a time when many Ontarians continue to face affordability concerns. But it seems like Justin Trudeau and his ally Bonnie Crombie don't care about reaching further into our pockets to achieve their own political objectives. This has to come to an end.

The carbon tax has to come to an end.

Could the minister please explain what our government is doing to support the people of Ontario without—

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, the member is right; we're not imposing a carbon tax in Ontario.

As a matter of fact, we're giving the people of Ontario tax breaks at the pumps—10.7 cents a litre until the end of this year. We're lowering taxes, we're lowering fees, and

as a result, we are seeing multi-billion dollar investments in our province.

As a matter of fact, right now, the Premier is standing in Alliston, Ontario, announcing the largest investment in our country's history, at the Honda plant.

We're seeing record investments, multi-billion dollar investments.

We have a plan for Ontario. It doesn't—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Your mike is not on. Time out. Take your seat.

I'll remind the members not to make reference to the absence of another member.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for his response. My constituents will be reassured to hear how our government is consistently introducing measures that provide tangible relief.

Speaker, the hard-working people of this province are paying higher prices for everything because of the sky-high carbon tax.

It's absolutely disgraceful that the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberal caucus support a tax grab that punishes hard-working families and local businesses. They must come to their senses now and join our government in calling for an end to this disastrous tax.

Can the minister please—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member will take his seat.

The Minister of Energy can reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, we have not introduced a carbon tax in Ontario. As a matter of fact, we have fought the carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The queen of the carbon tax, the leader of the Liberals, combined with the NDP—they want to have the highest carbon tax in the world.

We have a plan called Powering Ontario's Growth. And the Premier announced, this morning, the largest investment in Canada's history, in Ontario—a \$15-billion investment in Alliston, at the Honda plant. That's on top of the multi-billion dollar investments, in what were previously the largest investments in Canadian history, at Volkswagen in St. Thomas and LG-Stellantis in Windsor and the Umicore plant in Loyalist township. We have seen \$45 billion of investment in Ontario's EV supply chain, because our plan is working. It's called Powering Ontario's Growth.

HOUSING

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier.

Ontario's housing crisis has become beyond parody. An Airbnb owner says she posted three tents in a room as a joke, but people are so desperate that the joke has become a reality: \$720 a month for a tent in a shared room—but hey, they come with their own lock. I call this hitting rock bottom.

Can the Premier tell me whether these three tents will count as affordable housing homes or one tent will be counted as affordable housing under his own strategy?

1100

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I don't actually have to answer a question. Do you know why? Because every question they ask just highlights how bad a party and how irrelevant they are to the discussion in the province of Ontario.

Let's look at this this way: They had one Premier, Bob Rae, in their history, and he was so embarrassed to be an NDP member, he fled the party.

Some of the best relations I have right now are with the former leader of the NDP, who is now the mayor of Hamilton. She is telling me that she loves working with this government, because we're getting things done—and it's not just her; it's the former leader of the Liberal Party in Vaughan, who tells me that the housing crisis started under the Liberal government, and that we are finally taking action to get more homes built across province of Ontario.

So do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to ignore the most irrelevant party in the history of the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question. The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: If denying solutions to the housing crisis was an Olympic sport, this Conservative government would be setting new records with their performance and denials.

Just a week ago, a landlord in the Premier's own Etobicoke riding placed an advertisement renting out half of his bed. The kindest thing that I can say about this posting is that this landlord is at least making more housing than this government.

But this is just another serious story that Ontarians are living with because this government is refusing to bring back real rent control.

Will the Premier restore real rent control, or is he simply satisfied that more Ontarians will just rent out half of their beds to desperate tenants in order to respond to the housing affordability crisis?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let's unpack that question. Who was the party that invented removing rent controls from new purpose-built rentals?

Mr. Will Bouma: The NDP.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It was the NDP. It was the NDP, under Bob Rae and the NDP Minister of Housing. And who was a chief of staff in that NDP government? Would it have been the Leader of the Opposition?

I'll tell you what, I'll take the good advice of—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to address the Chair.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I will continue to take the good advice from the Leader of the Opposition.

We are breaking records. We're breaking records on new purpose-built rental housing, more than ever before; the most new housing starts over the last three years than we have had in over 30 decades. I'll continue breaking those records every single day.

HOUSING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Associate Minister of Housing.

Before the previous Liberal government took office in Ontario in 2003, Ontario was registering 85,000 housing starts per year, but then, after the Liberals took office in 2004, that rate fell below 80,000 units per year, and it never came back until the Liberals were thrown out of office.

Speaker, the housing supply crisis that we inherited was a result of the failures of the previous Liberal government—supported, of course, by the NDP.

And now the Liberals, under the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, are supporting the federal Liberal carbon tax, which is a tax driving up the price of everything, including housing.

Can the minister please tell us how our government is building more homes, delivering for Ontario, and fighting the carbon tax?

Hon. Rob Flack: I thank the member from Essex for that question.

As we all know, the carbon tax that has been inflicted upon us is hurting the cost of building houses throughout this province. Even still, in the last three years, we've built more homes—in the 1980s. And even more importantly, we've set a record—27% increase, last year, in purpose-built rentals.

Let's look at another factor. In the last five and a half years, we built more purpose-built rentals than in the entire 15 years of the Liberal government.

And we're going to do more. We're going to pave the way for more housing to be built. We've lowered the HST on purpose-built rentals. We've lowered development charges. And we are investing in massive infrastructure—billions in infrastructure across this province, to get shovels in the ground faster.

But when I talk to modular home builders, they complain about the cost of transportation to get from A to B—their homes. The carbon tax—

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that response.

Despite the challenges imposed by the federal Liberal carbon tax, our government is delivering on our commitment to build more homes in Ontario. The carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberals, on the other

hand, are propping up their federal buddies in Ottawa with a pricey carbon tax every step of the way.

Speaker, Ontarians are already struggling to make ends meet, and this regressive tax is only adding strain to their household budgets.

We know that in order to provide more affordability and more housing solutions, our government must continue to show leadership by undertaking robust efforts to build thriving communities across the province.

Can the minister please explain how the Liberal carbon tax is making it more expensive to build houses in Ontario?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you again to the member from Essex.

Mass timber construction is an innovative technique that has the potential to lower our carbon footprint while building more housing in Ontario. It's sustainable, it's energy-efficient, and it lowers our carbon footprint. I'm proud that our government is expanding the use of mass timber construction. However, mass timber materials are heavy. They need to be transported. And guess what hurts that transportation cost? The carbon tax. We need to get rid of the tax. Building with mass timber uses 50% less carbon than building with steel.

Let's axe this tax. Let's make it affordable for all Ontarians to get into the housing market. Axe the tax.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier.

The Conservative government continues to underfund the education system. With inflation, per student funding has fallen by \$1,357. When school funding doesn't keep up with inflation, school boards struggle to offer special education and supports for children with higher needs.

For example, the Rainbow District School Board in Sudbury has an almost \$19-million shortfall.

Kale is one of the students in Sudbury who's being hurt by these Conservative cuts. Kale is in kindergarten. He has autism. And because there's not enough school board funding, Kale can't get the supports he needs to be safe and successful at his school.

My question is, why is school funding so low that schools can't support students like Kale?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Burlington and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: It was the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, that cut half a billion dollars in education funding while calling it savings. This included special education funding.

For the 2023-24 school year, we've invested over \$3.4 billion for special education, the highest investment ever in Ontario history. This represents \$125 million more compared to the 2022-23 school year and nearly \$541 million more than the 2017-18 school year.

We are the government that is ensuring equal access to top-quality education in Ontario. Under this Premier, our government continues to make record investments to

support the next generation of Ontario leaders, including those with special needs.

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

MPP Jamie West: Conservatives talk about dollar amounts because they don't want to admit that they're not keeping up with inflation—\$1,357 less per student under this Conservative government.

Kale's parents are working tirelessly to get their son the supports he needs to be safe and successful. They've already been waiting for years on the Ontario Autism Program wait-list. They've already been paying out of pocket for autism supports for Kale. On top of those financial burdens they're paying because of this government, Kale's parents are trying to find a school with the supports Kale needs. There's not enough funding to provide the support at Kale's current school. There's not enough funding to enrol Kale at the closest next school.

Will the Premier explain to Kale's family why there's not enough funding to support Kale?

1110

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Our government continues to make record investments to support the next generation of Ontario students, including those with special needs. We've announced a three-year program backed by \$6.2 million and targeted supports for students with disabilities to pursue co-operative education opportunities. It's a pilot program designed to connect students with special needs to good-paying jobs.

We've also increased funding for the behaviour expertise amount to \$39 million for the 2023-24 school year.

And we are providing \$10 million in investment for the summer of 2024, to provide transition programs and additional staffing for students with special education needs over the summer months.

Our government is providing historic investments into education to ensure that students get back to basics; learn the foundations of reading, writing, math; and prepare for the jobs of tomorrow.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It seems the Minister of Education wants kids in this province to use their imagination when it comes to improvements and funding for their own schools.

The TDSB has been left far behind in this government's recent budget. The largest school board in Canada is facing a deficit of \$26.5 million for the upcoming year, and this government has no interest in helping them with capital funding.

Sensational Secord Elementary School in East York is in desperate need of the new build promised ages ago.

Parents are coming to me, wondering how their Premier is doubling the salaries of his staff and ballooning his office budget while their public schools are crumbling under the pressures of overstuffed classrooms, dilapidated infrastructure, and a complete lack of priorities by this government.

My question is, why is the TDSB getting shortchanged, and when can the Secord community expect their long-promised new school?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The response, the member for Burlington and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: It's incredibly clear that TDSB lacks the capacity to manage their budget and prioritize services for students in schools from kindergarten to grade 12.

Our government has increased base funding by \$700 million just this school year alone, investing over \$26.7 billion—the largest ever in Ontario's education history.

TDSB student enrolment decreased by about 4% from 2019 to 2020 while, at the same time, their per pupil funding has increased by 8.7%. After running a series of deficits over the last 20 years and increasing school board staffing on the sunshine list, the TDSB should focus on prioritizing students and stop subsidizing services for non-public-school students.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It seems the gravy train has not been stopping at Danforth GO station. This major mobility hub at Main and Danforth is considered an MTSA—although we will be waiting until the cows come home before the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing finally signs off on those.

There are 7,200 residential units—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to, for a moment, remind the member for Beaches–East York that the supplementary question needs to follow with regard to the subject that she raised in the initial question. She can't introduce a totally separate subject. It has to make reference to the original question.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Come on. Government side, come to order. Order.

Restart the clock. Member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: With the 7,200 new residential units in this “yes in my backyard” neighbourhood, this government has not had the foresight to invest in local schools. So where will our youngest new residents live? Maybe this government actually needs to go back to school themselves to study up on logic.

Currently, Secord is 200 students beyond capacity.

Speaker, when will this government put their money where their mouth is and actually get the shovels in the ground and build Secord's new school?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Our government more than doubled the amount to build schools—from \$550 million a year ago to \$1.3 billion this year; a 136% increase. This funding will support 60 new projects just this year alone, creating over 27,000 school spaces. Over 10 years, our government is investing \$16 billion in capital grants, which will support new schools for students in high-growth areas, improve the condition of existing schools, and implement our new plan for child care in schools.

Under our plan, schools are being built. They're being built faster, efficiently and effectively so that students have increased access to a place to learn and prepare for the jobs of tomorrow.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

The carbon tax isn't just increasing our energy and gas bills; it's also driving up the costs of food, housing, and more. That's unacceptable to Ontarians who are already struggling to make ends meet.

Speaker, we know that the NDP and Liberals in this House will not stand up for their constituents. Instead, they are choosing to do nothing and watch this terrible tax triple by 2030.

Their inaction is exactly why our government will not stop advocating for Ontario workers and families. We will continue to call on the federal Liberals to put a stop to this disastrous carbon tax.

Could the minister please explain what steps our government is taking to keep costs down for Ontario families—

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

The Minister of Energy can reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: We're opposed to the federal carbon tax—as all Premiers across Canada have done, of all political stripes. They're opposed to Justin Trudeau's, Jagmeet Singh's and Bonnie Crombie's federal carbon tax. The queen of the carbon tax is happy to support that federal carbon tax, which went up a whopping 23% on April 1.

We're lowering the price of gasoline by 10.7 cents a litre. We're cutting taxes. We're cutting fees. We're ending tolls. We're bringing in One Fare so transit riders can save up to \$1,600 a year.

We're powering Ontario's growth with clean, reliable electricity by investing in our nuclear facilities, our hydroelectric facilities, and building other new non-emitting generation. As a result, the plan is working.

While manufacturers were headed south of the border six years ago, under the previous Liberal government, they're coming back in droves—including a historic \$15-billion Honda investment today—

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for that response. The federal carbon tax is hurting people in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora and across this great province. I hear it every time I go door-knocking—the Liberal carbon tax is driving up inflation and increasing the cost of essential items like groceries and transportation.

Speaker, it's perplexing how the Liberals and the NDP in this House, after hearing the widespread frustration towards this tax grab, can sit here and still support the federal carbon tax.

Unlike the opposition, our government will always support the people of Ontario. We will persist in urging the federal government to abolish this regressive measure.

Could the minister please explain to the House why it's imperative for the federal government to terminate this costly tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, just imagine what we could do in Ontario and across the country without this federal carbon tax that's layering cost over cost at the pumps and on your natural gas home heating and your grocery store bill. We're layering costs on top of costs, making it more expensive for the people of Canada and the people of Ontario.

In spite of all that, our plan, Powering Ontario's Growth, led by Premier Ford, led by our Minister of Economic Development and our entire team, has brought historic investments to our province.

The Honda announcement made this morning is the largest in Canadian history—\$15 billion. That Honda accord, in partnership with our federal and civic partners, is piloting a new direction for Ontario, putting us back on top as the economic engine not just of Canada but of North America. We all in this House should be celebrating that kind of an achievement today—\$15 billion—

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

1120

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Across Ontario, too many students are not getting high-quality, effective French immersion because of our teacher shortage. There are French immersion classes being filled by teachers who speak no French; others are experiencing turnover of four or five teachers in a single year.

Learning French is important for employment opportunities, for cultural appreciation and mutual understanding between anglophones and francophones. But you can't learn French if your teacher doesn't speak French.

When will we actually see serious, long-term solutions, so that every child in Ontario who wants to learn French has the opportunity?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Burlington and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: The francophone community remains an integral part of Ontario's socio-economic fabric.

Our government is taking action to tackle a decade-long French teacher shortage inherited from the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP. We're working with French-language education partners to implement our four-year, \$12.5-million French teacher recruitment and retention strategy. We're funding an additional 110 language teacher education spaces for the 2023-24 year.

Our government remains unwavering in its commitment to support the francophone community while con-

tinuing to invest in our plan to further recruit and retain highly qualified French-language educators in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Dans le système scolaire francophone, ce n'est pas mieux : 6% des professeurs ne sont pas qualifiés. Le nombre d'inscriptions continue d'augmenter. Nous avons besoin d'au moins 1 000 nouveaux enseignantes ou enseignants de langue française chaque année pour les cinq prochaines années, mais ce gouvernement n'en finance que 500 par année.

Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement n'est pas intéressé dans le succès des jeunes francophones?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Our government remains committed to the francophone community and francophone education in the province of Ontario.

Over 10 years, our government is investing \$15 billion in capital grants, which will support new schools for students in high-growth areas, improve the conditions of existing schools, and implement our new plan for child care in schools. This includes approximately \$1.4 billion for the 2023-24 school year to support the repair and renewal of schools.

Our government remains committed to the francophone community to ensure that they continue to prosper in Ontario.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

In March, Bill 153, the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2024, received royal assent. The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. Ontario One Call's identification of underground infrastructure is a necessary safety measure in construction, and this industry greatly contributes to the growth of this province.

To meet the demands of our modern economy, the government must ensure that services effectively and safely reach the people and businesses of Ontario.

Speaker, I understand that on May 1, some regulations from this new legislation will come into force. Can the minister please explain to the people of Ontario what is on the way and how these regulations will help Ontario grow safely?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for the appropriate and timely question.

On Wednesday, May 1, two new regulations will come into effect under the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, and they will enable One Call to better locate underground infrastructure and streamline delivery processes to cut down on the number of locates needed on a job site.

Large excavation projects will now be able to request a locate 10 business days prior to their intended dig, and this helps with timelines and streamlining projects.

Ontario One Call will also be given the power to impose administrative penalties, but they will do so with this new enforcement tool only when necessary.

These changes will help keep construction costs down. And they are just one example of how our government is delivering on vital infrastructure like transit, building homes, and building roads and infrastructure, ensuring public—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to thank the minister for his response. I'm glad to see that the government is delivering on its promise to safely build the infrastructure Ontario needs for the future.

Speaker, many of my constituents in the riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville have come to me expressing concerns over issues relating to door-to-door sales.

We must remain committed to protecting consumers from unfair practices, aggressive sales tactics and misleading claims.

This new legislation, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023, is providing Consumer Protection Ontario with new powers to enforce consumer protection law. Can the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery elaborate on when Ontario consumers can expect to see changes come into effect?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: That's another thoughtful and timely question from the member.

Our goal has always been to better protect Ontarians. We heard that in our first mandate and embarked on a 15-year review of consumer protection—that was neglected for 15 years, rather. We embarked quickly on it, and in this term, introduced in this House, unanimously passed, the Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act.

We are now in the regulatory phase. We are listening and consulting. We will address further issues around door-to-door sales, direct contracts, and we will engage to ensure that our modern marketplace aligns with new consumer behaviours and the digital world.

From the beginning, a Progressive Conservative government introduced legislation on consumer protection—the first in the country, in 1966. A Progressive Conservative government did it again in 2002. And a Progressive Conservative government is doing it again in 2024, on behalf of all the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Liberal carbon tax continues to make life more unaffordable for the people of Ontario. It's driving up prices and making life more expensive on everything from grocery bills to the cost of filling up our cars. But it goes well beyond that. The carbon tax scheme is negatively impacting the very people who have a critical role in building our province. The carbon tax is increasing the costs for building materials and the transportation of these materials, adding significant burden for the home builders of Ontario. It's not right.

The people in Chatham-Kent–Leamington and across Ontario who dream of home ownership should not be punished by the federal carbon tax scheme.

Can the minister please explain how the Liberal carbon tax is making it more expensive to build housing in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the great member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for that great question.

As the members know, our government is taking an all-hands approach, ensuring that we're getting shovels in the ground and increasing our housing supply. But the federal Liberal carbon tax is hurting these efforts.

Speaker, let me paint a picture for everyone in this place today. When our men and women in our forestry industry go into the forests in the north to cut down that tree for a two-by-four, they use gas and fuel in their chainsaws, carbon tax. When the forest equipment takes that log out of the forest, carbon tax. When the trucker takes that log to the mill to be processed, carbon tax. When the mill processes that log into two-by-fours, carbon tax. There is a theme here. When that truck takes that two-by-four to the Home Hardware or the Home Depot, carbon tax. And when the contractors come to pick up that two-by-four carbon tax. That is seven times, just right there.

When will the—

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to our parliamentary assistant for that response.

It's encouraging to see how our government, unlike the NDP and Liberal members in this House, is supporting families and individuals across Ontario and fighting back against the Liberal carbon tax.

In the middle of a housing crisis, this tax grab is impacting every person looking to buy a home. Home builders in Chatham-Kent–Leamington and Essex county have told me personally that this carbon tax is dramatically increasing the price to transport building materials. This is truly devastating to young families hoping to enter the housing market and seeing prices go well above what they can afford.

The federal Liberals need to do the right thing and scrap this tax today.

