

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 162A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 162A

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday
28 May 2024

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi
28 mai 2024

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 mai 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CYBER SECURITY
AND BUILDING TRUST IN
THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RENFORCER
LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ ET LA CONFIANCE
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. McCarthy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures / Projet de loi 194, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à renforcer la sécurité et la confiance en matière de numérique et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les mesures de protection de la vie privée.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Mr. Speaker, good morning to all honourable members of this House. On behalf of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, it gives me great pleasure to lead off debate in regard to second reading of a very important and timely piece of legislation, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, which if passed—if it passes this House—promises to strengthen digital protections for people in our great province. I welcome the opportunity to speak about this critical new legislation and I look forward to an informed debate about what it will mean for ministries, public sector organizations and the citizens who elected us to serve them.

I will be sharing my time today with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the excellent work of my ministry officials in putting this bill together after many years of consultation and bringing it to the point where we can engage now in a thorough and thoughtful debate in the House. I want to particularly ac-

knowledge and thank my deputy minister, Renu Kulendran; the associate deputy minister, chief digital and data officer, chief privacy archives, digital and data, John Roberts; ADM Melissa Kittmer; ADM, corporate chief information officer, Mohammad Qureshi; chief information security officer, Daniela Spagnolo; and our legal director, Fateh Salim. Thank you to all members of the ministry for making this possible today.

In an era dominated by technology, where our lives are increasingly intertwined with digital platforms and our data is stored in virtual realms, the importance of safeguarding against cyber attacks and protecting personal data cannot be overstated. The pace of digital innovation is accelerating like never before. On a daily basis, new technologies and modernization of services are revolutionizing the way we live and work. These new advancements are not only reshaping but enhancing the lives of individuals globally.

It is important that we harness the benefits of these changes as they have a profound effect on day-to-day life, impacting people of all ages while also safeguarding Ontarians against potential harms. By doing so, we aim to ensure Ontario remains a leader in the digital arena, fostering a future where technology enriches our lives while maintaining the highest standards of safety and security.

The Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024, Bill 194, would, if passed, build a foundation to better protect the personal data entrusted to us by the people of Ontario when interacting with public sector organizations, with additional protections to safeguard the health and safety of Ontario's children.

The overarching key outcomes of this important legislation, if passed, are as follows: enhancing cyber security by strengthening resilience and maturity within key public sector entities; building a strong foundation for artificial intelligence governance while ensuring its use is transparent, responsible and accountable; improving digital service delivery to provide a consistent, secure and seamless experience when accessing government programs and services; reinforcing data and privacy protections so Ontarians can confidently and safely participate in today's digital world; and last, but certainly not least, strengthening children's protections to prevent the misuse of their data, especially in classroom settings.

As a government, it is paramount that we do our part within our jurisdictional powers to ensure the proper safeguards are in place to protect the residents of Ontario. We are steadfast in our commitment to put guardrails in place to better shield Ontarians from potential harms, a key priority guiding all of our work on cyber security and digital trust.

In today's digital age, we simply—I've said this many times before, and I'll say it again: We simply cannot afford to be off-line in an online world. We live in an era dominated by technology, where our lives are increasingly intertwined with digital platforms. Personal data is stored virtually in the cloud; the importance of safeguarding it against cyber attacks for the people of Ontario can never be overstated.

Trust is the main pillar upon which our digital economy is built. Without trust, people are reluctant to interact with the ever-evolving digital economy, and businesses then hesitate to adopt new technologies moving toward the future. Building and maintaining trust in our digital ecosystem requires a multi-faceted approach involving not only robust cyber security measures but also transparent policies, effective regulation and co-operation among government, people, families, industry and civil society. As our lives become increasingly reliant on digital technologies, it is paramount that we enhance our safeguards and protections to maintain the trust of Ontarians in our government and our institutions.

We all know how increasingly sophisticated, relentless and frequent cyber attacks have become. According to the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, cyber attacks are a growing threat to Ontario. The number of cyber incidents in this province has risen from more than 10,000 in 2018 to over 28,000 in 2022. From critical infrastructure to personal data, our digital systems are under constant threat from cyber attacks. These attacks can come from a variety of sources, including malicious hackers, organized cyber criminal groups and even hostile nation states. The consequences of a cyber attack can be severe, ranging from financial loss and identity theft to the disruption of essential services, and even threats to our national security.

0910

There is no doubt about it, we must lead in protecting people's personal information online, and that is why we developed Ontario's first-ever Cyber Security Strategy in 2019. As part of that strategy, we established an all-new cyber security expert panel. The job of that panel is to identify and report on areas where we could grow and improve our efforts. After the expert panel released its report in October 2022, we very rapidly got down to work on implementing the recommendations of the panel. The report pointed to the need for strong governance, education, communication and co-operation. All of these are areas that we are targeting in this proposed legislation in a multitude of ways in our day-to-day work.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would establish regulation-making authority and empower the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to lead the cyber security direction for select public sector entities, especially for vulnerable sectors such as hospitals, schools and children's aid societies. Regulations may include sector-specific requirements and mandatory cyber incident reporting to government. These regulations would be developed through consultations with key government and public sector stakeholders to help these organizations

better prepare, respond and recover from cyber threats and attacks.

We are also proposing centralized reporting within government to better respond, deploy and get involved in emergency management of cyber incidents, particularly with those public sector organizations that do not have strong cyber security practices. Not only will this elevate the overall maturity of Ontario's cyber security regime, but it will lead to long-term cost savings by mitigating the quantity and severity of cyber attacks. On average, a cyber attack costs an organization almost \$7 million. Cyber attacks on public institutions are not just attacks on Ontarians' data, but also their tax dollars that fund and maintain these institutions.

Simply put, cyber security challenges are immense, and we must rise to meet them head on. We must safeguard and limit exposure to cyber threats and attacks for the people and the businesses of our province. If this legislation is passed, it will empower our government to take the serious measures needed to enhance protections across the board, to better protect the personal data entrusted to us from unauthorized use as well as curb the impact when cyber attacks do occur.

Let us shift gears to a core responsibility entrusted to the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery: the transparent, accountable and responsible use of artificial intelligence. This legislation, if passed, would empower my ministry to lead the way by building a strong foundation in AI governance to leverage its tremendous benefits while ensuring it is used safely and responsibly across government and the public sector.

As we embrace transformational and powerful artificial intelligence tools to help us build a better province, we are committed to ensuring that these technologies are used transparently, accountably and responsibly in the public sector. To that end, we are introducing safeguards through proposed legislation that will guide the use of AI in our government and public sector. This legislation will include a clear definition of an artificial intelligence system, aligned with other leading jurisdictions. This step is crucial to create consistency in how AI is defined and understood across the public sector, supporting our AI-related initiatives across government. We are also proposing to establish strong accountability and transparency requirements.

These measures will require public sector organizations to inform the public whenever they are interacting with AI systems. Additionally, any decisions made by way of artificial intelligence must always have a channel for human, recognizing the potential for bias in AI systems.

The proposed legislation will also create regulation-making authority to ensure the responsible, risk-based use of AI by select public sector organizations. This includes strict adherence to Ontario's Trustworthy AI Framework. This framework has been developed by my ministry and it aims to protect people from unintentional harms and reduce both liability and reputational risk associated with artificial intelligence technologies.

We understand the importance of co-operation and consultation in this process. Therefore, these regulations will be developed through extensive consultations with government and public sector stakeholders, Indigenous partners, industry leaders and AI experts. These legislative changes are designed to ensure that Ontario remains at the forefront of AI guidance and usage, setting an example for transparent, responsible and accountable implementation of AI technologies.

The immense promise that artificial intelligence holds in putting forward solutions to some of our most pressing challenges cannot be overstated. It can unlock the potential for unprecedented innovation in virtually all industries, and it fosters long-term economic growth across Ontario.

With more than 400 artificial intelligence firms and institutions in our province—the number of which is growing daily, I might add—Ontario truly is at the forefront of an artificial-intelligence-enabled future. Ontario is where global giants and start-ups can grow side by side.

Under the leadership of our government, we have been exploring the use of AI, recognizing the amazing potential of its application in health care, education, crisis response and so much more. While working together with our public and private sector partners at all levels, we will position Ontario as a global leader in the responsible adoption of AI.