1130

Can the parliamentary assistant please share how this Liberal carbon tax scheme is increasing the prices of new homes across Ontario?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my friend from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for that supplementary question.

As the member mentioned, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, may think a 23% increase on April 1 was an April Fool's joke, but Ontario families are not laughing.

Speaker, as I mentioned in my earlier response, the carbon tax is on everything in your house: on the two-by-four, on the drywall, on the barbecue in your backyard, and on that food you put on the barbecue in the backyard.

Not only did Bonnie Crombie have an abysmal housing start record, but in the last month that she was mayor, she supported increasing the cost of building materials for our homes, increasing the cost on the gas of our construction workers building those homes, and increasing everything that goes into a home.

When will the independent Liberals get in their mini-van, go to Ottawa and demand that the federal Liberal government scrap this—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Members will take their seats.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The next question.

FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. We cannot boast about having a full supply chain for EVs in Ontario without the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations where the minerals are.

Can this government confirm that you have the free, prior and informed consent of all the First Nations in the north for mining for EVs?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member knows quite well that the minister and the Premier have been working very closely with First Nations, because we understand how important it is to unlock the resources of the north to power not only the economies of northern Ontario, but to help empower the manufacturing might of southern Ontario. That is why we are working very closely with First Nations partners in that area who have told us that they want to be partners in helping unlock these resources for all Ontarians and for First Nations communities.

That is why we are taking enormous steps to ensure that every community in northern Ontario is no longer using diesel generation, for instance. I know the Minister of Energy has ensured that—I think almost every community now will be hooked up to the grid to help us support what we are doing in northern Ontario.

The member is absolutely correct; First Nations are going to be partners with us in getting this done, and I look forward to that continuing collaboration.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, I know for a fact that this government remains well short of the First Nations partnerships and permissions that it needs to fulfill the Ring of Fire mining aspirations. The fact is that most of northern Ontario's minerals are years, if not decades, away from powering any EVs.

Speaker, my question to the minister: Has the minister personally met with the leadership and the rights holders of these lands impacted by the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know the member opposite would know that both the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and the Minister of Mines have been doing just that.

I know that the Minister of Indigenous Affairs has worked very closely with First Nations partners to ensure that we not only work with First Nations—we're hearing from so many partners, not only in northern Ontario, but partners from across the province who say that they want to participate in helping us rebuild the economic powerhouse that was the province of Ontario, and that no community wants to be left behind. It is so vitally important that our partners in First Nations communities are a part of that. They want to be a part of that. And we're going to continue to work very hard—I know it's a priority of the Premier; I know it's a priority of the Minister of Indigenous Affairs; and I know how hard the Minister of Mines has been working to ensure that we get that.

We can't power the south, we can't power the north, unless we unlock the riches of Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is to the Solicitor General.

The Liberal carbon tax is pushing families and businesses in my riding of Thornhill and across the entire province to their limit. Ontarians have to pay more for their daily necessities, from their grocery bills to filling their cars at the gas pumps—and I did that just the other night. And with this month's 23% hike, Ontarians are justifiably concerned about the impact this will have on our public safety system.

Public safety is a top priority for communities, and it's essential that our first responders have the tools they need to keep people safe.

Can the Solicitor General please explain the negative impacts of the carbon tax on law enforcement and public safety agencies across Ontario?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my friend from Thornhill for that question.

I want to thank Chief Jim MacSween and the amazing people at the York Regional Police service who keep York region safe every day.

It's undeniable; as much as this government is doing everything we can to graduate more people at the Ontario Police College to fight auto theft—because we're in a crisis with people stealing our cars—to get those violent and repeat offenders off our streets, we have a carbon tax that's affecting public safety.

Chief Jim MacSween will say that to fill up every car at YRP costs a lot of money. That money could put more boots on the ground—and Bonnie Crombie knows this, the Liberal Party knows this. It's time they do the right thing, call their friends in Ottawa and say, "It's affecting the public safety of Ontario. Scrap the tax."

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the Solicitor General for his response and for his dedicated work for the province.

It's encouraging to hear that our government is supporting our vital first responders and calling on the federal Liberals to scrap the tax. The same can't be said for the NDP and the independent Liberal members in this House, as they choose to side with this unjust tax grab.

With media reports about criminal activities in communities across this province, people in my riding want to make sure that our front-line police officers have the support they need to carry out their duties. They're concerned that the Liberal carbon tax is placing a strain on policing budgets.

Our hard-working police officers deserve to have the resources they need to respond to emergencies so that Ontarians can live safely in their communities.

Can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how the carbon tax is negatively impacting police services?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I want to thank my friend for the question.

It's one thing that the proxies for the Liberals and the NDP try to sink the police service budget in Toronto, in Ottawa, in Hamilton and in London—it's unbelievable. They knew that in addition to trying to sink the budget, they were affecting public safety.

What makes matters worse is that Bonnie Crombie served on the board of the Peel police service. She knew the budget. She knew it's undeniable that the carbon tax is affecting every fill-up of a vehicle to keep Peel safe. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? In spite of that, she will not come clean with Ontarians and say, "I know this. It's affecting public safety. I will do something about it, and I'll tell the people I'm against it." She's in favour of it, and everyone knows it.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

In 2022, the government threw the vehicle registration system into disarray. But instead of cleaning up their mess, they decided to double down and eliminate vehicle registration entirely. Now there's a spike in vehicle thefts. Coincidence? Not so much. In 2023, a billion dollars was lost in Ontario alone. Thieves are exploiting this loophole, to sell stolen vehicles to unsuspecting Ontarians. Car thefts are so high that police are telling people to keep their car keys close to the front door.

Will this government help police identify stolen vehicles by re-implementing vehicle registration?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: There's no government in the history of Ontario that has taken public safety as seriously as our government, led by Premier Ford. Whether we're fighting to keep violent and repeat offenders off our streets, graduating a record number of cadets at the Ontario Police College, or fighting auto theft—we worry

about this day and night, and we do something about it. That's why we've invested \$51 million, through grants throughout Ontario, to fight auto theft.

We will do everything we can to fight auto theft, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you why: because we have a right to live safe in our own homes and communities and not be subject to people who think they can knock down our doors and demand our keys. It's completely unacceptable, and we're not going to stand for it.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPORTING MOBILITY, AFFORDABILITY AND RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION IN ONTARIO ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR UNE MOBILITÉ ACCURUE, DES PRIX PLUS ABORDABLES ET DES TRANSPORTS PLUS FIABLES EN ONTARIO

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

Bill 184, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006, the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Shortline Railways Act, 1995 with respect to transportation / Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2006 sur Metrolinx, la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun et la Loi de 1995 sur les chemins de fer d'intérêt local en ce qui concerne les transports.

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

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On April 24, 2024, MPP Hazell moved second reading of Bill 184, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006, the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Shortline Railways Act, 1995 with respect to transportation.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra
Bell, Jessica	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Bourgouin, Guy	Harden, Joel	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Taylor, Monique
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Trevor	Riddell, Brian
Barnes, Patrice	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	Leardi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lumsden, Neil	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Michael D.	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Quinn, Nolan	
Harris, Mike	Rae, Matthew	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 27; the nays are 61.

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

Second reading negatived.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm first going to recognize, on a point of order, the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to wish my office roommate and the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore a very happy birthday today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I'm going to recognize the member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington on a point of order with regard to standing order 59.

Mr. Trevor Jones: With respect to standing order 59, the agenda for next week, for all members' benefit:

Monday, May 6: in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 166, Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024. The night sitting is yet to be determined.

Tuesday, May 7: in the morning, third reading of Bill 165, Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024; in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 162, Get It Done Act, 2024; 6 p.m., the member for Perth–Wellington, Bill 186, Growing Agritourism Act, 2024. The night sitting on May 7 is yet to be determined.

Wednesday, May 8: in the morning, a bill to be introduced; in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 165, Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024; 6 p.m., the member for Newmarket–Aurora's private member's motion number 92 on artificial intelligence. The night sitting is yet to be determined.

Thursday, May 9, my father's birthday: in the morning, a bill to be introduced; in the afternoon, a bill to be introduced; at 6 p.m., the member for Niagara Falls's

private member's motion number 94, Ontario caregiver support benefit—and in the evening, to be determined.

VISITOR

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I rise on a point of order to welcome a former colleague of mine and yours: Cam Jackson, who served in this Parliament under a number of different leaders—I think, 22 leaders?

Interjection: Years.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, 22 years. Well, we are the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, so he could have had 22; I think I'm up to 10.

He served, obviously, as a minister of the crown—a Minister of Tourism, as most remember him by—but he also served in opposition with me.

He also became the mayor of Burlington for a brief period of time.

We thank you for your service, and we're so glad that you're here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, was going to introduce the former member for Burlington South and the member for Burlington, but I think it would be redundant for me to do it, twice.

Welcome.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, I'd like to correct my record in Hansard for yesterday's question on the developmental services sector. In fact, we are investing approximately \$3.4 billion this year, which is over a billion dollars more than 2017-18. Of that investment, it's \$2.2 billion of funding towards supportive living, services and support, which is an increase of—

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

The member for Ottawa South has a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm asking for unanimous consent to ask the government to bring forward a substantive motion on allowing the kaffiyeh in the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for the government to bring forward a substantive motion to allow the wearing of the kaffiyeh in the assembly. Agreed? I heard some noes.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I rise on a point of order to introduce, from the township of Hastings Highlands, Mayor Tony Fitzgerald and Deputy Mayor Tammy Davis.

Welcome to your House today, folks.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for me to ask our pages to assemble.

It is my honour now to say a word of thanks to our legislative pages. Our pages are smart, trustworthy and hard-working. They're indispensable to the effective functioning of this chamber, and we are indeed fortunate to have had them here these last three weeks.

To our pages: You depart having made some new friends, with a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and memories that will last you a lifetime. Each of you will now go home and continue your studies—including math—and no doubt will contribute to your communities, your province and your country in important ways. We expect great things from all of you. Who knows? Maybe some of you someday will take your seats in this House as members or work here as staff. No matter—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): They jumped the gun.

Thank you to all of our pages, once again.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Nina Tangri: I have a couple of introductions today. Steve Doherty, who is the executive director of Youth Without Shelter, does absolutely phenomenal work, supporting youth in Toronto and beyond. I also have, today, about 51 seniors from the Mississauga Seniors Cultural Association. They're making their way in.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Improve Air Quality for Our Children” and it is signed by parents from a local public school in my riding, Runnymede public school.

Speaker, we know that good, clean air reduces not only the spread of infectious diseases, but it also lowers chronic conditions, the rate of chronic conditions. It helps children learn better. Studies have shown that it improves attendance. It improves test scores.

But right now, in Ontario, there's no requirement to monitor air quality either in our public schools or in child care centres. Other jurisdictions are doing it, in Canada and in the United States, and it has shown to work well in our efforts to get clean air for kids. And so, this petition is urging the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require the Minister of Education to pass the private member's bill that I have co-sponsored called Improving Air Quality for Our Children Act, 2024.

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled “A More Affordable Life in Spadina–Fort York,” and it’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

It talks about how housing, groceries and gas are unaffordable in Ontario. The five largest grocery corporations are making record profits, as are the oil corporations. Rents aren’t affordable. The cost of buying a home is unaffordable. So the people who have signed this petition, they’re asking the Legislative Assembly to take immediate action on this affordability crisis by building 250,000 units of affordable housing, including co-ops, social and supportive housing.

They’re also asking that residential development on public lands, including the Ontario Line stations, mandate 30% of those units be affordable units, because it would be such a lost opportunity if they’re building those stations on public land and there’s no mandate for affordable housing with them—and also to take on price gouging by the oil and gas corporations that are causing both the prices to skyrocket and also inflation to skyrocket.

They’re asking that we keep our public services, particularly health care, public, so that people pay for their health care with OHIP rather than their credit card.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled “Double Social Assistance Rates,” and I want to thank Carol Anne Krause for collecting the signatures on this petition.

Speaker, we all know that for those who are living with the support of the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works, the rates for both of these programs are below the poverty line. Essentially, it is legislated poverty. The rates for ODSP have increased by very, very little, certainly not keeping up with inflation, since the rates were deeply cut under the previous Conservative Harris government and the rates for Ontario Works have been frozen. In order to be able to live healthy, dignified lives, the rates for both OW and ODSP must be doubled immediately. So this petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the Ford government does just that: Double social assistance rates immediately.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m proud to present this petition on behalf of the people I represent in London West. It is urging the government to support quality care for residents of long-term-care homes in this province. As you know, Speaker, there are almost 80,000 people in the province of Ontario who live in long-term-care homes, and their families want to know that those residents of those long-term-care homes will be cared for properly, that they will be safe and that their needs will be attended to. But because the government has not come up with an adequate

plan, with funding to make sure that we have enough PSWs and nurses in long-term-care homes, it is very difficult to ensure that the quality care that seniors deserve is being delivered in long-term-care homes.

We know that there have been inquests into deaths. There was a scathing exposé say by the military about some of the conditions in long-term-care homes. Those reports have really focused in on the need to provide four hours of hands-on, direct care per resident per day.

This petition calls on the government to move forward with a workforce strategy, with increased protections for residents of long-term-care homes so that they can get that legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, with some adjustments for the level of acuity of each resident.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled “Health Care: Not for Sale.”

Speaker, everybody in Ontario should get health care services based on our need, not based on the size of the wallet. And right now, parts of our public health care system is being privatized under this government. We know the consequences of privatization of our public health care system. It will not only worsen and weaken the public health system, it will also worsen the staffing crisis that we have. We have many examples and research to show that privatization of health care usually leads to worse health outcomes for the population.

So this petition is urging the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all privatization of—

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington has a point of order.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I just wanted to remind the member, who is clearly editorializing and not summarizing her petition—I think it’s a reminder to bring her attention back to the standing orders to follow and align with the Speaker’s ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I will remind all members that the standing orders have been changed recently: “A member may present a petition in the House during the afternoon routine ‘Petitions.’ The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached thereto but shall not read the text of the petition.”

I find that the member from Parkdale–High Park is summarizing her petition, and I would ask her to finish up summarizing the petition.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Since the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington cannot see the content of my petition, he doesn’t know that it is summarized.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please summarize your petition.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Speaker, this petition is urging the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the privatization of our health care system.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled “To Raise Social Assistance Rates,” and it’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it talks about how our OW and ODSP rates are not even at poverty; they’re at destitution levels.

1310

The funding for ODSP is around \$1,300 per month, out of which \$556 is for housing. But \$556 does not provide any housing anywhere in this province, so the ODSP rates are pushing people with disabilities in this province into homelessness.

The Ontario Works rates are \$733 per month. That’s for housing and for all costs. Nobody can live on that amount in this province.

The petition points out that the CERB program during the pandemic gave \$2,000 as the minimum that was needed in order to keep body and soul together in this province, and they’re asking for an immediate doubling of OW and ODSP rates.

I fully endorse this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to page Aislyn to take to the table. Thank you so much.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition that is signed by a number of residents of London West who either have a child with autism, know a child with autism or are concerned about the lack of autism services in this province.

We know that the wait-list for access to the Ontario Autism Program has increased significantly under this government. There are now 67,000 kids waiting to receive the treatment and support that they need to be able to achieve their full potential, and the changes made to the Ontario Autism Program by this government after the Liberals had botched it have just made things worse.

So the petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to make the investment in needs-based, equitable autism services for all kids with autism in this province.

I am very proud to support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Emerson.

RARE DISEASES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Ontario Needs a Rare Disease Strategy,” because, right now, in Ontario, we do not have a rare disease strategy.

In 2016, the Ministry of Health established a rare disease working group. The working group did their work and presented a report to the Ministry of Health in 2017, and since then, no action has been taken. Meanwhile, those living with rare diseases are left behind without the access to the supports that they need.

So, in this petition, the signatories are calling on the government to pass the Rare Disease Strategy Act. It is a

bill that I have tabled and co-sponsored in the House that sets out to implement the recommendations outlined in the rare disease working group report.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto, and it’s asking the government to stop the cuts and invest in schools that our students deserve.

There’s been quite a bit of discussion about the number of cuts. The inflationary cut to our schools is \$1,300 per student, per year, since this government took office, and that totals billions of dollars for school boards. This is the reason that almost every school board in this province is facing a funding shortfall this year.

This is not just a one-year thing. The TDSB mentions it faced a \$63-million funding shortfall last year. There’s a \$23-million funding shortfall this year. Every year, the TDSB trustees are asked to make cuts. They’re not provided with the funding just to continue the services that they offered the previous year, and that is on this government.

There’s also the government—the TDSB was instructed by the government to use the reserve funds to get through the pandemic to provide computers and other services that students needed to get through the pandemic. That reserve fund was never re-established by this government, so those cuts are also impacting our students. And the net impact is that our students do not get special education. They have larger class sizes. They do not get the health supports. We have an epidemic of mental health issues among young people these days, and they’re not getting the supports that they need.

So this group is asking the government to fix the education formula, to stop this year-after-year round of cuts, because our students deserve better.

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Fix Ontario’s Family Doctor Shortage.”

There are 2.3 million Ontarians who do not have a family physician, so they’re not connected to any form of primary care. That obviously puts their health at risk. We know that access to primary care keeps people out of emergency rooms. It promotes health and well-being. It prevents conditions from getting worse. And one of the ways in which we can address the family doctor shortage, as recommended by the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario College of Family Physicians, is to free up the time that doctors are spending on administrative work.

And so, this petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a strategy where support staff can be hired to take over the administrative portion of the doctor’s work so that family doctors can spend their time seeing patients instead of doing paperwork.

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GET IT DONE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PASSER À L'ACTION

Mr. Sarkaria moved third reading of the following bill:

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): Would the Minister of Transportation care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'd like to start off today by acknowledging I'll be splitting my time with the parliamentary assistant; the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; and, lastly, the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Mr. Speaker, when our government first took office, we made a promise to the people of Ontario. The promise was to get it done, and we have kept that promise. We are building the infrastructure we need to support our growing population and getting it done by making life more affordable when many hard-working Ontarians are struggling to make ends meet with the rising cost of living.

Our track record speaks for itself. We won't back down in our efforts to build this province for the future, while keeping costs low for businesses and families across Ontario.

We've all experienced the devastating impacts of gridlock. Experts say one of the worst things you can do for your mental health is be stuck in gridlock, stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. And it's not just a frustrating experience for drivers; it destroys our economy and our productivity. Gridlock costs our province \$11 billion a year in lost productivity, a number that will only grow if we don't take bold action today.

Our province proudly welcomes over 500,000 newcomers each year. These men and women are the ones that will help us build a stronger Ontario for everyone, bringing their expertise in the skilled trades, medicine, information technology and other critical industries. But if we don't act quickly to build the highways, transit, housing and other critical infrastructure that we need to support these newcomers, gridlock will only get worse.

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When you look at the projections, my ministry's traffic modelling data shows the majority of highways in the GTA will be operating at overcapacity by 2031. This also includes the 407. Even when factoring in actions our government is taking, including historic investments to widen highways, expand public transit—over \$180 billion over the next 10 years—the data is clear: We need to do more to help fix gridlock in the long term. If we try to

divert drivers from one highway to another without building, we will find ourselves with the same problem that we have today, but even worse off a decade down the road.

When we all make the leap into politics, we make the commitment to ourselves to leave Ontario better off than when we found it, not worse. If you're a commuter who is tired of being stuck in gridlock, wondering when you'll get home to your family, or if you've been struggling to pay your bills while the cost of living keeps rising, I want you to know the actions that our government takes to try to help these issues. We hear you and we have a plan for you.

The Get It Done Act is that very plan. It will improve lives all across this province by streamlining the approval processes. We will finally be able to build key infrastructure projects and create more jobs and more homes, keeping those costs down for the hard-working Ontarians who are the backbone of our economy.

When it comes to expanding our transportation network, our government has the most ambitious capital plan in the province's history. We're spending nearly \$100 billion over the next 10 years to build new highways, roads and public transit. The investment isn't only to keep people and goods moving; it will connect communities from across this province. This includes more than \$27 billion to build, renew and expand highways. These highways we intend to keep toll-free.

However, we need to get to work quickly so we can build our economy for years to come. But we can't do that if we maintain the status quo. Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's development moved at a snail's pace. The people of this province have paid the consequences of that for far too long—for 15 years. We know Ontarians are waiting for the critical infrastructure they desperately deserve.

Madam Speaker, that's why our government is getting shovels in the ground to get it done. We were elected on a promise to build Ontario, not cross our fingers and hope for the best while our highways, roads, bridges, infrastructure and schools deteriorate. We're a government of builders. We've seen how that turns out, Mr. Speaker. We want to build, to keep pace with our growing population, not wait and hope for problems to solve themselves. We just know that doesn't work.

We have a plan to spark investment in our province. We want businesses to have the conditions they need to set up shop here, thrive and contribute to our economy, creating well-paying jobs. That's what we've delivered from day one, since we took office. The Get It Done Act is another step in that plan.

Our government has always acted quickly to slash red tape and get shovels in the ground on the projects that matter most to Ontarians. The Building Transit Faster Act is a perfect example of this. When the bill passed in 2020, it gave the province new powers to streamline the construction of critical public transit projects. Our government has not let those powers go to waste. The Building Transit Faster Act allows us to accelerate priority transit

projects that will put tens of thousands of Ontarians within walking distance of public transit. These projects include the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Yonge North subway extension and the Eglinton Cross-town West extension. Now with this piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, our government is moving forward to declare the Hazel McCallion LRT extensions to downtown Brampton and downtown Mississauga that we announced a priority transit project. We've heard the needs of commuters, and we are acting on them.

We know public transit will play a key role in our province's economic growth in the years ahead, and to keep people and goods moving across Ontario, we also need to build new highways. It's that simple. The GTA is already home to some of the most congested highway corridors in North America and we won't sit back and watch while traffic gets even worse. The greater Golden Horseshoe will have a population of almost 15 million people by the year 2051. Doing nothing is not an option, Madam Speaker.

For far too long, building new infrastructure in Ontario has been slow, it's been burdensome, and its delays have cost taxpayers too much money. Our government has seen enough of that. Ontarians have seen enough of that. We need to slash through the red tape so we can get shovels in the ground for critical projects like Highway 413 so that we can save commuters as much as an hour each day and five hours a week. The Get It Done Act, if passed, would allow the province to streamline the approval process for building highways, railways and transmission lines, allowing us to get to work quickly on the projects that matter most to Ontarians.

Few of our government's priorities are more important than building housing and our housing goals are ambitious. Our government plans to build at least 1.5 million homes across the province by 2031 to support the fast pace in our growth in population. Our government knows the importance of rewarding municipalities that build houses beyond the target. And, Madam Speaker, we've been quick to do so, but there is always more support we can lend to municipalities looking to grow with us.

Madam Speaker, as we know, hundreds and thousands of newcomers are arriving in Ontario each year. It's important for us to take a step back and remember why they're coming here: for dreams of a better life; to have a good-paying job for themselves and to support their families. Our government wants to make these dreams a reality. That's why we're focused on building: building highways, transit, homes, schools, hospitals that will help make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family.

As our government rolls up its sleeves to build new highways and expand existing infrastructure across our province, we're cracking down on rising costs for families. That's why our legislation bans any new tolls on provincial highways, including Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. People have to get to work, to school and make it to special moments with friends and families, and they should have the confidence that government

won't add unfair costs to their trips now or in the years to come. We're building Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass to get people moving and goods moving across the province toll-free. Many Ontarians feel like they're fighting to keep up with the rising costs. It's time they keep more of their money where it belongs, in their pockets.

That is why our Get It Done Act would amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to prohibit any new tolls on provincial highways. If a future government decided to pick a fight with hard-working Ontarians by introducing new tolls, they would need to consult with the public first. Madam Speaker, no one should have to pay hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars per year on top of their other day-to-day expenses just to get to work, their medical appointments or visit loved ones. This doesn't even factor in the rising costs of commercial goods. If trucking companies were forced to pay highway tolls to transport the goods we rely on every day, it doesn't just end there, Madam Speaker. These costs are carried over to our shelves, and families and consumers are left to carry the burden of the hiked-up food costs, clothes and household essentials.

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The people of Ontario deserve to have their say if a future government tries to introduce new tolls. This is why, Madam Speaker, we have also fought so hard against the carbon tax that punishes families, businesses and those who try to take their kids to a hockey game, a special performance or even just to school.

We know that eliminating highway tolls can make a real difference. In April 2022, we eliminated tolls on Highways 412 and 418. By the year 2027, this move alone will save hard-working drivers \$68 million. These are the kinds of savings that hard-working Ontarians deserve and that our government will continue to deliver by banning new tolling. We will always say no to new tolls, and yes to saving Ontarians hard-earned money.

As I mentioned earlier, municipalities looking to grow have a strong partner with our government. Last year, we announced that the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway would be uploaded to the province from the city of Toronto, subject to due diligence. We plan to keep those highways toll-free, and if the Get It Done Act passes, we'll be one step closer to protecting Ontarians from new highway tolls for years to come.

Madam Speaker, our act doesn't stop there. It includes numerous measures to put money back in families' pockets, right where it belongs. It's a government's job to ensure people keep their hard-earned dollars, not to hike fees, especially for essential documents that people across the province rely on to go about their daily lives. We aren't going to gouge taxpayers on drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards. People depend on those documents, and our government won't take advantage of them by raising them.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to repeat, as I did at the start, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the member for Cambridge as well.

We aren't just talking the talk. In 2019, we froze the fees for drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards, saving Ontarians millions of dollars. Since that time, the fee freeze has saved Ontarians \$22 million, and it will help save \$66 million more this decade.

These savings are game-changing, Madam Speaker. I've heard first-hand the huge impact, whether it be removing tolls, fighting against the carbon tax, fighting against photo card or drivers' licence fee increases, these can have on families and businesses across the province, and I can tell you, our government has no plans to hike those fees and take advantage of hard-working taxpayers. In fact, since being elected, we have never raised a fee and we have never raised a tax on businesses or families in this province.

With the Get It Done Act, we're bringing forward legislation so that we can maintain the current fees for drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards. We don't just want Ontarians saving money today; we want to keep those costs predictable so taxpayers can save money for years to come. If the Get It Done Act passes, future governments would need to introduce legislative amendments and explain to the people why they are increasing fees. The people across this province work hard for their money, and they deserve to keep it and we're helping them do just that.

Unlike Bonnie Crombie, the queen of the carbon tax, and the Liberals, our government isn't trying to make things more expensive. Time and time again, she has voiced her support for increasing prices through costly carbon taxes. That's a shame. It's not the government's place to put a price on carbon, and ours certainly won't. That's why we didn't waste any time delivering on our promise to scrap the cap-and-trade system we inherited when we took office. These are cash grabs, plain and simple. Whether it's a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system like the one we got rid of, we see how damaging the federal government's carbon tax really is, and Ontarians and Ontario are sick of it. Increased prices at the gas pump, hiked-up business costs, grocery costs and the price of everything we buy, even clothes: The impacts of the carbon tax are endless, and none of them are positive.

If passed, the Get It Done Act would require future governments to hold a referendum before introducing any new carbon pricing measures. This would not only cover carbon taxes, but any new system that puts a price on carbon, cap-and-trade or otherwise. With so many people across the province struggling just to make ends meet, we are taking a stand and we are saying no to carbon taxes and other faulty carbon-pricing systems. If a future government wants to put a price on carbon, the people of Ontario deserve to have their voice heard, and if the Get It Done Act passes, they will.

Since day one, our government has had a mandate to save Ontarians money, but it doesn't end there. We are laser-focused on saving them time, so they can spend less hours on the roads and do more of what they love with friends and family. That's why we're building generational projects such as Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. This is in addition to carrying out the largest

transit expansion in Canadian history. We don't want Ontarians struck in gridlock wondering if they'll ever make it home, when they could be spending time with those who matter the most, doing what they love.

In 2022, our government scrapped licence plate renewal fees. This move has saved vehicle owners up to \$120 per car or truck every single year. Although free, vehicles owners currently need to renew their licence and their vehicle permits online or in person, something we plan to put an end to as well.

If passed, the Get It Done Act will bring in more common-sense benefits for vehicle owners in Ontario by enabling the automatic renewal of license plates for passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks. This will save drivers across the province more than 900,000 hours each year. Automatic license plate renewals will apply to owners of cars, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds who are in good standing.

Our government not only prioritizes saving time and money, but also the safety of Ontarians by rewarding drivers who are following the rules and cracking down on those who don't. Until the automatic renewals process begins, I encourage all vehicle owners to renew their license plates at no cost, online or in person at ServiceOntario.

As we continue building a better Ontario and making life more affordable, we are always focused on the future, on our infrastructure needs and the jobs that will secure Ontario's place as a global economic hub for decades to come, after the previous 15 years of a Liberal government that drove out over 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

It has never been more clear: Our future is electric, and today we marked an historic day with the largest investments in EV manufacturing right here in Alliston, Ontario. Our province has attracted more than \$30 billion in investments to build electric vehicles and battery plants. The EV industry will create thousands of well-paying jobs for Ontarians, connecting young Ontarians to well-paying jobs and a better life as we lead the charge for the electric vehicle revolution.

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As more and more drivers transition to electric vehicles, the critical minerals in northern Ontario have never been more valuable. Amid this shift, we need to do everything we can to make our mining sector more attractive to investors. To date, the permitting process to operate in Ontario's mining sector has been far too slow and far too complicated. It's time for a change. Our government will slash through the red tape to assert Ontario's position globally as a competitive jurisdiction as the EV revolution takes hold. The future is electric, Madam Speaker, and Ontario will continue leading the charge.

As our province gets ready to welcome millions of newcomers in the coming years, as we find ourselves on the cusp of realizing the enormous economic opportunities within our mining sector and other industries, we have three choices: We can maintain the status quo and allow red tape to run crazy, slowing down development, impeding investment across this province; we can do abso-

lutely nothing as hard-working people struggle to get ahead and build better lives for themselves and their families; or we can roll up our sleeves and get it done for the people of Ontario.

The Get It Done Act, if passed, will deliver policies that will power our economy for generations to come. It will give us the tools we need to get people and goods moving, to connect Ontarians to opportunities across this province. Madam Speaker, it will help keep life more affordable for hard-working taxpayers, which has been our number one priority since we have taken office. We will continue to build for the future generations of this province.

And further, Madam Speaker, I would like to turn it over to my parliamentary assistant to continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: My thanks to the minister for leading off this debate and for presenting this bill before the House.

Speaker, it shouldn't be news to the members of this House that our government has plans to build a better Ontario. We have the most ambitious capital plan in the province's history. We're spending almost \$100 billion over the next 10 years to build the highways, the public transit that will keep people and goods moving across this province.

We need to build this infrastructure now, Madam Speaker. It's not something we can wait around for and hope will magically appear. In fact, it's never been more urgent. That's why the Get It Done Act will streamline the approval process for key infrastructure projects. This isn't a new approach; it builds on the great work that we've already accomplished.

The Building Transit Faster Act, tabled by our government, became law in 2020 and allowed us to accelerate the planning and construction of priority transit projects. And, Madam Speaker, we certainly put those powers to use. We now have shovels in the ground on multiple subway and light-rail transit projects that, soon enough, will connect hundreds of thousands of people, more communities across the greater Toronto area, and put tens of thousands of Ontarians within walking distance of public transit.

And, Speaker, we're not stopping there. Our government will move forward to declare the Hazel McCallion LRT extensions into downtown Brampton and downtown Mississauga as a priority transit project so that we can build this much-needed transit infrastructure faster, expanding access to rapid transit across Peel and the GTA. The Hazel McCallion line and its extensions will transform the way people travel, providing two of Canada's fastest-growing cities with quicker, more reliable service than existing bus routes. By declaring the Hazel McCallion line extensions a priority transit project, we're looking toward to the future and building the transit network that Ontario needs now and for years to come.

And if the Get It Done Act passes, we will be able to get to work quickly on other projects that also matter to Ontarians. The Hazel McCallion line extensions will join

several other priority transit projects that are currently under way, such as the Ontario Line which will add 15 new stations to Toronto's Line 1 subway.

The Ontario Line will be a complete game-changer for anyone that takes transit in Toronto. And this is essential, for a city the size of Toronto we need to have more transit options to sustain it. Anyone who takes public transit in Toronto would agree that they're fed up with overcrowding and limited transit options. Our new subway line will accommodate 40 trains per hour and nearly 400,000 riders per day, offering multiple connections to existing subway stations, streetcars and bus routes.

Our government is all about building quickly—and the Ontario Line will get people moving quickly. Wait times for the next train on the line will be as short as 90 seconds. The Ontario Line will reduce crowding at the TTC's busiest stations by as much as 15%. This project is the difference between having to miss an important meeting or appointment because you were waiting for the next train. It could be the difference on giving up on public transit altogether.

Our new subway will not only get people moving, it will expand their opportunities, giving them better access to jobs, services and housing. And we already have shovels in the ground on this historic project that will change peoples' lives. We're getting started on the process of building the southern portion of the Ontario Line, the Pape tunnel and the underground stations and more. As our population continues to grow, our transportation infrastructure needs to grow with it—and we are getting it done.

Our government doesn't take a piecemeal approach to transit infrastructure. We have a vision to build an integrated transit network all across the greater Golden Horseshoe, which is expected to grow by five million people over the next 10 years. That means building new transit projects that are integrated into the existing transit, allowing commuters to travel from one municipality to another quickly and safely—and this vision will become a reality, Speaker.

To connect communities and create new travel options for people within the GTA, we cannot ignore the commuters beyond Toronto's borders. The Yonge North subway extension—another one of our government's priority transit projects—will revolutionize public transit in the GTA by extending the TTC's Line 1 up into Richmond Hill. For the North York and York region residents, days of driving to Finch station, parking a car before boarding a subway to downtown Toronto will soon be over.

The Yonge North subway extension will put 26,000 more people within walking distance of public transit and accommodate more than 94,000 daily trips. Commuters will save as much as 40 minutes per day—that's hours more per week to spend with friends and family doing the things you love. The extension will reduce gridlock by taking cars off the road and offering more transit connections, making travel between York region and Toronto easier than ever, enhancing Ontario's connectivity as we deliver an integrated transit network for all GTA residents.

The people of Scarborough deserve the same access to fast, reliable transit as the rest of Torontonians. That's why we've declared the Scarborough subway extension a priority project. The Scarborough subway extension will add three stops and almost eight kilometres of new track to the TTC's Line 2 subway, creating high-speed service for commuters east of the downtown core. Riders will benefit from connections to GO Transit and Durham region transit, making travel across the GTA more seamless than ever. We have an ambitious goal to build one of the most integrated transit networks in North America, and prioritizing this important work will finally allow us to do so.

But our government is doing more than just building subways. Light-rail transit will be essential to the transit network that powers our economy into the future. That's why we recently issued a request for proposals to design and build the seven stations that will make up the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, which alone will put 37,500 more riders within walking distance of public transit. The extension will connect to existing transit lines, including the TTC, GO Transit and MiWay, offering riders anywhere from Scarborough to Mississauga options to get where they're going. That is what real progress looks like.

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In my brief time at the Ministry of Transportation, I am quickly learning that a world-class integrated transit network requires more than just building transit. It requires seamless and affordable transitions from one transit system to another. Hard-working Ontarians shouldn't have to pay multiple fares for just one trip just because they're transferring between transit systems, Speaker. The people of this province deserve better than that.

Our government won't stand idly by while Ontarians miss out on life-changing opportunities because the cost of transit is too high. That's why, earlier this year, we very proudly launched the hugely successful One Fare program. This new program, fully funded by our government, means commuters now pay only one fare to transfer between the TTC, GO Transit, Brampton Transit, Durham Region Transit, MiWay and York Region Transit. This is how you create an integrated transit network, Speaker: by not only building transit but by removing the financial barriers to taking transit.

Earlier this week, that program officially hit five million transfers by transit users within the program. This program is saving commuters up to \$1,600 per year. These savings are real, especially for post-secondary students, some of whom spend upward of \$400 on public transit every month. No one should have to skip a class, pass up a job opportunity or miss out on a family event because the cost of transit is too high. Thanks to One Fare, they no longer have to.

One Fare follows the successful introduction of debit and credit card payments on GO Transit, the UP Express and the TTC. Paying for transit should be easy and smooth, not a nuisance. That's why you can just tap your debit or your credit card—physical or digital—and you can get to where you're going to quickly and easily. We

also launched Presto on Google Wallet, which gives transit riders even more options for payment. The point here is that it's never been more convenient or affordable to take transit in Ontario. With the Get It Done Act, our government will be able to take those changes to the next level.

I want to interject a little bit here that it's not just the Golden Horseshoe and the GTA that are benefiting from this. Rural and small communities are also being supported by this government. Just last Friday I had the opportunity to announce some funding from the gas tax program for four small municipal transit systems in my riding. That \$600,000-plus is a game-changer for those small municipalities to continue to have even small communities using transit and off the road.

When so many taxpayers across the province are seeing their hard-earned dollars stretched further and further than ever, it is time that we take decisive action to make life more affordable. That's why our government has been hard at work to save Ontarians money. The Get It Done Act will allow us to build on all the great work we've done so far, Speaker. We're saying no to tolls on new highways. We're saying no to fee hikes for drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards. We're saying no to putting a price on carbon, but we're saying yes to building a better Ontario, a connected Ontario that will allow our economy to thrive for generations to come.

We've all witnessed the slow pace of development in Ontario, and our government has seen enough of it. The greater Golden Horseshoe will have a population of almost 15 million people by the year 2051. If we don't act quickly to build new infrastructure, the gridlock on our roadways will only get worse—much, much worse. We can't have 15 million people stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic when they could be contributing to our economy or spending time with loved ones. We need to roll up our sleeves and get to work today so the people who live in this province in the years ahead can have the amazing life in Ontario that they've always dreamed of.

Our government is already using the Building Transit Faster Act to accelerate priority transit projects, but the Get It Done Act, if passed, will allow us to do so much more. It will help us build the highways and the critical infrastructure that we need to support our growing population. It will give municipalities across the province the tools and the support that they require to help us build 1.5 million new homes by the year 2031. And it will allow us to slash through the red tape that is holding us back from building a better Ontario.

Thank you very much, Speaker. At this time, I would like to pass it over to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank my colleague for his excellent remarks as well. I'm pleased to join the debate on third reading of the Get It Done Act, an act that would make it easier and faster to build transit, housing and other critical infrastructure. Because all over our

province, we're seeing historic growth—465,000 new residents in the first half of last year alone—and this is a trend that will continue, with almost six million new people expected to come to Ontario in the next 20 years.

But we're also seeing other incredible signs of growth in this province: 18,000 new businesses opening their doors in Ontario just last year. That's over 40% of all the new businesses in Canada. And these new businesses are sprouting up in every corner of the province, from Barrie to Brockville, Innisfil to Ingersoll, and from Cornwall to Kenora. This includes investments—and I mean historic investments—in our auto sector.