AI technology is, of course, evolving very rapidly. In the last year or so, we have seen its adoption and expansion advancing at a blistering pace. Every day, more and more companies of all sizes are building AI systems into their operations to increase efficiency or expand their range of products and services.

While we recognize that the potential of AI is incredible and can impact all in the province in a positive manner, our government is extremely cognizant of the many possible risks that it could pose as it continuously evolves. We are the first province in Canada that is taking initiative to create and implement substantial legislation that protects everyone of all ages in the online world. The AI pieces within this proposed legislation build upon our existing work to responsibly adopt this revolutionary technology.

Our consultations on AI began in 2021 to develop the principles of Ontario's first trustworthy artificial intelligence framework. At that time, my ministry began by bringing together experts from the tech and AI industries as well as academia to form our AI expert working group, a group to provide advice and recommendations on the development of this proposed AI framework.

Round tables and bilateral meetings have been held with Indigenous groups, industry, civil society and legal organizations on the development of the framework. They play a pivotal role in ensuring we do not lag behind when it comes to AI. We will adopt the best policies and the best practices and invest in the appropriate technologies within government to create efficiencies in the work that we do. The regular advice of these stakeholders and advisers and their recommendations to my ministry have assisted and will continue to help support the development of any

future updates to Ontario's Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Framework.

Additionally, we will continue to actively engage with our federal partners to advocate for the people of Ontario when it comes to the federal government's work on cyber security, privacy and AI. This includes the federal government's Bill C-27. We constantly monitor the progress of federal bills to ensure alignment in areas of common priority and sectors of critical importance for Ontario and how to be nimble as we integrate our future work for the benefit of the province of Ontario and, indeed, all of Canada. We will waste no time working with our federal counterparts and all of our partners to protect the people of Ontario in terms of their privacy and their online security. This is a top priority for our government.

0920

Our government prides itself on protecting all citizens and consumers in Ontario. My ministry recently introduced the new Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, 2023, and the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2024, both of which received unanimous consent in this House. Just yesterday, I tabled legislation that, if passed, will retroactively ban notices of security interest, or NOSIs, on the land registry with respect to consumer goods and services. This legislation, Bill 200, will protect seniors and the most vulnerable from bad actors, predatory practices and, indeed, organized white-collar crime.

These are just a few examples of the great work the various teams across my ministry have done, and I am proud to lead the ministry's efforts to ensure that our government is providing safeguards for all consumers. Moving forward with this legislation, our goal remains the same: to protect all of our citizens and residents across this great province.

Another enhancement that will be delivered if Bill 194 is passed into legislation focuses on the critical topic of modernizing digital service delivery. In an era of rapid technological advancement and evolving public expectations, it is vital that we continue to evolve in the way our government interacts with citizens and businesses. Our government wants to ensure that we are creating the necessary changes to keep up with the ever-changing digital world, and we have already begun to make changes to help make life easier for the people of Ontario.

Digital technology has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives, revolutionizing the way we work, communicate and access information. The proposed changes in this legislation include enabling powers for service provider organizations like ServiceOntario to enhance digital service delivery; and allowing online service delivery to be more convenient by offering those who provide consent the ability to benefit from what we call the "tell us once" feature, which includes pre-populated fields and communication preferences so that citizens and residents don't need to restate their information every time they interact with government. Again, this is a matter of choice, but it's also a matter for convenience if selected by those of our fellow citizens and residents who interact with government.

This modernization requires a fundamental rethinking of the way government interacts with the people it serves, placing their needs and experiences at the forefront of service design and delivery. By embracing a holistic, integrated approach, we can streamline processes and provide a seamless, safe and consistent experience across all touch points.

For far too long, previous governments have been lagging when it comes to adopting new technologies and providing efficient and modern service delivery. Ontario is prepared and equipping itself to lead in this space and become a global model for how we can embrace technology for the benefit of all.

One of the key aspects of modernizing digital service delivery is the adoption of user-centric design principles. By engaging directly with the people of Ontario to understand their needs, preferences and pain points, we can create intuitive, user-friendly interfaces that enable a smooth interaction with government services across the board. From applying for permits to accessing social benefits, every interaction should be as simple, intuitive and efficient as ordering a meal or booking a ride.