Thanks to the leadership of this Premier, our government is strengthening Ontario's position as a global leader across the electric vehicle supply chain. Over the past three years, we've attracted record-breaking automotive and EV-battery-related investments from global automakers, parts suppliers, and EV batteries and material manufacturers—and we heard a little bit from the previous speaker, who has a great investment of Umicore in his own riding as well.

But this is making us North America's hub for building the cars of the future. It's creating the jobs of the future. It's historic investments like the one in Windsor, where LG Energy Solution and automaker Stellantis are joining forces to build the province's first large-scale EV battery manufacturing plant. The NextStar Energy EV battery plant will support 2,500 Ontario workers, with more than \$5 billion invested in Ontario. The plant is expected to be fully operational in 2025, and would be the first large-scale domestic EV battery manufacturing in Canada, with a production capacity of 45 gigawatt hours to supply Stellantis plants in North American markets.

And this morning, Speaker, I was in Alliston as Honda Canada announced a milestone \$15-billion investment to establish a comprehensive electric vehicle supply chain, creating good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. This is a large-scale project that will see four new manufacturing plants in Ontario, and just next door in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil.

Honda will build an innovative and world-class EV assembly plant in Ontario, the first of its kind for Honda and the first in Canada, which will produce up to 240,000 vehicles per year. They will also build a new stand-alone battery manufacturing plant in Alliston, and to complete the supply chain, Honda will also build a cathode active material and processing plant through a joint venture partnership with POSCO Future M and a separator plant through a joint-venture partnership with another corporation.

Speaker, this is huge news. Today's announcement not only secures the jobs of the 4,200 associates at its two existing facilities in Alliston, but it will also create more than 1,000 new jobs in Ontario. Make no mistake: This is the largest auto investment in Canadian history. It's a strong vote of confidence in our government's plan to build Ontario. Businesses know that under our government and under the leadership of this Premier, we have created the conditions for them to thrive and for Ontario to retake its rightful place as an economic engine of North America.

With today's investment, I'm proud to say that Ontario has now landed over \$43 billion in transformative auto and EV investments in the past three years. These are made-in-Ontario EVs that are not just a good-news story, but a great-news story for our environment and for our economy, and it has ripple effects.

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Just on my way back from the announcement to the Legislature just now, I got a message from Matt McRae, who is an owner of a Tim Hortons in Beeton, just next door to Alliston where these thousands of jobs will be. He sees the great partnership we have with transforming the automotive sector, taking care of our environment but not forgetting small business owners like him by keeping taxes low and not raising fees, which is good news for his employers and his business. Certainly he'll be providing coffee, tea and Timbits to way more workers.

But the fact is, over the last three years, Ontario has created more than 700,000 net new jobs—not just the jobs that Matt McRae, as I was speaking about, is creating in his own business, but all across the province, for today and tomorrow. We're also building the infrastructure that is required. After all, those workers at Matt McRae's Tim's need roads to get on to get to work. Those workers are going to the Honda manufacturing plant, whether they're waking up in Barrie, waking up in Innisfil, waking up in Alliston or today I met someone from Brampton who wakes up in Brampton and drives all the way down. They need roads to get to work.

And this government has an ambitious capital plan. It's the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history when it comes to building the infrastructure required. That's because our government has planned investments over the next 10 years totalling \$185 billion, getting shovels in the ground to build hospitals, highways and other critical assets for Ontario's growing population, laying the foundation for a strong Ontario: investments like the new Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, a \$1-billion fund to largely support core infrastructure projects such as roads and water infrastructure, to enable housing for growing and developing communities, because we know that building more homes is critical to accommodating Ontario's growth. Those workers who are going to be working at those Honda plants need a home to live in. Again, whether they're in Barrie, Innisfil, Newmarket, Aurora or surrounding communities, need a place to live. They need roads to drive on to get to their jobs.

That's why investments like the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, which helps municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure, are important. The government is quadrupling the housing-enabling water systems. Our government announced \$200 million for this fund in January of this year, and then announced that it would be quadrupled to \$825 million in the 2024 Ontario budget. This increase would make more funding available for municipal water infrastructure projects, which in turn would enable much-needed new housing.

Our government is improving flexibility on loans for water infrastructure projects, helping ensure that this

growth does not come at the expense of the environment. We will provide municipalities increased access to financing for housing-enabling municipal water and waste water infrastructure projects under the Infrastructure Ontario Loan Program. Municipalities will be given options that will provide flexibility on things like construction period interest payments, including deferred interest payments until projects are substantively complete, long-term loans, more flexible repayment terms and lower administration costs. Deferring interest and principal payments until after the construction period will better align municipal revenues from new housing with payments on the loans from Infrastructure Ontario.

Speaker, I've given you just a few examples of the incredible growth occurring all across Ontario and a few examples of the programs our government has established or is establishing as part of its 10-year, \$185-billion infrastructure plan, a plan that is certainly ambitious, a plan that will require everyone to work together. I can assure you that this government is up to the task. And as the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, I am ready and willing to play a vital role.

One of the ways we will be doing this is through modernizing and improving the environmental assessment process. We've taken a hard look at our policies and processes and found ways to make them smarter and more efficient, to get shovels in the ground to finish major projects sooner. It's through these improvements that we will modernize Ontario's environmental assessment program while maintaining environment protections. Over the past several years, we've consulted extensively with municipalities, Indigenous communities and key stakeholders on ways to do just that.

I'm here today to speak about a minor change to the Environmental Assessment Act that we're proposing in the Get It Done Act, 2024. It will help municipalities, provincial ministries and other provincial government agencies when planning for infrastructure development. It would clarify the ways that property can be acquired for a project before the environmental assessment process is complete. This proposed change would provide greater certainty to municipalities and other proponents as they plan for future projects. Project proponents will still have to comply with all other applicable legislation.

I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing me to talk about building up Ontario's infrastructure and to emphasize its great importance, and how we are continuing to build up Ontario, and how I, as the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, am playing my role in this government with my great team members as we are creating homes for the future, roads for those who need to get to work and creating lasting investments for generations to come, all while protecting our great environment.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: It's an honour to rise in the House today as part of the government's leadoff of third reading debate of Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, 2024, alongside

my caucus colleagues the Minister of Transportation, the Associate Minister of Transportation and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

On behalf of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, it's my pleasure to be here to highlight the details of the bill, which, if passed, will impact every corner of the province to provide relief to millions of drivers, vehicle owners and users of the Ontario photo card.

Since first forming government in 2018 and given a second mandate by the Ontario voters in 2022, our government and our ministry have been focusing our efforts on delivering customer-focused services to you—the hard-working people and businesses of Ontario, and we continue delivering this commitment through ServiceOntario, our hub for service delivery for the province and the public face of government.

Madam Speaker, our government is taking a responsible approach to rebuilding Ontario's economy through smart investments and without—and I say this twice—without raising taxes. While Ontario households continue to struggle, families are feeling the pressures caused by high interest rates and global instability. Ontarians need to know that their government will be there for them. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, rest assured they can count on us to provide real, meaningful changes for Ontarians through this signature omnibus bill. By keeping costs down, we are going to do what's needed to get it done.

This is not just important legislation, it's a key piece of our government's overall strategy to save the people of Ontario time and money and make government services simpler, faster and better. That is why our ministry has been proud to work with the Ministry of Transportation to make this a reality—changes that allow people and businesses of this province to keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets while modernizing systems that they rely on.

Speaker, it has been two years since our government first removed licence plate renewal fees and stickers for passenger vehicles like trucks, motorcycles and mopeds. This change has resulted in an annual savings of \$120 for vehicle owners—per year, per person, per car—in southern Ontario and \$60 a year in northern Ontario.

Our latest proposed changes to the Highway Traffic Act are paving the way for the transition to automatic renewal of licence plates. With this bill, we are building on our government's decision in 2022 to eliminate licence plate renewal fees, making the entire renewal process automatic, providing both convenience and affordability. In the meantime, it's important to note that before the automatic renewal process begins later this year, vehicle owners will still need to renew their licence plates, at no cost, which can easily be done online or in person at a ServiceOntario centre.

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With the renewal of licence plates being one of the most in-demand government services, we are proud to share this service to Ontarians 24/7 through ServiceOntario. Automatic licence renewal is just another way our government

is working to develop new and improved online services to match the fast pace of our ever-evolving digital world.

Of course, we need to make sure that every driver renews their licence plates, and while our government has eliminated the fee, we did not eliminate the requirement to renew the licence plate itself.

Speaker, it is very important to note that this automatic renewal process will only be available to drivers in good standing. This means drivers that have outstanding fines or tickets and do not have valid insurance will not be able to renew online or at ServiceOntario until those procedures are paid. Starting this summer, this new process will begin to save drivers' time by automating the licence plate renewal process, resulting in savings of more than 900,000 hours each year for vehicle owners.

Interjections.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you.

Additionally, the Get It Done Act, 2024, also proposes to make the current freeze on drivers' licence and Ontario photo card fees permanent through this legislation. We originally put a freeze in place through regulation in 2019, and it has saved applicants \$22 million since that time—a remarkable number. It's estimated this change will save drivers \$66 million over the next five years.

We have seen time and time again the opposition parties have never seen a tax hike they did not like, and that is why we are enshrining this freeze into law to ensure that when they attempt to hit you with more fees, they cannot sneak these fees in.

This legislation is a catalyst for positive change. It is all about putting customers at the centre of everything we do to save people precious time and money by putting money back in the pockets of fellow citizens and residents and stimulating economic growth. It ensures that our citizens and residents are respected and saved from the financial obligation of increasing fees when paying to renew their driver's licence and when obtaining their Ontario photo card.

Last year, our government removed the tolls on Highways 412 and 418, and with this legislation we are proposing to prohibit the introduction of any new tolls on any highways. This is one of the most common-sense ways we are helping to boost our economy without adding any financial burden to the people of Ontario.

If passed, the Get It Done Act, 2024, will build on our government's commitments to date with streamlined approvals for major infrastructure projects, housing and keeping costs down for people and businesses and support economic growth for long-term prosperity. It will also play a valuable role in empowering the citizens and businesses of Ontario by giving them a leg up in making ends meet more easily. This legislation aligns with the work our government and our ministry, the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, has done to help create stronger communities in Ontario and better opportunities for future generations.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, our government is on a mission to keep costs down for families and businesses, and it ultimately makes life simpler, faster and

more convenient for Ontarians in every corner of the province. I am very proud to stand here and say we are well on the road to building a strong Ontario.

With the growing number of passenger vehicles on the road, this multifaceted piece of legislation promises to be a game-changer for millions of vehicle owners who call Ontario home. The Get It Done Act, 2024, has garnered significant support from stakeholders such as the Ontario Motor Coach Association, Motor Coach Canada, the Ontario Trucking Association, the CAA Club Group and many more, including municipal partners. It is thanks to the support and feedback of our stakeholders that we can continue working with them to get it done for this great province.

A strong Ontario needs better transit, better roads, expanded high-speed Internet availability and more homes built for our growing population. To support these essential goals, Ontario is helping contain the costs of building roads and new homes.

The House recently passed the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2024, which enhances the locate delivery system and prohibits underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging fees to locate underground infrastructure. Underground infrastructure owners or operators will not be able to charge fees for locates. We are reducing the potential for spiralling costs while protecting our workers and the public as well as the critical infrastructure below us. It also enhances efficiency and is an effective approach to building critical infrastructure safely, like improving transit, connecting people to high-speed Internet and getting homes built.

Our government is making tremendous progress on reducing regulatory burdens and enhancing consumer protections so the people and businesses of Ontario can thrive. The Get It Done Act, if passed, will allow Ontario to reduce red tape and streamline approval processes for key infrastructure investments to help get shovels in the ground sooner and save taxpayer dollars.

Our proposed measures in this bill reinforce our commitment to cutting red tape and improving processes to better the everyday lives of fellow citizens and residents across Ontario. This is why our ministry is always considering ways to reduce burden, improve predictability and save businesses compliance costs by looking for these opportunities to eliminate administrative burdens for those seeking permits, licences, information or any other type of government approval, and improving the overall user experience by making it easier than ever to get required information and services.

This past January, our minister announced measures to make it easier and more affordable for Indigenous people to access records and services, reducing barriers for Indigenous communities and individuals seeking that information. We introduced permanently waived fees for death registration searches, death certificates and certified copies of death registrations for impacted Indigenous people. During what is no doubt an already extremely difficult time, this latest update will provide ongoing financial relief for impacted Indigenous communities and their families throughout Ontario.

Madam Speaker, these are just a few examples. I am proud of the role that I play in the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery in fulfilling our government's commitment in reducing barriers for Ontarians and saving them time and money.

It has been my pleasure addressing you all today to highlight in detail the exciting components of this proposed legislation that touches upon our ministry's work. As always—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member.

Mr. Brian Riddell: And I just got cut off.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): You ran out of time. My apologies.

Questions?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the minister. I'm looking at schedule 3 of this bill as it relates to the official plan, and this schedule restores some of the forced urban boundary expansions that had been opposed by local municipalities. Speaker, it repackages the same decisions that were at the heart of the greenbelt scandal. So my question is, have you learned nothing from the greenbelt scandal?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Let's look at the facts here. We work with local municipal leaders and leadership across this province to come to decisions that are reflected here, but what's most important is we're building 1.5 million houses over the next 10 years.

But what does this act also do? It helps us accelerate public transit and the building of the Hazel McCallion line across this province, where we're building houses and making sure we can build for generations to come. We're also looking at ways to speed up the building of public transit: \$70 billion over the next 10 years.

We're also looking at ways to speed up how we can build highways in this province. We know how important they are. It doesn't matter where you live in this province. We're going to build Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, and Highways 11, 17, 69. We're building all across Ontario because that's what the future generations of this province deserve.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I was just looking at the name of the act, the Get It Done Act, and son of a gun, if anything says get it done louder, it's \$15 billion worth of Honda investment in the province of Ontario. Now, that's getting it done.

That's just occupying everything that I'm thinking about today, so I'm going to toss this question over to the minister and say, how is your ministry interacting with this Honda investment, this incredible, life-changing investment, the most historic, the biggest, largest, most enormous automobile investment in the history of Canada? How is your ministry going to interact with that?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much to the member for that question. What an important

question. It doesn't happen by chance, Madam Speaker. We're competing with international sites across North America and across other jurisdictions. It's because of the vision of this Premier that we have been able to land over \$30 billion of EV investments.

You know what? It's because we're committed to building highways. We're committing to building transit, we're committed to building homes, something the Liberals and the NDP have said no to every step of the way. In fact, they continue to campaign against projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

We need those critical pieces of infrastructure to attract investment, like the one the member is talking about: a \$15-billion investment, one of the most historic—the largest investment in Ontario's history for an auto manufacturing facility. Thank God we have someone like Premier Ford leading this province because under the Liberals and the NDP, all they know how to do is raise taxes, cancel projects, not build anything, be NIMBYs. But under this government we're getting it done and we're getting projects built.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a question for the minister about schedule 6 of this bill, which, of course, as the minister knows prohibits tolls on provincial highways unless there is an act authorizing the toll, which is currently what is in place in Ontario.

There are two acts authorizing tolls: the Highway 407 Act and the Highway 407 East Act. If the minister really cared about helping Ontarians' pocketbooks, why did he not remove tolls off the two highways in this province that do have tolls?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let's talk about pocketbooks: \$120 off of every car sticker for cars and trucks that this Premier put forward. Guess what? The NDP voted against that. A 10-cents-a-litre reduction in your gas tax, Madam Speaker. Guess what? The NDP and Liberals voted against it. When the federal government was raising the carbon tax by 23% on April 1, we heard nothing from the NDP or the Liberals, especially Bonnie Crombie, the new leader, the queen of the carbon tax.

When it comes to fighting for pocketbooks, when it comes to fighting for Ontarians, there's only one Premier and one government that does it, and that's ours. Whether it was removing the tolls off of Highways 412 or 418 it was this government, under this Premier, that led that charge. It's so unfortunate that any time we bring any measure forward, whether it be tax cuts, fee decreases or other measures to support the people of this province, the NDP and Liberals vote against it. We're always going to put more money back into the pockets of hard-working families.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: What I'm saying is from me, but it is the numbers that speak louder than the words: \$68 million in approximate savings from the removal of tolls on Highways 412 and 418 over 2022 to 2027; \$22 million

in approximate savings to date due to freezes on drivers' licence fees; \$66 million in approximate savings due to freezes on drivers' licence and Ontario photo cards, between 2024 and 2029; 30 minutes—the average time drivers will save with the building of Highway 413. This is incredible.

To the member from Cambridge: In my riding of Mississauga–Malton I've heard several complaints regarding the lack of affordability here in Ontario. Can you please highlight how this legislation, if passed, would help make life more affordable for Ontarians all across?

Mr. Brian Riddell: Now more than ever, we need to keep costs down for the people and businesses, and this is why our government is putting more money back in families' pockets by removing unnecessary fines and fees, strengthening protections against new toll highways. Since day one, it's always been a priority for our government that we wanted to do this.

We have also enhanced affordability and convenience for the eight million vehicle owners by eliminating licence plate renewal fees and the need for licence plate stickers. This will save Ontario drivers approximately \$66 million between 2024 and 2029 due to the government's proactive action in freezing fees for drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards.

Our government has extended the gas and fuel tax rate cuts through June 30, 2024, and, with this extension, it is expected to save households an average of \$260 each year. Also, thanks to our Fewer Fees, Better Services Act passed in 2022, our government has abolished licence plate renewal fees and the need for licence plate stickers for specified vehicles. Lastly, we've invested over \$28 billion across Ontario to make commuting and our infrastructure more affordable.

Our government has taken action to get it done for the people of Ontario by proposing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member.

Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll ask my question to the member for Brampton South—the minster. This bill is called the Get it Done Act, and I've got to say, there's an incredible irony, because I've got a list of seven bills that this Conservative government has had to reverse because they got it wrong: Bill 124, Bill 28, Bill 35, Bill 39, Bill 112, Bill 136 and Bill 150. These cover things like stripping education workers of their constitutional rights and protections under the Human Rights Code, the paving over of the greenbelt, the dissolution of Peel and the reversing the urban boundary expansion.

Rather than calling this the Get It Done Act, should this government not be known as the ready, fire, aim, we got it wrong and have to reverse it act?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We're building for the next generation. Here are the facts: Those members opposite have voted against the Highway 413, something that is going to build and create over 3,500 jobs for the people of this province. It's going to attract investments like we have today, \$15 billion. Could you imagine if the

NDP had any say? What would happen to this province? Higher taxes and we'd drive out investment from this province.

We've landed \$30 billion since this government has come in because of the measures we have taken. We have cut taxes on businesses and people in this province, and we have put more money back into their pockets. The NDP vote against every single one of our measures, every single one of these workers who are being supported by these EV investments.

Those members have an opportunity to vote in this budget, in our budgets, to support them. What do they do? They say no to every single thing that this government is doing, whether that's reducing taxes, fighting the carbon tax or taking 10 cents a litre off your gas costs.

We're going to continue to get to done. We're going to continue to build over \$180 billion over the next 10 years. This is about building for the next generation.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House. Today we're doing Bill 162. The working title is the Get It Done Act. I've got to say, Thursday afternoons, we're all struggling. A few of us on the government side aren't struggling; I appreciate that.

Before I get into the formal remarks, today is the last day for the current group of pages, and I'd just like to make a thank you again for all their work. We couldn't survive without them.

There's another group of people who are here for longer periods, our ushers, and they all should have a medal of honour because they actually have to be here all the time and listen all the time. That's pretty tough. One particular usher, this is his last day: Steve. Steve and I have a bit of a love-hate relationship, I've got to say, because Steve—where is Steve? There's Steve. Give us a wave, Steve. Come on. Get up there. Give us a wave.

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Steve has got the meanest evil eye. I come around the corner and I'm running my hand along the banister; that's a rule that I found out you're not supposed to do. There's Steve. Another day, I come and I'm just finishing my muffin, so I have some in my hand, and there's Steve. I've got to say, on all our behalf, to all the ushers—especially to Steve on your last day—thank you very much for your service to this province.

The last time I spoke to this bill, at second reading, I spent quite a bit of time talking about how it was called the Get It Done Act. It's still the Get It Done Act and in northern Ontario, we hear “get 'er done.” And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but we don't think of smart, thoughtful things when we hear “the get 'er done act.” We just don't. When you hire somebody and he goes, “I'll get 'er done,” you just know that it might work, but it might not work very well. I might go back to that a little bit later.

But I listened very intently to the minister. I have a lot of respect for all the members of this House. I do. I respect this place. I respect people's points of view. I often

disagree and they often disagree with me, and that's what makes this place cool.

He said, "Our track record speaks for itself." The member from—

Mr. Chris Glover: Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. John Vanthof:—Spadina–Fort York just brought up that this government has had to rescind seven bills. I would say that that part of the record also speaks for itself. That's a lot of getting 'er done and then thinking "oops." That's a record. Your record speaks for itself, that you are the undisputed, unqualified get-'er-done kings and queens. No other government has put forward such egregious legislation that the same government has had to say, "Oops. Oops. We've got to get that undone, because we got caught."

Again, we disagree with some things on philosophy. You won a majority government; I get that. I get that. We're not disputing that. But some of the things that you do, you know it yourself. You know it yourself and you still let it happen. And that's why, when I'm listening and listening to the minister say, "Our track record speaks for itself"—and those seven, these weren't little things.

I can talk about a couple. The famous blue licence plates: That's not going to change the world. Actually, no; it could change some people's lives, because as soon as those things came out, you realized that you couldn't see them at night. That's a bad thing, right? And that wasn't one of the seven bills. So then it was, "You know, okay, yes. Our careful planning and changing the colour to the Conservative blue—yes, okay, we'll get rid of those."

I have a friend who bought a car in that period—and I'm going to talk about cars later, because we all want to have the car industry be very robust in this province. He bought a car, a brand new one, with the blue licence plate, and I said to him, I remember—he's a good friend of mine. I said, "Do you know what? The government just said that these things are no good, but when they send you the new one, hold on to it, because it'll be a collectors' item, kind of like a penny that wasn't minted correctly." And we waited and we waited, years and years and years, and then the government came out with their plan how they're going to get rid of the blue licence plates: They're just going to wait until they fall off. That is the plan.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, government members are saying it: "That's a good plan."

That's just a little thing, but some of the things that you've had to rescind—the greenbelt grab—it was obvious right when it happened, right when you announced what you were doing. It was obvious to almost everyone in the province that that wasn't going to fly. It just wasn't, and it didn't, and you had to back up on your legislation. There are still problems, and I'm not going to dwell on it, but you have a few hangovers from it, particularly an RCMP investigation, so obviously this isn't a philosophical difference. That's much deeper than philosophical—much deeper.

So when you say that your track record speaks for itself, I would say you have to take that with a huge—not a grain

of salt, but a big cube. I always use farm references, and I'm not going anywhere where people think I'm going, but anybody who has ever been on a farm—cows need salt, and farmers buy big blocks of salt. You can buy white ones, blue ones or red ones. So when this government says that they have this track record that speaks for itself, you need to take it with a big blue block of salt.

The Minister of Transportation also said that bumper-to-bumper traffic is tough on your mental health. I agree with that. I come from northern Ontario. I don't do a lot of bumper-to-bumper traffic until I drive here. My trip here, if traffic here is good, basically from Queen's Park to my home, is six hours—if traffic here is good. If traffic here isn't good, it's six-plus hours. I get bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Now, the government is very aggressive on Highway 413. We disagree philosophically. But bumper-to-bumper traffic is happening now, so even with the things this government is trying to do with the 413—actually, some of them might slow things down, because when you don't do your due diligence, people push back much harder. If you're going to do a quality, qualified environmental assessment, it might seem like it's taking a long time, but if you don't do it, you're going to run into protests and it's going to be much tougher. I'll get back into that with the Mining Act.

So let's say it takes—anybody got a guess? How long is it going to take to actually start and complete the 413? Twenty years? Ten? Let's go for 15.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member across the way is saying 10. Again, well, he stands by his record; let's go 20.

So we're talking about the 413, the planning, blah, blah, blah. Who owns the land around the 413 also might run into some investigative problems. But all that time, people are still in bumper-to-bumper traffic. So although we differ philosophically completely on the 413, there's something that the NDP proposed that we could do tomorrow and would help people's mental health tomorrow—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, well, maybe. It's late in the day Thursday, so tomorrow. We could do this tomorrow. Well, actually, no, we're not sitting tomorrow, but the government could do it over the weekend. The Premier's office has got like 40 people. They could maybe get a good start on it this weekend. They get paid better than we do, so they could get a big start on it.

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Take the tolls off the 407 for trucks. The government forgave the company that owns the 407 a billion dollars in fees because, during COVID, they couldn't come up with them. So, instead of forgiving that billion dollars, say, "Okay. We want, as a start, a billion dollars of coupons for trucks," and get the trucks off the 407 so people can actually get home on the 401. That's something that would help people tomorrow. The 413 is going to help them—if it helps them at all—20 years from now. The government is very opposed to that. We put that forward—maybe

they're just opposed to it because we put it forward, the official opposition put it forward.

Something else that the Minister of Transportation said is that we are opposed to everything. Actually, that's not true, but I am very proud, extremely proud that we voted against every one of those bills that you had to rescind. We're very proud that we had nothing to do with the bills that are causing that RCMP investigation—very proud.

We vote against your budgets because there are always financial measures in those budgets that we are opposed to. But when this government puts forward—and amazingly, I give credit where credit's due. Sometimes they put forward legislation that moves the bar forward in certain areas, and we support them, as much as some days it pains me. But if legislation moves the bar forward, we're happy to vote for it. That's our job. It's our job to criticize, to oppose, to propose, to hold the government to account, and also, when the government puts forward legislation that we agree with, to support. But that is not, it appears to us, the way the government operates.

Again, the Minister of Transportation said that we have some of the most congested highways in North America. We have them today, I think we could all agree, except for the 407. It's not congested. The 407 was actually—if I remember, they didn't actually sell the 407, right? A previous Conservative government didn't actually sell the 407; they leased it out for 99 years. Didn't they just lease out something else for—oh, no, Ontario Place. They only leased it out for 95—only 95. Nothing to see here, folks. Nothing to see here at all. What could go wrong with a 95-year lease? I'll tell you what could go wrong. A 99-year lease on the 407, that could go wrong. We can't change that because you can't—any good government, you have to live by—I guess, when a government makes a law, when that law is passed and when companies base their decisions on those laws, you can't retract. That's the way our system works.

Actually, this government did for the first time—at least the first time since I've been here. I've been here a while, Speaker. Like, I'm not one of these 30-year-type people, but I've been here 12 and a half. In dog years that would be a lifetime, but in legislative years it feels like a lifetime, too. If it was 12 and a half years of Thursday afternoons, it would be tough, and as the Speaker sitting here Thursday afternoon, you know that, Speaker.

Now, I've completely lost my place. Oh, yes, now I know where I am. Okay. I do actually have notes for this speech; I just haven't got there yet. I just haven't got there yet. I'm just hoping that nobody does a point of order that I have to stay to the speech, because I can get really quiet and dry if you want me to. Okay.

But when this government was first elected, if you will recall, the former Liberal government was not actually supported by the NDP, because the only time the Liberals were supported by the NDP was between 2011 and 2013 or 2014. That's when I first got elected, in the minority. And after that, there was an election, and do you know what happened in that election? The people of Ontario picked the Liberals over the Conservatives and over us,

and they had a majority. And then they did it again. So, that had nothing to do with the NDP supporting the Liberals for those two majorities. That had to do with the people of Ontario making a decision. I didn't agree, either. I didn't vote for the Liberals in those two elections—obviously, I hope.

Getting back, when this government was first elected, the Liberal government prior had created the Green Energy Act and they tendered contracts for private companies to create power, wind and solar, and do you know what? Those contracts were far too high. I think we can all agree. They were not good contracts, but they were tendered by a duly elected government, and then this government made legislation to cancel those contracts. Again, a government can do that. But what this government did, and it should never be done, is they had a clause in that bill that the companies involved who lost those contracts could not sue or could not have remedy to keep themselves whole.

So, if you've got a great deal on a wind turbine or on solar panels and the government was wrong enough to do it, or miscalculated to do it—and then the next government says, "Okay, you got that deal. You spent untold millions of dollars building those windmills," and then the next government says, "We're going to cancel that, and do you know what? You can't even sue us to get that cost back." It said that in the legislation. I know it did; I had a long talk with the President of the Treasury Board at that time. That is the kind of rash decisions of a new government, kind of like the blue licence plates—much worse than the blue licence plates. And this government didn't actually learn, because after that is when they started taking these big bills and then having to rescind them—basically things that they saw that the people of Ontario rejected wholeheartedly and completely.

Something else that the Minister of Transportation said in his speech—and I'm taking all these subjects, Speaker, from the minister's speech, not directly from the legislation, but I listened intently to his speech. He talked about how the government was going to upload the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway from the city of Toronto. That's something that we understand. I think I would agree with that. Those aren't really city streets; they're major provincial thoroughfares. But coming from northern Ontario, there are miles and miles—or, okay, we're metric now, right?—kilometres and kilometres and kilometres of former provincial highways that were downloaded by a former Conservative Premier, Premier Mike Harris. Kilometres and kilometres—imperial is not unparliamentary, eh? No.

But anyway, I've got the town of Iroquois Falls. It's got more kilometres of former provincial highway per person than anyone else in the province, and they're having to close bridges, because do you know what? Their tax base just can't maintain it. Does it make sense for the province to upload major thoroughfares that actually aren't really part of the city's infrastructure? I'll give them that. But in farm language, we have what's good for the goose is good for the gander. So if it's good for Toronto—and Toronto

is a huge part of the GTA. When you're from northern Ontario, we basically think of Toronto as anywhere south of Barrie, really. I didn't really start to differentiate until I got elected, because for us, that's where it starts to get busy. We get it. For a northerner who doesn't go south very often, we start to get really nervous around Barrie, because that's where it gets busy—not from the people, but just the congestion. So we just think of that as Toronto.

1450

But now I've been here for 12 and a half years, so I live here six months a year, and now I know. I know there's a big difference between the downtown and Scarborough and Milton and Mississauga. I know there's a big difference, and I've learned a lot, actually. I really enjoy the Legislature for that, because when I listen to other people's speeches—and I do the same thing, right? We all focus on the places we're from, and we do that for our own reasons too, so the people know that we are representing them. But it's really interesting, if you listen to what drives different places. I really find that interesting.

Something else I really find interesting is listening to people—what they did before; their pasts—because there's a lot of lived knowledge. It really makes a difference.

But getting back to the roads: You want to upload the Gardiner and upload the Don Valley? Go to it. But how about we also look at uploading roads not just in—I know northern Ontario, northeastern Ontario. I know my part in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario is a big place. But what about those roads? It's easy to forget.

Another issue: I wasn't going to talk about this very deeply, but I think I'm going to. There was a big announcement today about Honda EVs. I think everyone in this House wants to have a robust car industry, and right now, we're in a transformational change between fossil fuels and EV. I don't think there's anyone here opposed, at all. But there's a few—not “buts”; we're not opposed at all. But it's our job to say, “Have you thought about this? Have you thought about this? Have you thought about this?” That's our job too, because we come from all across the province.

I think one of the reasons why big companies are coming here and making investments in battery plants and car plants is that we have a stable society—which we do. Compared to much of the rest of the world, we have a stable society, which I'm very proud of. And we should have access to natural resources, to supply—and the government's good at talking about this, and I agree—the supply chain. I agree with that. But parts of the supply chain, you haven't fully thought through.

The member from Kiiwetinoong asked a very important question this morning. I'm here asking it again, and it's not something I fully understand either. But free, prior and informed consent, not just from one or two First Nations, but from the First Nations that are involved—obviously I'm not First Nations and I cannot speak for them, but I can speak for how we've gone through this cycle in northern Ontario too.

I come from a mining area, and I'm very proud of it. We have great mining companies. One of our biggest

mining companies is Agnico Eagle. They're very good to work with. They have a very good environmental record. But it has been that the minerals come from the north, the industry is in the south, and then when something changes, the north is just left. And no one knows that better than First Nations because it's happened time and time again. I'm sure that the companies that you're dealing with need the assurance that those minerals are available, and we have them. But I'll tell you something, and this was very early on: When the Premier said that if the road wasn't quick enough, he'd get on the bulldozer himself, that sent a chill through northern Ontario, because what that said is, you know what, we don't really matter. If the south needs it, it's going to happen. That is not going to speed things up.

I'm not saying this to—we want this to succeed, as Ontarians. We all want this to succeed, but when you're going to pick one or two and leave three or four behind and say, “Oh, we've consulted everybody,” you're going to run into problems, perhaps much bigger problems than you've ever envisioned, and that, that is a problem—I've said problems a couple of times. That could potentially slow this down, slow your EV supply chain down way more than some of you are considering, and we don't want that to happen.

So we need—please, when someone asks if it's going to be free, prior and informed consent, it means something. It really means something, because for First Nations in northern Ontario, they've signed treaties that no one has ever lived up to. So having us say, “Trust us, we'll give you this and this; just trust us, everything is going to be fine,” they've heard that song and dance before. Northerners have all heard that song. And as a white son of an immigrant, I can't speak for First Nation people at all, but as a northerner, I can speak to this: that we have all heard that song and dance before.

We need to make sure that the people of the north are actually partners, true partners. And I think that the companies we're dealing with want that too. I heard the Minister of Transportation talk about mining and how they've changed, they're removing the red tape. And the mining companies I've talked to—it does take too long to permit a mine in Ontario, right? We're not disagreeing with that. But changing, removing the red tape and regulation isn't actually the problem.

So one of our major mining companies in my area—they have gold mines in my area—Agnico Eagle, they also have a gold mine in Nunavut. Nunavut has stronger environmental regulations than Ontario—much stronger—but the permitting process is much faster. So that's the issue, because modern mining has a good reputation. Mining didn't always have a good reputation. We have lots of old mines in our area that left environmental degradation, lots, but modern mining now doesn't. They need to protect that reputation, and that reputation is protected by regulation, so I'm not sure that you're actually solving the problem. I'm not sure, because for mining to be accepted in a region—and we have lots of mines; we have some new ones being built—everyone has

to be confident that everyone will be protected by the regulations.

1500

Saying that we're going to get rid of red tape and get rid of regulations is not actually doing that. Saying that we need to make the permitting process faster—have actual hard dates for mining—that's really important. I'm sure it's really important for the EV companies too, that they have hard dates, because when they're talking about billions of dollars—the government is putting in billions of dollars—they have milestones and goals that they have to hit, because they also have to have major investors. This is a tough gig, so you need dates.

You don't want surprises. I'll give you a little surprise: You want to get to the Ring of Fire? You want a road to the Ring of Fire? Okay. But the road we have now from North Bay to there will never handle the equipment you need to get there.

I hear the Minister of Transportation say, "We're going to improve Highway 11." On Highway 11, to the former Minister of Transportation's credit—Minister Mulroney—she actually got the 2+1 passing lanes approved. I give credit where credit is due. She did that. We worked very hard along with the GEMS committee to get that done, but that is not going to help you get to the Ring of Fire. You're going to need millions—billions—of dollars. I don't know how much it costs to build good roads, exactly, but from North Bay north you do not have the roads. Forget where you don't have a road at all—you're going to have to build a lot there too—but the roads from North Bay north aren't going to get the stuff there either. That doesn't come from me, that comes from the president of the Ontario Road Builders' Association.

There are a lot of things that we've got to do and that we would support you on, but let's really talk about this.

Before I run out of time, I actually better look at some of these notes. There's one other thing—and it's in the notes too. I do believe the actual name of the bill has something about carbon tax, that there's not going to be any new carbon taxes allowed without a referendum or something.

This government is very opposed to the federal carbon tax, as the NDP has never been in favour of federal carbon tax, by the way—ever. We think it's regressive. We did vote for cap-and-trade. This government scrapped it. The minister said, "We got rid of cap-and-trade. We took the government to court on the carbon tax."

Just for the record, the federal carbon tax is a backstop program. If the province has its own program and it meets the goals of taking carbon out of the atmosphere, you don't have to pay the carbon tax. Quebec doesn't pay the carbon tax. Please correct me if I'm wrong, because I've been known sometimes to have the occasional misinformation—not on purpose—but Quebec doesn't pay the carbon tax because they have cap-and-trade.

The province cancels cap-and-trade, then fights the federal government on the carbon tax, spends millions of dollars and loses the court battle. Now it's basically become a political battle. They're helping their federal

friends and they're blaming every problem on the carbon tax. Again, let's make it clear: We are not in favour of the carbon tax.

Now they have in this legislation that if another government wants to put any other carbon pricing system in, they have to hold a referendum. The only carbon-pricing system that's exempt from that is the one that this government itself implemented. They have a carbon tax. It's an industrial compliance fee for carbon.

I'm not going to say who said this, but I had a conversation with one of the members. And when I asked him about it, he said, "Well, it's more than two words. Nobody will understand it." But this government has an indirect carbon tax. So because of this government, Ontarians are paying two. They're paying a federal one, which we don't agree with either, but they're getting rebated for most of that. But for the industrial compliance fee, there's no rebate.

Some of the government's arguments I believe. The government continues to say that if you had a cap-and-trade system, the extra costs of cap-and-trade will filter through the system and end up making things cost more. You know what? That's fairly good logic. So the government's own industrial compliance fee for carbon—that cost will also filter through the system and make things cost more. So there's no rebate for that.

I really would like a good debate on this. Don't quote me on the number; I don't have it in front of me. But I believe last year it was \$140 million, \$150 million, what the government brought in. Where does that money go?

Again, I think people have figured out by now that I'm not—we have a few PhDs in economics; I am not. I use farmer economics. Since the federal carbon tax is a backstop program—if you have your own program, you shouldn't have to pay the federal carbon tax. To me, the government has that program, the industrial compliance fee for carbon. Maybe it's not robust enough to meet the goals. I'm not qualified to say that. Maybe it's not. But you would think the government is also spending quite a bit of money to change the Hamilton blast furnaces to electric, but that also reduces carbon, and all the EVs. Couldn't the government actually use that to make the argument that we have a robust enough program so we wouldn't have to pay the carbon tax? Like, put some horsepower behind it to actually do that?

I'm seeing a lot of noes, but the fact is, we do have a provincial compliance fee, which is very similar to cap-and-trade—very similar. So you cancel cap-and-trade, and you put in something else, but you don't talk about that. Nobody wants to talk about the compliance fee, but it's there. It's there. So even if you make the argument: "You know what? We've already got our own system. Maybe we should pay less carbon tax than the other provinces because we already have at least a partial system"—but you don't want to admit that you actually have a system. That's crazy, because you should be proud of anything you do to reduce carbon, even if we disagree on how you're doing it. For the life of me, I don't understand.

You go through the theatrics of trying to tie a future government—or maybe your own government, because

this government has been known for flip-flopping. So maybe you have in your caucus a big bunch of people who are pro carbon tax, so you're trying to stop yourselves from putting in another carbon tax. I don't understand. But the referendum—I really don't understand what you're trying to do, because you have your own carbon tax and you've exempted your own program from the referendum. What are you doing?