Finally, modernization is not a one-time event but an ongoing journey, one that demands continuous iteration, adaptation and improvement. As technology evolves and societal needs change, so too must our approach to digital service delivery. As we build a better Ontario together, it is vital that no one is left behind. Our government is providing multi-channel options, making services more convenient and accessible whenever and wherever Ontarians choose to obtain those services. The people and businesses of Ontario deserve nothing less, and we will continue to make changes moving forward based on the needs and wants of our citizens and residents.

As one of the top global leaders in the digital space, our Ontario government not only needs to demonstrate that we are taking a positive and responsive approach to preventing cyber attacks and breaches and ensuring that AI is used responsibly, but that we are also taking other measures to protect people by effectively safeguarding their personal data. Our proposed legislation, then, if passed, would further update Ontario's privacy framework to reflect emerging digital and data issues. It is imperative that the data the people of Ontario entrust to government always remains safe and secure.

As I indicated previously, trust is essential. We need to continue to build up the trust of Ontarians so that we all feel safe participating and we are all able to thrive in today's vast online world.

As we have seen over the past few years, privacy breaches have been occurring at an alarming rate. These breaches have the ability to impact our most important sectors such as our hospitals and our schools, indeed putting children and the most vulnerable at risk. Our government is therefore working tirelessly to strengthen these safeguards against those breaches and put mechanisms in place to mitigate and minimize their impacts when they do occur.

That is why we are proposing to modernize privacy protections and reduce risks associated with privacy breaches and unauthorized data access, including identity theft. This will be done, we submit, through proposed amendments to FIPPA, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The proposed amendments would establish requirements for privacy breach notifications and mandatory privacy breach reporting to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario by all FIPPA institutions. This would provide information that is key to mitigating breaches and do better in terms of ensuring personal information is kept safe and secure. Let there be no doubt about it, Speaker and fellow members of this House: Safeguarding data and privacy in today's increasingly digital world is, and will remain, a top priority for our Ontario government.

The proposed changes reflect a series of consultations with the public, key stakeholders and experts, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, to modernize protections for data in our province. The changes would update our policy landscape to reflect the emerging digital data and privacy issues that deeply impact our citizens and reflect the rapid technology changes we see globally.

Now I would like to speak about the core priority of this landmark legislation, the protection of our province's future: our children. In this world of ever-changing technological advances, there has been no period of history where children have been subjected to the online world more than right now. We must ensure that children are protected from bad actors online and that their personal data is not being mined or used for harmful practices. That is why this bill also includes targeted updates to improve privacy safeguards and establish information protections for our children, aligning with recommendations from a variety of partners.

The Law Commission of Ontario in 2023 issued recommendations citing the lack of protections for youth, the elderly and other vulnerable communities against risks in the digital landscape. As minister—but more importantly, as a father and as an uncle and a family man—I am beyond proud to have tabled this new act, which, if passed, will be a comprehensive approach to strengthening data protections for children in provincial settings such as schools and children's aid societies.

0930

Studies indicate that children are accessing the Internet at a younger age more than ever before, and experts agree that children are at greater risk of harms posed by digital platforms. Recent years have seen increasing instances of privacy violations, cyberbullying and other data-related harms. Yes, an expanded online world does provide tremendous benefits for our children, but we must recognize the unique risks that they face—risks that, quite frankly, none of us ever had to face growing up. We are truly, then, charting new territory in the digital world, and we must do what we can as legislators to place the appropriate safeguards needed to protect them. This is what we owe to our

children: never accepting complacency, and putting their best interests first and foremost always. This is the priority of all our Ontario government, and I urge the member of House to adopt it unanimously because it goes above partisan politics.

Make no mistake about it, we must all work together, sparing no efforts to ensure their safety. That is why, if this bill passes, my ministry will work in lockstep with our partner ministries to develop consultation plans with priority sectors, the public and targeted experts. We are eager to work with school boards, parents, all groups overseeing children in provincial settings, social media and tech industry experts, as well as law enforcement. These extensive consultations would inform the development of regulations and directives to ensure the right protections are in place, matching the unique needs of our various public sector institutions and the children they serve.