1510

There are things in here—we're going to get back to the 407. We're not going to have any tolls. I didn't know this coming from northern Ontario, I didn't know this until very recently—I always thought that when the massive mistake was made to lease out the 407—that the whole 407 belonged to some private—is it a Spanish company? I don't know where they're from.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Brazil. I think it's Brazil.

Mr. John Vanthof: Brazil, wherever. Anyway, it doesn't really matter. It doesn't belong to us.

But that's not actually the case. I was mistaken. Believe me, it's not often that I'm completely mistaken, but part of the 407, I believe the 407 east, does belong to the province. You kept the tolls on there. "No new tolls. We're the anti-toll party—except for this stretch of highway."

Again, a lot of these regs and rules seem more for political purposes than actual legislation that's going to improve the lives of people living in Ontario. I think one thing we can all agree on, regardless of our political affiliation, is we all want to improve—our lives, let's be honest, but particularly the lives of young people, like the pages, the lives of the many people who want to come to Ontario and the lives of the many people who want to stay in Ontario. We want to do that for everybody, regardless of our political affiliation. But I've got to wonder sometimes—referendums, except on things we've done.

You've spent days and days and weeks and weeks in question period about the carbon tax. I know what you're trying to do; you're trying to brand the new Liberal leader. I don't mind that. I'm going to be upfront; I don't mind that. But you don't seem to be focusing on the things we can actually do in the province so that people don't have to pay as much carbon tax. We're being double charged. In a way, we're being double charged.

I hear constantly about the 10-cent rebate in gas. Is it 10—

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's 10.7.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's 10.7. I like the member over there. He knows. He's got his notes. He's going to give me a tough question, I can tell.

The one thing about the reduction in gas tax, I don't think we felt it in northern Ontario, because there's nothing stopping—again, every business, big or small, but especially businesses that control the market, are going to go for their maximum profit. I don't blame that. That's free market. But in gas, I think you just gave up your 10 cents and the gas companies got it, because there's nothing—you didn't put anything in to say that 10 cents actually has to go to consumers. We hear this all the—I

drive every week, and there is sometimes 15 cents, 20 cents difference in my drive. No, that's not transportation.

I have a member here I used to do business with, and he'll know exactly how much extra transportation it is to get—it's not 15 cents or 20 cents on a litre of gas, it's not, because sometimes the farther ones are cheaper than the closer ones. It's whatever the market will bear.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's it.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's the free market. I'm not trying to—so you gave up provincial revenues. Again, it's your decision. But there is nothing in that legislation that said that that had to flow through to the actual consumer. It's things like that.

So on the carbon tax, again, we're not in favour. I don't know how many times we have to say that. We're not in favour of the carbon tax. We are in favour of a pricing system. We believe that we need some kind of pricing system so that we can use less fossil fuel and also help people use less fossil fuel. I hope that's one of the reasons why this government is pushing for electric vehicles so hard. We get that, but we just don't see why you're not putting in the safeguards so that when you make decisions, that those decisions actually benefit the people because, sometimes, the free-market system—when you have the public and the free-market system working together—will grab what it can grab.

As a farmer—I've got a few other farmers here. Right now, beef is really expensive, and cattle are really expensive. Farmers are selling cattle at expensive prices. No farmer is going to say, "You know what? That's really expensive, so how about I give you"—a Holstein or a beef calf now is like a thousand bucks. "Well, that's too expensive, so how about I'll give you \$500 back?" No free-market person is going to do that, and neither do big companies. They wouldn't be in business long.

So when the government is going to give somebody a deal like taking taxes off, and they're going to stand there and they're going to say, "We're making your life easier," they haven't ensured that they have. They've ensured that they're getting less income themselves and they're hoping that that tax break flows through, but there's no reason that it will.

Now, I better start reading some notes here. Protecting against the carbon taxes act: I've covered that. Removing tolls from non-tolled highways: I think I've covered that. Highway 413: There is a huge difference of opinion on Highway 413—I'm going to talk about something personal. Where we massively disagree with the government, massively—now, not on development. We understand the population is increasing. When you have industries, now with a huge change for EVs, you need development. We get it. What we don't understand—and I'm going to use an example—what's happening right now in Wilmot—and please, in your questions, correct me if you're wrong because maybe I'm misunderstanding something here. So the government has basically put out that all municipalities, if they want to be shovel-ready in case another big—I'm sure the government is working on other announcements, other industries. That's your job, it's all our jobs. So municipalities need it, okay.

So in this case, a private developer somehow figured out that something might be coming so they tried to scoop these farms, and when the scoop didn't work—so you have to wonder where the intel came from for the scoop—then the next step is expropriation. Now, expropriation has a place. If there's a new highway, but expropriation for industrial development—well, wait a second. You are taking farms—and this could happen anywhere in Ontario. You decide we're going to need this thousand acres, so we're going to expropriate it for whatever cost, but that thousand acres has been developed by those farmers, and if there's a better use for it—you have to make a really good argument to me that there's a better use for farmland than growing food, but if you can't prove that, that land shouldn't be expropriated.

1520

You should actually treat those farmers like the business people they are—and they are—but that's not what this government seems to be doing. They seem to think that big business trumps all and that that thousand acres—they're not stealing it; expropriation isn't that. But let's be honest: If there's a factory that's going to come there, that is industrial land. That is not agricultural land. The value of the land has just skyrocketed, and that price didn't go to the people who actually had that land. It went somewhere else. That's not right.

I can't believe that Conservatives, who would claim to be business people, buy that. No, I can't believe it. I've got a few hundred acres. If somebody wanted to build, I personally would say you would have to prove to me that it's better than somewhere else that maybe can't grow food as well. But then, whoever has that land should be a part and should be paid for that land what it's actually worth. That's not what expropriation is; it isn't.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, it isn't. Anyone knows that if you want to buy a house on a street, and there are 10 houses, but you want the one that isn't for sale, you just can't take the average of the other houses in the town and say, "Well, that's what we're going to give you," because that house isn't for sale. It's a whole different thing, and anyone who doesn't understand that has never really thought it through.

I'm a farmer, and if your family has built that farm up for the last 100 years or the last 10, and somebody says, "We're going to build something else there," well, do you know what? That's worth a lot more than the going rate per acre. It is, because there was never a "for sale" sign there, and I don't understand why no one, especially Conservatives, understands that.

I talk to a lot of farmers. Another one they didn't understand was the three severances per lot that this government was going to implement. That works for some places, but if you have a livestock farm, three severances per lot is going to kill your farm, because if your neighbour sells a lot next door to you, because of minimum distance separation, you can never expand.

Hon. Rob Flack: But we fixed it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, you fixed it, after there was public outcry. There's public outcry in Wilmot right now

and there might be public outcry from farmers across the province. You fixed it, just like you rescinded those other seven bills. That is an issue. It's an issue.

Oh, I've only got four minutes left. I don't think I've got really much more to say—I probably said too much already. I'm hoping the Speaker hasn't fallen asleep. I tried hard not to—anyway, I think the biggest thing with this bill is that a lot of the things you're doing seem to be more for political purposes, more for messaging purposes, than actually moving the province forward. We're not against moving the province forward, as I said. The announcements for the EV plants, we're in favour. St. Thomas—not everybody is happy about St. Thomas, but that went through the House no problem. And we understand not everybody is ever going to be happy. That's why we have the system we do. But please understand how things actually should work.

Rail about the carbon tax all you want. We agree that there shouldn't be one. But tell people about your industrial compliance fee for carbon. Tell them the truth.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member opposite. He always makes Thursday afternoons a little more tolerable, maybe, I should say.

I want to remind the member, and maybe the member from Spadina–Fort York, as well, that if you do nothing, you won't need to pivot and change direction. Before you got to your notes, I just want to say that I wouldn't be too proud of voting against everything. You mentioned the seven bills, but everything is a little bit—because when you accomplish one thing, when you do nothing, you stop to grow, and when an economy stops to grow, it dies. It's important, and this government is really demonstrating that in continuing to move forward.

This bill, like so many others—together with so many others—creates an environment for growth. The Honda announcement today is an example like that. It also creates an environment for people to thrive, and within this bill—like the eight million vehicle owners that are saving 900,000 hours in time because of the changes that we're making to licence renewals; it's just one thing in this bill that helps create that environment.

Would the member agree that creating that environment for the economy and for people is a good thing?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for that question.

Actually, I said that we were proud that we voted against those seven bills. We have voted for lots of bills that you've put forward. We don't vote for your budget bills because we disagree, as the loyal opposition, with many of your budgetary policies. The first term, you were always talking about how we propped up the Liberal government. Now, with this question, I'll look up the figures—I don't have time right now—but actually, we looked it up, and we voted for the Liberals, I think, 60% of the time and you voted for the Liberals 50% as

opposition. We don't vote against everything. It's our job to hold the government to account.

And on the registration for cars, you know what, you should maybe rethink that, because there is a loophole now where car thieves, because we are not going to register cars, have an easier time selling them. So, look before you do things, and there's a difference between careful legislation or having to rescind whole—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I have to say to my colleague, that was a really good speech, and maybe you should set aside your notes more often because it's a very effective technique appreciated by all in the House.

Your comments about farmers and the sale of land: Could you expand a bit and give us a sense of where the rest of the farming community in Ontario is on this at the moment? Because it sounds to me like it would be a red flag.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, and that's a good question. I think many farmers throughout the province are busy and they don't really realize what's going on in Wilmot. But if it was their farm that was getting expropriated, the farm that their kids were going to take over, the farm that their father ran, they would be just as angry.

But farmers are business people. They are. I don't think anyone is going to disagree with that. Treat them like business people. They know the value of what they have built. They know the value of that land if there is going to be an industrial project put on it. They know that. And they know that when that land is expropriated that their value is being taken, and that is where the government is going to run into trouble.

1530

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Again, with respect to our shared love of agriculture and our farmers throughout this province, we both have been in that realm our entire life. I would say I think this government, with all due respect, understands that the business of farming is that: a business.

There are all types of farmers in the farming continuum: some hobbyists; some sundown farmers, as we used to call them at Masterfeeds. For most today, it's a consolidated industry. It's huge. It's massive.

With respect to Wilmot and again with all due respect, do you not believe that—and you pay fair value for what it's worth. But how much land has been expropriated and how many farms have been sold? In my opinion, none so far.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's actually—I don't disagree with his statement, because of what happened. So a developer shows up, offers you money for the farm and then you don't accept that offer. Then, there's a threat of expropriation by the municipality. Okay.

But because of the directive of the provincial government that you need shovel-ready spots, right—I listened to the Minister of Job Creation, who said several times about St. Thomas and about—that it was not expropriated, and

that's the issue. If the threat of expropriation is taken away, regardless of which level of government, it's a whole different story. But the threat of expropriation, which comes from the directive from the Premier, regardless of who's doing it—the directive is from the Premier, we all know that.

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I'd like to thank my colleague for his excellent presentation. One of the things that this government has talked a lot about in this bill is around highways, how they're going to stop tolling highways that don't have tolls and are quiet on highways that do have tolls.

But one of the things that I've also noticed is that they are silent when it comes to the northern Ontario highways. And this member has advocated to make sure that the highways are safe, that lives are not lost or that they are properly maintained. So my question to the member is, can you share with the members of this House, particularly the government, on the importance of maintaining the highways for Ontario's economy?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm happy to elaborate a little bit farther. I said in my comments about Highway 11 north of North Bay—it actually isn't ready to take the traffic from the Ring of Fire, even if you get the Ring of Fire road built. I don't think anybody from northern Ontario is going to disagree with that. That highway hasn't had a major redesign in I don't know how long. It's the same as it was.

And if you're going to get your critical minerals from northern Ontario, it has to come somehow. And right now, it's not ready. The problem with Highway 11 is that Highway 11 runs like a main street. There's 1,800 trucks a day now that go on Highway 11. It's two lanes, 1,800 trucks a day. It's closed on a regular basis, miles of trucks waiting—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question? Quick question, quick response.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I was looking at some bills that were sent to me by my constituents. On the bill, there's—I'll call it a carve-out which shows how much the carbon tax is. I did a rough calculation and depending on which residence it was either 28% or 29% of the bill. So residents in my riding of Essex are paying their heating bill and the carbon tax makes up 28% or 29% of their residential heating bill.

Now, I commonly refer to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane as the gentleman farmer, and I think he is. I was wondering if the gentleman farmer from Timiskaming-Cochrane has taken an opportunity to look at his bills, because he has bills related to his farming operation, I'm sure, and if he can tell us what percentage that carbon tax is.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for that question. It's a good question. My carbon tax—well, I heat my house with wood and propane. It's significant. A lot of farming operations are exempt from the carbon tax—not all, but a lot of them are, and we're against, we are opposed to the individual carbon tax.

My question is, you have implemented your own carbon tax scheme: the compliance fee which you charge. Why don't you use that as a wedge to try—so that your residents and my residents don't have to pay the individual carbon tax? Put some horsepower behind that instead of just blaming it all on the feds.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm proud to rise this afternoon in the third reading of Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, introduced by the Minister of Transportation. I want to thank him and his team, including the associate minister and the parliamentary assistant from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for all the great work they're doing.

I want to thank the associate minister in particular for all his great work on the One Fare initiative. Speaker, it's been less than two months, and there have already been over five million free transfers between GO Transit and municipal transit systems across the GTA. Again, this will save the average commuter \$1,600 each year.

Before I begin my remarks, I also want to congratulate the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development for their announcement today on the largest auto sector investment in Canadian history: \$15 billion from Honda for new electric vehicle manufacturing plants in Alliston, north of Toronto. Speaker, this means that, in the last three years alone, we have been able to attract over \$43 billion of investment from global automakers here in Ontario.

I remember when the former Liberal Minister of Finance, who I ran against in 2018, said that assembly line manufacturing was “a thing of the past” in Ontario. Speaker, if the former Liberal government had been re-elected, it would have been something in the past. But our government has taken a very different approach, that the bill today, Bill 162, would continue. We're cutting taxes, red tape, energy costs, and making Ontario open for business again. This has produced an economic recovery that leads the country and leads North America.

In June 2018, there were 7.2 million jobs in the province. Last month, there were almost eight million. That's an increase of 725,000 jobs. That is an average of about 10,500 new jobs each month, or 126,000 new jobs each year. Last year, Ontario created more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined.

Speaker, to support this growth, the 2024 budget includes the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history. It includes investments of \$190 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years, including \$98 billion for new highways and public transit, including many critical projects in Mississauga and across the Peel region that the changes in Bill 162 would help us to build faster.

As the minister said, modernizing and streamlining Ontario's 50-year-old environmental assessment process would make it easier to build infrastructure we need. That includes the new 20-kilometre Hazel McCallion LRT line in Mississauga, including the new downtown loop and expansions into Brampton that were announced earlier this year. This project is now a priority transit project under the Building Transit Faster Act, together with the Ontario Line

and other major subway and LRT projects across Ontario. It includes a historic GO Transit expansion along the Lakeshore and Milton lines and across the GTA. ONxpress is planning to run up to 18 trains per hour on the Lakeshore West line; that is an average of a train every three minutes. Expansion of the Milton line would be a little bit more difficult because the corridor is owned by Canadian Pacific; the passengers share the same tracks with the freight train. But we're working toward a two-way, all-day service by building a fully separated passenger rail line.

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The changes included with Bill 162 would help us get this new rail, highways and other important infrastructure built up to four years sooner. For example, for some projects, terms of reference will no longer be required, which by itself can save up to two years.

Schedule 1 would also make a minor change to clarify that we can acquire property before an EA is approved. While these changes would save time and money, it is important to note that all environmental safeguards would still be maintained, including consultation. But Bill 162 would help to bring Ontario's EA process in line with other provinces, including Quebec and British Columbia, and with the federal government.

On that note, I want to take a moment here to thank the federal government again for their decision last month to cancel their EA on Highway 413, which would have delayed the project by at least five years. By working together, we should be able to begin construction next year to help connect Peel, Halton and York regions and save drivers 30 minutes each way. That's five hours per week and 260 hours each year, or a total of 11 days each year.

Ontario grew by half a million people last year, and we're on track for at least another half a million people this year. That's more growth than any US state, including the fastest-growing states like Florida or Texas. The western GTA doesn't have the highway capacity we need to support this growth. All of our major highways, including the 407, will be over capacity within the next 10 years. Highway 413 will finally bring relief to an area that clearly needs it.

I've mentioned this before, but when I was first elected, we met with the region of Peel, on September 18, 2018, and they told us that Highway 413 was one of their top priorities. They said it's “critical to the economic well-being of both the region of Peel and the entire province.” They said Highway 413 is “required to support increased capacity, which is needed across Peel due to our goods movement sector.”

This was the position of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga, including Bonnie Crombie. Like John Kerry, she was for Highway 413 before she was against it. Not long ago, the federal Liberal environment minister said that his government would stop investing in road infrastructure, but even he is now on side on Highway 413, so I hope that Bonnie Crombie will support 413 again as well.

Next, I move on to schedule 2, which would help make life easier and more affordable for drivers. As you know, two years ago, we eliminated licence plate renewal fees

for passenger vehicles, saving drivers \$120 each year in southern Ontario and \$60 in northern Ontario. Combined with our gas and fuel tax cuts until at least the end of 2024, which are saving the average household another \$320, this is real relief for Ontario taxpayers.

Unfortunately, at an event earlier this month at the Empire Club, Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie said that these are just “gimmicks” that she would cancel if she ever got a chance. This couldn’t be any more out of touch with the average Ontarian. I have a lot of respect for the member from Ottawa South; he was right when he said his party lost in 2018 and lost party status because they had a listening problem. Their leader still has that same problem.

Families are struggling with the cost of living, high interest rates, high inflation and, of course, the federal carbon tax. That’s what I’ve been hearing lately when I go door-knocking in Mississauga–Lakeshore or in Milton. I haven’t been in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, but I’m sure it’s the same there as well. They don’t think that the tax relief we’re providing is a gimmick. That’s why schedules 2 and 4 of Bill 162 would put the current freeze on driver licence and photo card fees in legislation for the first time: \$35 for photo cards and \$90 for a five-year driver’s licence. This would save drivers \$88 million by 2030 and also help to protect them from future increases. Moving forward, this House would have to approve any changes.

As well, schedule 2 of Bill 162 would help us to transition to automatic licence plate renewals for drivers in good standing who have no outstanding tickets or fines. As the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery said, at a time when people are as busy as ever with their work and families, we can save them time, not just money, by making government services simpler, faster and better. That is what schedule 2 would do. As the minister said, this change alone would save drivers over 900,000 hours each year.

Moving on to schedule 3: As I said earlier this week, our government is committed to working in partnership with municipalities to get shovels in the ground and build 1.5 million homes. As the minister said, we are not micro-managing or taking a top-down, Queen’s-Park-knows-best approach. These changes to official plans in schedule 3 of Bill 162 respond to feedback from municipalities, including the region of Peel, after many months of consultation.

I also want to thank my friend the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for all the work she’s doing to consult with our municipal partners to streamline the EA process for water and sewage projects. As Mayor Steven Del Duca told the committee of infrastructure back in January, the biggest problem municipalities are dealing with as they work towards their housing targets is the need for more water and waste water infrastructure. That’s why the 2024 budget includes \$825 million for the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, which we announced at the Arthur P. Kennedy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeview. The planning expansion here will support tens of thousands of new homes along the Mississauga waterfront, including the Brightwater and Lakeview developments.

Right now, the municipal-class EA process for new waste water treatment plants or an expansion can take up to two years or more, when we need homes right now. Adding time limits for the first time could help cut these timelines from two years to six months. As I said before, all current environmental safeguards would be maintained, including consultation.