It is paramount that we do our part, that we do everything that we can in protecting our children and our youth by acting in their best interests for a successful and secure future. We will be proposing to introduce clear rules to strengthen the protection of children's information to combat the misuse of data created by children and youth engaging with schools and children's aid societies. We must safeguard children's information from being stolen or used inappropriately due to cyber incidents.

Based on the consultations, future regulations could include age-appropriate standards for the software programs on devices, such as laptops used by students at school, and strengthening the standards for software procurement by schools to prohibit the usage or selling of student data to third parties for predatory marketing.

Make no mistake about it, our government must and will take decisive action to safeguard children from harm and to ensure that their online experiences are safe, positive and empowering. It is not just about protecting them in the present, but also about safeguarding their future autonomy and agency over their personal data. The health and well-being now and in the future of the children of Ontario depends on meeting the new challenges of this age as we move forward in the ever-changing digital world.

My ministry's work on safeguarding children in provincial settings through this proposed act goes hand in hand with the important protections for children and youth in educational settings implemented by the Ministry of Education's latest proposed ban on cellphones and social media in schools. My colleague the Minister of Education will elaborate on this further in his remarks in the House today. And my colleague the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I anticipate, will highlight how our proposed changes also align with and work in parallel with his ministry's Supporting Children's Futures proposal. We will continue to build off the great work we have done with these ministries and consult with all impacted ministries and public sector entities on any policies that may impact them.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the various teams across my ministry who helped make this bill a reality.

This is a culmination of years of work by resolute Ontarians committed to securing the bright future of our great province, especially for our children. This legislation, if passed, would give Ontario residents and businesses critical peace of mind when interacting with their government and all public sector organizations.

Speaker and fellow members of this House, make no mistake about it: Ontario needs these new digital trust policies to reduce the risk of exposure to cyber attacks on critical infrastructure and government operations, the risk of privacy breaches that threaten individual trust in public services and the risk associated with irresponsible use of artificial intelligence.

As I hope I have made abundantly clear, the time for action is now. Bad actors in the digital world are increasingly sophisticated, persistent and growing in numbers exponentially each and every day. But we have the backs of Ontarians, and we are here to protect our children. We will combat the threats posed by these criminals head on. Together we are taking a government-wide, holistic and responsive approach to strengthening cyber security, keeping sensitive data protected and ensuring adaptability to emerging technologies. We in Ontario are taking the lead and will continue to consult with all partners and make the necessary changes as we move forward in our ever-changing digital world.

Cyber security, digital privacy, protecting children online, artificial intelligence risks and modernizing digital service delivery are interrelated issues that require our urgent attention and concerted action. I have no doubt that together we can build a more secure, resilient and inclusive digital society for generations to come.

Speaker, it has truly been an honour to address the House today with respect to our proposed Bill 194. I appreciate the kind attention of colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and I look forward to listening carefully to all contributors to this important debate. I know that there will be many thought-provoking and thoughtful comments that will be shared among us, and I look forward to a conversation that will result in a very, very effective and forward-thinking bill.

I encourage all here to support the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024, because it's the right thing to do in moving the province forward in this digital age.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for his remarks.

Speaker, let me start by stating that our government takes the privacy and safety of young Ontarians very seriously, so I'm very pleased to be here today to speak in support of Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024. I'm grateful to my cabinet colleague the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery for his comprehensive approach to Bill 194 that works towards making the digital world safer

for all Ontarians, especially our most vulnerable and the future of this province: the youth and children.

The proposed legislation would help strengthen privacy protections, including those for children whose personal information is held by children's aid societies. My ministry has complementary legislative proposals before this house through Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, that was introduced on April 17.

The work in both pieces of legislation is a result of collaboration and the valued input of children, youth and families with lived experience in the child and youth protection sector. And it's also done in collaboration with partners like children aid societies and service providers as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities from across the province. I would like to acknowledge and express my deepest gratitude for the incredible work that these partners do. Their tireless efforts have a profound and lifelong impact on the outcomes of vulnerable children and youth as they transition from care into adulthood.