Next, I want to thank the minister for schedule 5, which would protect Ontarians from any new provincial carbon tax by making the government ask for the approval of voters in a referendum.

It was an honour to welcome the Premier and the Minister of Finance to the Pioneer gas station in Port Credit for an announcement in February. I got my first job there at that station when I was 16, pumping gas and propane. At the time, the price of gas was 33 cents per litre. Within the next six years, the federal carbon tax is scheduled to rise to over 37 cents per litre, more than the price of gas when I had my first job there. At a time when many families and small businesses cannot afford it, this will increase the price of gas, groceries and almost everything else. Again, this is with the full support of the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie.

As the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer reported last year, the federal carbon tax costs the average Ontario family almost \$1,700, far more than any rebate. Still, Bonnie Crombie refused to call on the federal Liberals to cancel their 23% carbon tax hike on April 1. As I said, just a few days later, she told the Empire Club that she would cancel the relief that we’re providing here to help keep costs down for families and small businesses. Speaker, that’s why, when Bonnie Crombie says she won’t introduce a provincial carbon tax, it is very hard to take her seriously because we’ve seen it all before.

1550

Former Premier Kathleen Wynne—who was back here at the Legislature yesterday—promised that she wouldn’t introduce a provincial carbon tax in 2014, but in 2015, just one year later, she introduced the cap-and-trade carbon tax. Now, just last month, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie told Colin D’Mello she thinks that this “was a great program.”

So, again, I want to remind all the members what the Auditor General wrote about it back at that time. She wrote that cap-and-trade would have cost Ontario families and businesses \$2 billion every year with hundreds of millions of dollars sent to California for little or no environmental benefits.

On November 30, 2016, the Auditor General wrote that the Liberal government did not study whether cap-and-trade would actually reduce emissions in California. In other words, she wrote, “These funds may be leaving the Ontario economy for no purpose other than to help the government claim it has met a target.”

The Liberals also claim cap-and-trade would cost only \$5 on your natural gas bill each year, but two of my constituents in Clarkson, Bill and Muriel Chudiak actually did their homework and they discovered that it would cost at least triple that which was hard for seniors living on fixed incomes.

As Premier Kathleen Wynne admitted, some seniors were forced to choose between paying the electric bill and buying food or paying their rent because of her mistakes on the energy file. They sold off Hydro One and created many new long-term energy costs. They signed over 33,000 contracts to buy power for 80 cents per kilowatt hour when nuclear power was available for nine cents per kilowatt hour.

In December 2015, the Auditor General reported that because of mistakes like this, Ontario consumers were paying for electricity that was overpriced by \$170 billion. For a typical family, that's a power bill of about \$1,200 higher than it should have been every year.

Speaker, this mismanagement of the energy sector is the reason—more than anything else—the Liberals lost party status in 2018 and again in 2022. Bonnie Crombie calls Bill 162 a “gimmick” or a “distraction,” but I'd like to share a statement from the former leader of the Liberal Party and now, the mayor of Vaughan, Steven Del Duca: “It is critically important,” he said, “that we help to keep our residents moving and our economy growing while not adding any financial burden to the people we represent.” And he continued, “I thank the Ontario government for introducing legislation”—and he's talking about Bill 162 here—“that will help to accomplish these important goals.” So I want to thank him for that and for the work that we're doing together to keep costs down and to support economic growth right here in Ontario.

Lastly, I want to add a few words about schedule 6. This would amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to ban any new tolls on provincial highways, including the 400-series highways, but also the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway, once they're uploaded to the province.

In April 2022, we removed tolls on Highway 412 and 418, which is expected to save drivers another \$68 million by 2027. Much like schedule 5, schedule 6 would require any future government to consult the public before they introduce any new tax.

Again, I want to thank the minister and his team for all their work on another important bill here in the House, and I know that as a government, we are saving taxpayers money here in Ontario, and we have increased our budget here in Ontario from \$152 billion in 2017, under the former Liberal government, to \$214 billion for Ontarians, without raising one tax and giving money back to our Ontario families across the province. So I just want to thank everyone for listening to me here today, and I want to thank the Speaker as well.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member opposite for your presentation, from Mississauga–Lakeshore. My question is about this government's decision to once again redraw urban boundaries in areas that are abutting prime farmland. I'm talking about Halton, Waterloo, Peel, York and Wellington county.

The government's own housing affordability task force said very clearly that we do not need access to new land to meet our housing targets. Given that, why is this govern-

ment moving forward with redrawing municipal boundaries to open up farmland to unnecessary development?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As you know, our goal is to build 1.5 million homes through the province of Ontario, and we are on target to build that. I look at my own community of Mississauga–Lakeshore with the Brightwater development and the Lakeview development going forward. We're looking at building 16,000 new units in the Lakeview development, with 10% of those homes being affordable and attainable for the people here in Ontario. As well, Brightwater has already their Peel homes there. We're going to continue to build homes across the province.

I look at the Indwell projects that we have right now. We have one on Lakeshore in Lakeview that has units there, as well as we're going to be building another building in the Clarkson area. We're continuing to build homes, and we're going to continue building through the province of Ontario with our municipalities and working together with them.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I thank the member. You mentioned that yes, our government has not raised taxes, despite building Ontario. The people in my riding of Richmond Hill are still complaining, or they have a lot of concern about affordability in Ontario. I know this bill, what we have done has been working on that, to help communities to be able to afford their daily lives, even though we're putting money into their pockets. Can you highlight a few things that we have done to help them and make their life more affordable?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank that member for that question. As you mentioned, we are saving Ontarian families money here in the province: the 10.7 cents on a litre of gas, and that will go on till December of 2024, minimum; as well as One Fare in transit, which people are using on transit right now, which is much easier than it was before. They just tap their card. They can use three transit systems and only pay one fare. As well as the licence plate stickers, removing those for our drivers here in the province of Ontario, which is saving a lot of money for them as well. The tolls off the 412 and 418: That is saving drivers and people here in Ontario. And we've done that—we are spending \$214 billion this year in our budget for Ontario.

This is the largest budget ever in Ontario's history, without raising a tax, and we're giving money back. We're building hospitals. We're building long-term care that was neglected by the Liberal government for so many years. Even in my riding alone, one long-term-care facility has 632 beds—more than the Liberal government built in the last 15 years.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: To the member across from Mississauga–Lakeshore, thank you for your presentation. I'm just going to ask you about the 407.

Obviously, part of the term sheet in the original agreement between the provincial government and the 407

operator was to maintain a certain amount of vehicles on that highway to reduce the congestion on the 401, and that meant that the operator had to set the tolls at a particular price. It couldn't be too high, otherwise you would see a drop in vehicle use, and of course we saw that the tolls were too high, and the vehicles came off the 407.

Your government, in 2021, waived a billion dollars of congestion penalties from the 407 for-profit operator. Do you have any regrets about waiving that billion dollars now that we're facing a \$9.8-billion deficit?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I thank the member for that question because, the member knows, we're saving \$68 million by removing tolls on the 412 and the 418 by 2027. As well, you mentioned that the 407—I want to thank you. You mentioned that it was not sold; it was leased. Thank you for acknowledging, after so many years, that you realize that it was not sold.

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As well, we are freezing our drivers' licence fees, and that is saving us another \$22 million. And the photo cards, as well, will save Ontarians another \$66 million. And by building the 413, that will save commuters another 30 minutes each way. But not only that; because of all the automotive investment that we are getting here in the province of Ontario, \$43 billion and the \$15 billion today, we're going to need more corridors to move our parts to these plants through the province.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Before I ask my question, I want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore. Thank you for your service. You're doing an incredible job for your residents and the whole of Mississauga.

My question to the member is, we have been extremely focused on building convenient transportation and shrinking commute times for Ontarians so that they can spend more time doing what they love: spending time with the family. Can the member highlight some of the efforts that are proposed in this that will improve the situation and help Ontarians?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Malton for that excellent question, and I want to thank you for all the great work you do in Malton as well. And being my colleague from Mississauga, thank you. I'm really honoured to have you as my colleague from Mississauga.

As you know, building that 413 will save commuters an extra 30 minutes each way. That's a total of an hour each day. But not only that, because of the gridlock that we do have, in the next 10 years, every corridor in the GTA will be gridlocked. So we've got to look for the future, how this highway will help us get parts into our plants. We're investing in all this automotive investment in the province; we need more highways and more transit in Ontario.

As we are, we are building the LRT line on Hurontario, which is coming right from my area of Port Credit all the way into Brampton, and with the loop too. We are building more transit than any other government has done in the history of Ontario: over \$71 billion in transit and \$28 billion in roads and highways. We're going to continue

doing this and building Ontario for the future and for our children to prosper here.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member opposite for his speech. He's always very well researched and he knows his stuff.

He's talked about removing tolls on the 412 and the 418—great. But there is a portion of the 407 that is still tolled by the province of Ontario. Now, since he is so much against the tolls on highways, I know he must be screaming in caucus meetings, “Why aren't we taking the tolls off that part of the 407?” So tell us, why isn't the government, if they're so against tolls, removing the 407 tolls that are part of the provincially owned portion of that highway?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Black Creek. He's a gentleman, and I always love speaking with him. In the House and outside the House, we get along very well. Being from two different parties, sometimes it's difficult, but you know, I respect him a lot and I'm honoured that he's my friend here in Queen's Park, and I want to thank him.

As well, I want to talk about the other highways. I know he mentioned the 407, but I want to talk about the other tolls that we have taken off other highways like the 412 and the 418, which is saving us \$68 million.

And building new highways, that is very—like I said all the time, it's about getting things to market. And it's very important, because if we can't get things into market, we're going to lose that advantage that we have. We have one of the best workforces in the world right here in Ontario, and that's why we've been able to attract \$43 billion of automotive investment here in Ontario.

I remember when I used to work for an automotive company. They were going to leave Ontario because this is not a jurisdiction for them to produce vehicles. We've changed that here in Ontario because of the Premier and the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, who have been able to attract all these people to come here to Ontario.

I want to thank that member for that excellent question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There's not enough time for another round of questions.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets / Loi prévoyant la remise d'un prix aux cadets exceptionnels.

An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day / Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine croate.

An Act to amend various statutes regarding infrastructure / Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux infrastructures.

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

An Act to revive Allied Contractors (Kitchener) Limited.

An Act to revive Bongo Studios Inc.

An Act to revive Winchester Design Build Inc.

An Act to revive Eastern Children of Israel Congregation.

An Act to revive Doreen Scolnick Investments Limited.

An Act to revive The Six Brewing Company Inc.

An Act to revive 1082472 Ontario Limited.

An Act respecting the Luso Canadian Charitable Society.

GET IT DONE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PASSER À L'ACTION

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's Thursday afternoon, as we know, and the real title of Bill 162 is An Act to enact the Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act, 2024 and amend various Acts. That's the real name of the bill, and it's six schedules. The layman's term, or the slogan term, of this bill is "getting it done," or—I'm going to say "getting it done"; I'm not going to call it the other one. But basically, this bill is strictly a performative bill, because when you look at the schedules that it actually is creating legislation for, a lot of them are really performative. There isn't a lot of meat behind them.

Specifically, I'm going to look at the first two bills that can impact people to a small degree. The government is going to, of course, exaggerate the type of savings people can have. Under schedule 2, for an example, is the Highway Traffic Act and it sets a statutory driver's licence fee of \$7.50 for each six-month period equal to the existing fee, which is set by regulation. Future fee changes will be required by an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act. It establishes a framework enabling an automatic licence plate renewal system, with details to be determined by regulation.

Again, this is a small piece of affordability. It's very straightforward and it's not a complicated schedule. But there are so many pieces of the Highway Traffic Act, Speaker, that we really need to address. When we talk about the slogan name for this bill, "getting it done," there are things that this government lacks that they didn't get done and they had to retract. That really took a lot of time up in this Legislature.

One of the things that people have mentioned was the licence plates. The licence plates were introduced by Ford and it was a new blue licence plate, which was part of the 2019 budget—again, putting it in the budget itself. But the

government quickly scrapped that rollout after a police officer in Kingston, actually, noted that the plates were barely visible at night. The government is no longer issuing those plates, but as of last year, there are still 170,000 circulating in the province, and the province hasn't yet articulated a plan to get them off the roads. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had mentioned that, I think, they are just going to wait until they fall off. Well, that isn't really a good plan.

I think the point we want to make on this side of the House is, many times, when small things come to this Legislature and they're very obviously not going to work, this government doesn't even listen to that.

The next schedule that's, again, very simple and is going to be exaggerated as some life-changing affordability piece for Ontarians is the photo card under schedule 4. It sets a statutory photo card fee of \$3.50 for each six-month period equal to the existing fee, which is set by the minister's order, and future fee changes will be required by an amendment to the act.

So, schedules 2 and 4 are somewhat of affordability issues for people—no disputing there; everybody could save a dollar in their pocket. Better a dollar spent on things you don't need. But those two pieces, again, making this a "get 'er done" act like it's something that's going to have a revelation for everybody's life? The title doesn't really suit what's in the act and how it's going to impact people's lives to get things done so that we can actually see the great progress this government is talking about.

1610

The other two schedules in this bill are really, again, performative. So we've talked about this, where the government has decided that on schedule 5—they call it Protecting Against Carbon Taxes Act. What they're saying is that they want to have a referendum prior to introducing a bill establishing a new carbon pricing program and establish rules for such a referendum. This schedule does not affect the Ford government's existing carbon pricing system on industrial emitters, which was established on January 1, 2022—without a referendum, I might add—and the schedule does not affect the federal carbon tax on consumers' fuels.

So, again, the government has put out something that—they want a referendum on a tax, but they've got their own. And they don't even have a plan for the money, for the compliance fees that they're going to collect. And if you look up some of these articles—again, why are governments not fully planning and executing their policies so everybody understands that they'll actually work? So when you throw out an idea, and this government throws out lots of ideas, and when they don't work, you have to backtrack them. And then, when you throw out ideas, nobody knows what's really happening with the money. And we want to know what's happening with the money. The taxpayers want to know, what are you doing with your money—their money? So that's another schedule, again, that's kind of performative. Having a referendum—has anybody priced out the cost of a referendum? Did you have a referendum on Ontario Place when you leased 95

years, the spa? Did we have a referendum for that? How much is that going to cost us? How much is 95 years of leasing out that spa space going to cost? We don't know that.

So when you're talking about legislation, when you're talking about policy, we want to have that information. I hope it's us who's going to be the government the next time around. The NDP is going to have a majority government in this Legislature; that's my prediction. And when we do things like that, we're going to have numbers, and we're going to tell people what things cost, because NDP governments actually balance budgets when they're in government. So you don't just throw ideas out, you don't know what they're going to cost. You don't just throw ideas out. You know the money you're going to bring in, what you're going to do with that money. That's important.

The next schedule on the bill, again, that's not really doing a lot—it's a lot of performative—is schedule 6. Schedule 6, we've talked about that too. What it's going to do: It's going to prohibit tolls on highways, quite frankly, that already have no tolls, and it won't prohibit tolls on Highway 407. And that's the highway that needs to be examined. We talked about how congestion is an issue on the 400 series. And right now, we can do something to alleviate that congestion. And I think the minister mentioned about mental stress when you're in traffic congestion on the 400. That's absolutely true, but there's also a safety issue. There are so many accidents that happen on that highway involving congestion and transport trucks.

One of the things the NDP proposed was to alleviate the tolls on transport trucks using the 407. And that is a really good idea, because then you alleviate the imminent traffic congestion that we have today. We're not going to wait 20 years for you to build your highways before we actually worry about people's safety. And then, if you're talking about building Highway 413 to curb the transportation time people have between work and home, well, if you took the transport trucks and put them on the 407 without a toll, you're going to have better time to get home for everyone, not just people using Highway 413.

So I have to say, with regard to the 407, it's very important that we note this government really gave the 407 a lottery ticket, \$1 billion you waived in fees. What kind of business sense is that when you can collect fees from a 99-year-lease highway that the Conservative government gave away and Ontarians are paying for? Now, they're able to get a billion dollars back from a business. It's a business. Do you think that business would waive a toll fee for anybody in this chamber or in this province? No. Quite frankly, it's a very abusive system. Let's say you moved and they're giving you the bills to your home. They keep adding exorbitant amounts of interest to those toll fees. So for us, for this Conservative government to let the 407 off the hook for a billion-dollar price tag, it's shameful, quite frankly.

And because it's so underused, you can actually land a plane. A plane actually landed on the Highway 407. So

there are ways we can alleviate congestion currently, and if you take off that toll off transport trucks, that's going to make a huge difference now, until you build your highways that you're planning to take an undertaking for.

So we talked about schedule 2, schedule 4 and schedule 6. Now, the schedule that is actually very, very crucial in this bill is schedule 1. What schedule 1 does is it amends the Environmental Assessment Act with the effect of confirming that expropriation may proceed prior to the completion of an EA.

During committee, we asked the government to put that back in, because again, you're creating these policies in such a rush, under the guise of building highways and building homes, and if you make terrible errors, you're going to have somebody's highway or somebody's home built on environmentally sensitive lands that end up, perhaps, with building problems. So we need to make sure that we have environmental assessments put back in. And when we mentioned this at committee, of course that was voted down. The Conservatives didn't even comment on it.

But one of the things that we have talked about—and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane touched on it—was Wilmot. That is something that we do have to address because, right now, there is the example of expropriation in that area.

I'm going to read, just quickly, from the news article that was written by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. They wrote an open letter condemning the expropriation threats to Wilmot farmers and the farmland. These are long-time farmers, so they have some credibility when they write letters about issues. They said:

“The magnitude of this proposed development project not only poses a direct threat to the farming community but also raises concerns about the irreversible loss of fertile farmland....

“As president of CFFO, I stand in solidarity with the farmers of Wilmot facing expropriation.... It's shameful that our farmers, stewards of our land, are left vulnerable to such injustice. Our government systems should protect them, not put them at risk....

“All levels of government should be ashamed that these farmers are even in this position.... They have been failed by the very system meant to protect them and our farmland.”

There was an example where, again, this government had to backtrack when they talked about severing farmland. I can't even say, “to the government's credit,” because if you talked to the farmers, I'm sure they would've told you that's not a good idea. If you would've done your testing on your licence plates—you know, we drive cars at nighttime, snow, rain, at daytime. Who would have designed these plates without the right procedural testing?

The other piece when we talk about plates: There's such a high number of auto thefts right now. One of the things that I had seen in the paper recently was on a gentleman named Derek Crocker. He bought a truck from a dealership, and he ended up having an accident. They ordered

parts for his truck based on the VIN number. When the parts came back, they didn't fit. And so, what's happening is vehicles are being stolen and they're getting re-VINned and nobody knows, not even the dealership.

So what has happened is there is not a Canadian or a US national vehicle registry, and so police agencies are asking and urging the federal and provincial governments to create one. Because if we're going to have all this work done of preventing crime for auto theft—and it's becoming quite violent, and we all agree that that should be curbed. No one should be worried about a car they drive and being attacked. But if we're going to do that, again, look at the policy and look at the results and go a step further so that they don't just thwart the system.

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The fact that we don't have to register our licence plates is also an opening. It's a loophole as such for these vehicles to be stolen and then re-registered.

The last schedule of this bill is schedule 3. The new municipal affairs minister, in a quote—there was a big scandal, as we all know. It's called the greenbelt. When he was asked about the greenbelt, and you guys were reversing all that terrible legislation, the minister said—it was in the Star. He said he was taken aback by the mess he had inherited. He also said that “reviewing how decisions were made regarding official plans, it is ... clear that they failed to meet this test.”