Speaker, we are here today because our government will never leave anyone behind, and it is especially important that no child or youth is left behind, that they have every chance to thrive and succeed regardless of their circumstances or history. We have heard from sector partners and communities about the need to implement measures that will better protect the rights of children and youth, that will enhance the quality of out-of-home care services and improve the accountability of service providers. That's why we have introduced a broad range of legislative proposals and a suite of regulatory and policy changes in both Bill 188 and Bill 194 that will support the futures of some of the most vulnerable children in our province.

0940

Today, I want to outline for the House how these two bills, if passed, would result in a safer online space for Ontario's young people. The children and youth services sector supports a wide range of individuals with diverse needs as well as their families and caregivers right across the province. For example, the sector supports those in need of protection, who have experienced or may be at risk of abuse or neglect. It also supports youth who are involved in the youth justice system, including those admitted into custody or detention to help them find their way and engage with their community. The sector empowers children to overcome barriers and reach their goals.

Our ministry's legislation, Bill 188, would, if passed, modernize and standardize important safeguards throughout the child and youth services sector. This includes stronger enforcement tools to hold licensed out-of-home care operators accountable to keep children and youth safe and healthy. It will create a framework that would enhance privacy protections of those who were formerly involved in the child welfare system. This will be done by further restricting access to records comprised of their personal childhood histories, once regulations are developed.

The proposals would also enable individuals to speak freely about their lived experience and give them more control over what they want to share publicly. These circumstances will be outlined following further consultations with the sector. They would also provide authority to expand the information that individuals working with vulnerable children and youth can be required to provide. This will go beyond formal police record checks such as offence declarations.

The proposals would reinforce the requirement for children's aid societies and out-of-home care licensees to explain the role of the Ombudsman and how to contact their office to children and youth. Finally, they would clarify that early childhood educators can be subject to an offence for failing to report child protection concerns to a children's aid society. This would be similar to other professions such as teachers and social workers.

Speaker, this bill is just another step forward in the work of child welfare, but not the final step. We'll continue to engage and learn from stakeholders, including youth with lived experience and many others, as we work to improve safety, supports and access to resources for children and youth who are served by the child protection system.

Our government wants children to have a healthy, safe and age-appropriate digital experience when engaging with public sector organizations like schools and children's aid societies. The proposed amendments in Bill 194 would enable the creation of protections that could help prevent inappropriate data practices that affect children and ensure that software applications support the health and well-being of all students. For example, future regulations under this legislation could include age-appropriate standards for software programs on devices like laptops that are used by students every day at school. These initiatives better protect how children's personal information is collected and used, and they align with proposed measures that we introduced in the Legislature just six weeks ago.

Taken together, Bill 188 and Bill 194 will strengthen digital and privacy protections for children and youth right across our province. As you can see, this bill is an important element of the government's ongoing redesign of the child welfare system.

Now I would like to speak to the connection with the proposed work and the broader Child Welfare Redesign Strategy, as it's key to understanding the context in which Bill 194's reforms are being proposed. Speaker, my colleagues and members of this House will recall that in July 2020, our ministry introduced the Child Welfare Redesign Strategy. Our government wants children and youth in care and in out-of-home care settings to feel supported and to be set up for success in life. But every child and every youth deserves a safe, loving and stable home, regardless of their circumstances. Through the comprehensive redesign, our government is introducing new initiatives to improve the quality of out-of-home care.

We commend the many service providers who are devoting their lives to support vulnerable children and youth.

However, sometimes there are gaps, and our proposed changes seek to close these gaps.

Some of these changes have included developing a new framework for what out-of-home care looks like; increasing and enhancing oversight and accountability for out-of-home care; supporting that oversight by adding 20 new positions across the province to support the management, inspection and oversight of out-of-home care for children and youth; and launching the Ready, Set, Go Program, which provides youth in the care of children's aid societies with the life skills they need, starting at the age of 13, and financial support when they leave care, up to the age of 23, so that they can focus on post-secondary, including the skilled trades, or pursuing employment.

Every child and every youth deserves a fair starting position in life, and our government is delivering that. We hit the ground running by consulting widely in the community with service providers to better serve children and youth. We did that by increasing the number of responsive inspections; by bolstering customary care arrangements to focus on family-based options like kinship and foster care, to ensure children and youth and families have a strong voice in decisions about their care; improving the quality of child welfare data to establish a baseline of common measures across children's aid societies that can be reported publicly, as well as developing an outcomes-based performance measurement framework; releasing the children and young persons' rights resource to help child and youth understand their rights and to use their voice; and of course, connecting youth leaving care with more supports to succeed.