But then, when you look in schedule 3, there are all kinds of changes to municipalities' official plans. It's very difficult, actually, to match the numbers in schedule 3, and they list so many of them. There are so many municipalities that are getting their official plans changed. It leads to the question: Who requested these things?

Because the other piece of this is what I find is a lot of legislation that the government creates, there's an indemnity clause: “You can't sue me. You can't sue the consultants. You can't sue everybody with good intentions.” There isn't that in here. So I often wonder, if I'm looking at schedule 3, the official plan adjustment, which is basically a work around the greenbelt and the farmland expropriation pieces, who asked for these official plan changes? You have to ask that question because it's very important that when we have—allowing schedule 3 to go beyond urban boundaries when we don't need to build housing beyond that. We know that there's infill. Your own report, your own housing committee, your own housing commission said that. There are ways to build housing inside the urban boundaries.

One of the ways that we want to build more housing in urban boundaries is having multiplex homes. The government has a triplex already; I think it's in Bill 23. I was out in my riding over the weekend, and we have fourplexes in neighbourhoods with single-family homes. They're very beautifully designed, quite frankly. They look like they're semis, and so one half has two units, front and back, and then the other half has another unit, front and back. So I don't know what the adversity of this government is to not say, “Let's do triplexes. Let's add fourplexes to that.”

But when we're encouraging people to be small landlords, I also encourage this government to make sure

they fix the Landlord and Tenant Board, because small landlords really have a difficult time when things go wrong. They cannot subsidize people's rents when a tenant goes off the wrong path. Then, there are also tenants who are in big corporation apartment buildings, and they are being mistreated. They can't get to the Landlord and Tenant Board quick enough to stay in their homes.

So there are lots of ways we can clamp down on—people who have homes right now, let them stay there by having rent controls, by eliminating renovations, by making sure we build non-profit, non-market homes like homes geared to income, like co-operative housing, like inclusionary zoning. We can keep people housed where they are; then, we can build the stock as well. No one is against building homes where people who are hard-working and need affordable homes—that's not a problem. We agree with that. But there are people who are in precarious housing situations right now, and if they are kicked out of their home, they can't afford the new rent. They are not in the market to purchase. So we're going to create another effect of people who are homeless or couch surfing.

I also talked about—we need to make sure that people who are homeless right now have a yearly shelter bed, because there's not enough transitional housing right now. Just having people who are homeless only having a shelter bed in the winter months, the cold months—that's not humane. We need to make sure shelter beds are year-round, so that we can actually get people off the streets and in shelters, so they can actually access health care resources, as well, that they need.

Speaker, there are things in this bill, obviously, that the government wants to push, and housing is one of them. We have different philosophies on how to create that housing and how to keep people in their homes right now. So I look forward to the questions.

The Get It Done Act doesn't get much done. This government has a record of creating legislation and having to backtrack legislation—and that was the wage cap bill, Bill 124; they had that put in and reversed. The dissolution of Peel—that was a colossal failure; and the greenbelt. The “notwithstanding” clause, with the education workers—if you remember that, that had to be reversed. There are so many things. So I hope this government listens to this part of the Legislature and maybe rethinks that this should not be pushed through. Go back and rethink the expropriation and go back and think about schedule 3, where you're actually expanding urban boundaries beyond the city limits.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member for London–Fanshawe. I appreciate that she said that if the NDP has a majority, she will make sure that she will have a balanced budget. As soon as I hear that, it scares me—when I think of Bob Rae's time. I can't even imagine.

Perhaps you can help us to see—we're doing everything we can to cut red tape, as well as doing things to make sure that we're building more houses, more infra-

structure. How can you help to do that? That is a way to help us to cut down a lot of costs, as well. How can you help in that area?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Bob Rae was decades ago; the Conservative Harris government was also decades ago, but one of the things, I know, with the Conservative Harris government piece is, they cut ODSP and they cut OW, and we're still seeing the effects of that. There are people living in apartments that right now are low rents, and there are landlords pushing them out of those units because of renovations. They want to get them out so that they can charge more. But where are people going to live when they're on that fixed income? Building housing is so important, and keeping people housed, who have limited resources and income, is so important, or you're going to end up with more homeless people who don't have access to affordable homes.

So the government should be building—and under Bob Rae, we did that. We built housing geared to income, under Bob Rae. We built co-operative housing. And every government should always have that built into a future housing plan—the present and the future—so we accommodate the socio-economic differences and demographics for everyone, whether you—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: What I noticed about the Get It Done Act is the move to make it easier to expropriate farmland to build new transportation projects. I think about Highway 413, a \$6-billion highway that will be travelling through some of the most fertile, productive farmland in North America. It doesn't make a lot of sense. And studies show that it might save people a minute in their commute times.

If we're looking at helping people get from A to B, what other transit or transportation solutions would you like to see in Bill 162?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There are other ways, absolutely, that we can use transit.

I'll use an example: We lost the Via service from London to Toronto years ago. And then, this government put in the GO train, but they've cut it back to the point where you can't even use it; it's very limited.

Having transit when it comes to trains, from south-western Ontario—it's a hub, and people want to come to Toronto. Making sure that we build transit inside urban boundaries, as well, and having buses—we lost Greyhound during the pandemic. That was another piece. The Northlander—that was another one, under the Liberal government, that we lost.

So there are a lot of projects where we have let things go to the point where now we're looking at building mega highways and taking our bulldozers and using good, fertile land that really doesn't need to be used.

The other thing is the 407—we can improve transit rather than building highways by having no tolls on the 407 for transport trucks.

1630

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

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciate my colleague across the floor from London. I find interesting your talk about fourplexes. It's a sincere question. I agree, they can look good in certain situations. London has as-of-right four now. I think you'd agree with that. They didn't meet their housing targets last year. In fact, fourplexes across the province, those that have it, have not shown any meaningful success in utilizing them.

What do we do with our municipalities—and they have the right, every municipality, to go as-of-right four. What do you think we need to do with these municipalities to get them done? They've got it; it isn't working in London. What do we do differently?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think that it's not a one-size-fits-all. But having that and saying, "Yes, we should be"—Bill 23 says, "Build triplexes." Why don't we say, "Build fourplexes," and give people the incentive to do that?

So, yes, absolutely, if one city doesn't want to use it, that's their loss, but they can be very well designed and they're good investments. There are actually a lot of multi-generational families who actually want to live close by, and that is a very popular piece right now that I have seen. If you want to build granny flats, then there are the working parents who need help with the mortgage. So if everybody can pitch in—that multi-generational piece—then it's affordable. But fourplexes, I think, are something that are not a scary piece and they're not going to work everywhere, but they should be built into legislation so that people have that option to be counted in the 1.5 million housing stock.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member from London—Fanshawe for her excellent presentation.

As you know, the Ontario NDP has never supported any type of provincial carbon tax on regular consumers. We oftentimes have supported the cap-and-trade system focused on large polluters, which is where that focus should be.

When the Ford government proposed a new carbon pricing system by scrapping the cap-and-trade program that the Wynne government had put in, it effectively launched a new carbon pricing system in Ontario—a new provincial tax. That was launched January 1, 2022. Yet there was, on the bill right now, a piece of legislation left over from the 1990s Harris government called the Taxpayer Protection Act, which specifically said that any new tax had to go forward to a referendum. So, in some ways, it replicates what's already in schedule 5. Yet, we know, in 2022, there was no new carbon tax referendum under the Ford administration.

So can the government bind any government to a referendum if they couldn't even follow their own rules?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's absolutely true. You can't actually designate another government to impose that referendum in order to pass a tax. It has never been done. The Harris government put that through, but it has never been used—and referendums cost, you know.

Quite frankly, if a government decides to utilize a tax, they need to explain it. The carbon tax that the Conservatives have, they haven't explained what they're going to use that compliance tax money for. They're supposed to collect it, yet nobody knows how it's going to be used. You should have had a referendum on that, and then maybe this would have some teeth in this schedule, but, right now, no, it doesn't have any teeth. You can't impose it on a new government.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The Get It Done Act, or, as you say, the get it done wrong act—and it has been termed many other things—we know all the problems with this bill.

To the member from London–Fanshawe. If you had your druthers, how would you clean up this bill, or what would your focus be to get it done right?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: One of the things we should do is remove schedule 3 so that we actually have consultation with municipalities and not force them to expand their boundaries through legislation, not impose official plans. That's provincial government interfering with municipal government, and we don't know who asked for those things.

The other piece of the 407, to actually make it stronger, is waive the tolls for transport trucks on the 407. Saying that you're never going to charge tolls on highways that don't have tolls is really tongue-in-cheek. Quite frankly, the member from Oshawa, who had bills to remove tolls from the 412 and the 418, deserves the credit for pushing this government to do the right thing, so thank you for doing that. But the 407 piece, that they're never going to put tolls on highways that don't have tolls—again, take the tolls off the transport trucks and that will actually make it worthwhile having that schedule in here.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very happy to rise again today to speak about Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, 2024. This bill is an important part of the Ontario government's plan to make life easier and more affordable for Ontarians. If passed, this bill would keep costs down and support important infrastructure projects.

Speaker, our plan is already saving Ontario households time and money. We have attracted hundreds of thousands of jobs, like today's new Honda plant and the Volkswagen plant, thousands and thousands of new jobs. We cut costs for families and have gotten shovels in the ground for many critical projects. This bill would continue that progress.

Even still, after six years of successful policies, there remain some who are opposed to our government's strategy. Some of the other parties don't agree with our plan to build infrastructure like housing, transit, highways, hospitals and schools. Some of the other parties don't agree with how we are putting money back in people's pockets, like by cutting the gas tax, the licence plate renewal fees and implementing the One Fare transit

program, which saves every individual using this program \$1,600 a year—each Ontarian. Some of the other parties in this House are even in favour of increasing taxes like the carbon tax on hard-working Ontarians. They either voted in favour of it or supported those who did.

I agree with the Minister of Finance's comments during the 2024 budget when he outlined the need to continue pushing forward. Madam Speaker, at a time such as this time, when uncertainty abounds and people are struggling to put food on the table, now is not the time to raise taxes or reduce investments. Now is the time to keep costs low while building more infrastructure. Now is the time to get it done.

Once again, I would like to express my support for Bill 162 and discuss a little bit about how it would positively impact Ontario families.

Speaker, to begin, I want to start with an example, because sometimes it is the small things that are most revealing. In 2022, our government eliminated the licence plate renewal fees. This saved vehicle owners a lot of money. The government has also done a great job setting up an online renewal system and digital reminders. This has saved Ontarians a lot of time and removed red tape. But the question we need to ask ourselves is, can we do more? We have already eliminated the renewal fees and the stickers. Why not simplify the renewal process entirely? That's what this bill proposes to do.

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Under the current system, vehicle owners still need to renew their licence plates every one or two years. It is tedious and annoying, and many people forget. This bill would, if passed, allow the government to automatically renew licence plates for those that are in good standing. It would save vehicle owners time and, hopefully, less people will forget to renew. It's a small but meaningful change and demonstrates how our government is making life easier for Ontarians, even with changes that might otherwise fly under the radar.

Next, let's talk about infrastructure. Through a number of changes, Bill 162 is proposing to streamline processes for infrastructure to be built quicker. New expropriation rules in the Environmental Assessment Act would clarify how municipalities and provincial ministries can acquire land to begin infrastructure projects. Our government is undertaking large-scale infrastructure investment, so this would be very helpful.

Just to give an example, the latest budget allocated \$1.3 billion for the construction and expansion of 60 schools across the province. It is a huge, historic investment in education, creating more spaces for students by doubling the previous funding commitments. That will amount to over 27,000 new student spaces and over 1,700 child care spaces. That's not including the investments which our government has put into the maintenance of schools, adding filters in all the classes during the COVID time. So that's on top of that.

Likewise, the government is working on investments to support seniors. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Long-Term Care were in my riding, Erin Mills, on

Tuesday, at Winston Churchill and Dundas, where Ivan Franko Homes is building a new long-term-care facility as part of their campus of care. The ministers were there in Mississauga to announce \$155.5 million of funding this year to fast-track long-term-care homes. If eligible projects are approved to construct by November 30, they will receive a construction subsidy that lasts 25 years. This is a great incentive to get shovels in the ground faster, and it shows how much our government is investing in important infrastructure for all demographics.

Madam Speaker, during second reading debate of this bill, I told the House about the government announcement for investments in the Milton GO rail corridor. For transit riders living in Mississauga–Erin Mills, the Milton GO service is our one connection into and out of the city. As the morning train departs from Milton to Union, it stops at the nearby stations of Lisgar, Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale, picking up Mississauga residents along the way.

Tens of thousands of commuters use this corridor on a daily basis, travelling into and out of Toronto for work. Without the Milton line, residents of Mississauga would be forced to find another means of transportation, or else not travel at all. This is why the services of the Milton line are so critical.

Madam Speaker, you can imagine my joy in February when the government announced its plans to invest in the Milton rail corridor by building new tracks that will allow for two-way, all-day train service. This opens up new possibilities for residents of Mississauga.

As a user of that line 25 years ago, I was using that Milton line every day in the morning. The only challenge is that, at the time, there were four trains in the morning in one direction and four trains in the other direction in the evening. So that's not convenient if I would be late at work or I needed to be early in the office. Now, if this is passed and we get that done, there will be a line going 24 hours every day, all day. There would be more access to Toronto city, even at times outside of the weekly days' rush hour.

The provincial government is committed to building infrastructure, Madam Speaker. You can see this commitment exemplified in the bill's provisions to help get infrastructure built faster and in the investments made over the past few years for large infrastructure projects all across the province.

All this being said, we are still waiting on the federal government to pitch in. In February, the Minister of Transportation asked the federal government to invest in the Milton rail corridor. The former federal Liberal Minister of Transportation has even agreed that two-way, all-day passenger train service on the Milton line is a priority, but the 2024 Liberal/NDP federal budget has not fully committed to funding this project. We continue to call on the federal government to invest in important projects like the transit initiatives for Mississauga and Milton.

Speaker, residents of Milton and Mississauga are hopeful to soon have better access to transit when two-way, all-day GO rail service comes to the Milton line, and

we are very excited, but we are not just waiting for long-term solutions. This government is investing in the present as well.

Last week, the province announced the largest GO train service expansion in more than a decade: 300 new trips per week, a 15% increase, giving transit riders more options and quicker commutes. At the beginning of this weekend, April 27, the communities of Erin Mills, Meadowvale and Streetsville will benefit from these additional services. This includes one new morning and one new evening weekday rush hour trip on the Milton line. The new trains will respectively depart Milton at 6:43 a.m. and Union at 4:10 p.m. This means there will be nine trains per day in each direction.

I'm so happy to say that the GO bus route 21 is being restored with service to Union Station. This bus will once again serve Mississauga residents during the hours when trains do not run, connecting transit riders from the suburbs to the city. I thank the government for this announcement. I know many people are very happy about these changes. This will be a meaningful difference.

Speaker, our government is investing in many transportation projects in Peel region, and this includes the Hazel McCallion Line. Named after our former mayor, the late Hurricane Hazel, this light rail transit route along Hurontario Street will connect residents of Mississauga and Brampton from their work and home to where they need to go. This includes connections to GO Transit, the Mississauga Transitway and Züm. And, recently announced, the government is investing even more in the Hazel McCallion Line, with a loop to connect the downtown of Mississauga and an extension into downtown Brampton. One of the proposed measures in this Get It Done Act package is to declare the Hazel McCallion Line extensions as priority transit projects.

Under the Building Transit Faster Act that we passed in 2020, Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario have tools to remove roadblocks and deliver priority projects faster. If this bill is passed, the Hazel McCallion Line would be one of the projects that can receive priority treatment. In my opinion, anything we can do to reduce the red tape and get more shovels in the ground is something we should all support.

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I think this is a great initiative. I am glad to see the government is committed to this project. Speaker, our infrastructure plans extend to Highway 413, where important work is under way. I need not remind the House of the many benefits this project would have. Not only would this highway help residents of Halton, Peel and York, but it could also benefit anyone who travels through the GTA, reducing gridlock and saving time on people's commutes.

This bill, the Get It Done Act, would continue to prioritize the 413 and help get it built faster. If passed, this bill would clarify some of the rules for expropriation, strengthening the already existing practices. By continuing to take steps to reduce project planning timelines, Ontario is working to connect people to places effectively

and efficiently, while supporting economic growth, creating more jobs and improving the lives of Ontarians.

The 413 is a great project. It is highly popular in the 905. It is going to save a lot of people a lot of time—30 minutes. Speaker, once the 413 is open, it would be available for Ontarians to use at a low cost. How low? Zero dollars. Speaker, zero dollars, because, if passed, schedule 6 of the Get It Done Act would prohibit the imposition of new tolls on provincial highways. This government already scrapped tolls on Highways 412 and 418 in the Durham region. Now we are committing to not adding any new tolls on the 413 either. That's how we keep costs low for families, all the while building infrastructure and fulfilling our promises to get it done.

Another way that this government is keeping transportation costs low is by freezing fees on drivers' licence renewals. Speaker, this bill proposes limiting drivers' licence renewal fees to no more than \$15 per year, and Ontario photo card renewals would cost no more than \$7 per year. So when Ontarians renew their driver's licence online or at a ServiceOntario location, they won't have to pay excessive amounts in fees.

As I said before, little things can be very impactful. This small but meaningful change will put a few dollars back in people's pockets.

On the topic of maintaining affordability for Ontarians, I would address this issue of the carbon tax. I have spoken about this issue many times before, but I want to do so again because it is important. Families across Ontario are struggling right now because of the high cost of living. High inflation and interest rates have made household finances tighter, and yet the federal Liberal-NDP government continue to double down on the carbon tax.

Ontario families don't need more taxes right now. Ontario families do not need more taxes right now. I am proud that our government has never raised a tax on Ontarians. In fact, we have cut many taxes, such as the disastrous carbon pricing program, drivers' licence fees, the gasoline tax.

Speaker, other governments might be willing to hike taxes on Ontarians. Even municipalities are planning it.

For example, when the Liberals were in power, they implemented a cap-and-trade carbon pricing program. Some of the members that voted in favour of this legislation still sit in the House today. That carbon pricing program was not just a nuisance; it hurt hard-working Ontarians. So we abolished that disastrous tax.

But then, the federal Liberals implemented another carbon tax. We warned them about the potential consequences of such a decision, but they did it anyway, and we all know how this went. The federal carbon tax hurt Ontarians and continues to hurt Ontario families. Even this month, amidst a lot of criticism from all sides of the political spectrum, they hiked the tax again. The Liberals have made their stance clear: Against all reason, they support the carbon tax. But unlike the Liberals and NDP that continue to push for greater taxes, we are not willing to hurt Ontario families with irresponsible taxation. Bonnie Crombie might be willing to do so, but we are not.

And so, Bill 162, the Get It Done Act, would, if passed, establish a system to call a referendum if any future government attempts to implement a new provincial carbon tax. In Canada, we trust democracy. We trust the people. If Ontarians want a carbon tax, then a future government with nothing to hide should have no problem calling a referendum. But the final decision should be made by Ontarians; no tax should be imposed on Ontario families without their consent.

Therefore, you can see how this bill is a fulfillment of our government's commitment to keep life affordable while building comprehensive infrastructure in all communities: automatic licence plate renewal, Milton Line transit expansions, the Hazel McCallion Line and Highway 413, tax cuts, fee freezes and strengthening protections against future tax increases. This government is making life easier and more affordable for residents in Mississauga and across Ontario. I'm very happy to see this bill fulfilling many of our commitments. Under the leadership of the Premier and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member.

Report continues in volume B.

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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
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	