We've backed this important work with significant investments of over \$1.5 billion in the child welfare system to support Ontario's 50 children's aid societies, including 13 Indigenous children's aid societies. That is a historic amount.

As you can see, the Supporting Children's Futures Act and the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act are not the first steps that we have taken to improve child welfare, nor are they the last. These new proposals build on the work that the government has undertaken over the past several years and will continue to take in the coming years. Bill 194 is an important step towards achieving stronger data protections for all children. Together, we will continue to strengthen families and communities right across our province.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end by thanking my colleague the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and his team for all the great work in putting this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to build upon the minister's gratitude to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. Minister McCarthy has been a strong leader in this space, ensuring that we protect our children.

The introduction of legislation followed on the government's landmark introduction of a comprehensive policy to remove distractions by eliminating vaping and cannabis

within our school facilities, by restricting cellphone use during instructional time and by outright denying access to social media on school websites and devices, a common-sense provision supported overwhelmingly by leaders both in education and in law enforcement and by the parenting community of the province, who want government to strengthen the regime that protects kids online and in class from the harms—the constant, rising harms online—that can manifest in bullying, in trafficking and in self-harm.

I think we recognize inherently as the adults in the room the necessity to build those safeguards, and that's why I am grateful to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery for bringing forth a program that helps to prevent—at its core, a legislative document that is designed to prevent and avert the types of tragedies we hear about too often in our society.

Madam Speaker, it is recognized that with the advent of AI, with 40% of jobs potentially being disrupted through the changes and disruptions of this technology, we need to really understand and recognize that the train has left the station in this space.

And so how do we protect kids, particularly when it comes to their privacy and data rights, which is a fundamental, sombre responsibility of government?

What I value is that most governments globally are seized with how to keep up with the rate of change in this space, and here we are in Ontario's Legislature with legislation brought forth, demonstrating a sense of proactivity and a willingness to move at the speed of change in the market and the economy.

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I'm grateful for this, because I was just in the United Kingdom representing Canada at the Canadian ministers of education council in my capacity as Chair. They held their global education forum. The number one issue seized with Ministers of Education in all regions of the world across the Commonwealth and beyond is the question of AI, the issue of academic integrity, of privacy and of online harm and how to create some conditionality around that technology to protect children.

That's why the legislation, as it is proposed, gives the cabinet regulatory-making power to create those limitations and safeguards as a responsible government would do. It aligns with the vision of the minister and I and others in this House, including the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, about bringing forth the social media executives in the country with OPP, law enforcement, parents and school boards to look at how we can strengthen and protect kids online, particularly when it comes to issues of the algorithm and the impact it's having on children and how it is very much a challenge for many young people in Ontario who are being targeted.

We also see issues related to privacy. The inappropriate distribution of images without consent, so many examples of tragedy on this space. So we need social media companies to work with us, and the government's inclination is to collaborate instead of to litigate with the largest businesses and corporations, working with law enforcement

and academia, to build a program that works for Canadian young people and for Ontario students. That's why we have committed ourselves to doing that. In addition to strengthening knowledge in the curriculum on concepts of digital literacy and online citizenship, how do we create a more resilient young people where they're able to understand fundamentally issues of misinformation, disinformation, issues related to the inaccurate presentation of concepts and really how do we strengthen the critical thinking skills that need to be front and centre of our young people's knowledge in the classroom today?

So we understand these threats. We also recognize the strengths in having digital fluency as a graduation requirement. It's why we have introduced in the curriculum mandatory learning years ago, and then we announced together we would strengthen that learning to help young people better understand AI and understand how to be cautionary users of AI. But with the recognition that we welcome the innovation that's taking place online. We just simply seek to keep up with it.

When I have spoken to job creators, when we have spoken to parents and when we have spoken to young people, we understand that AI can be an incredibly powerful tool for learning. We can reimagine education through its use, but it will never supplement the necessity of human judgment and intelligence. You cannot replace that, the value of an in-person teacher, but AI can be complementary to it. So we have undertaken a commitment to bring forth safeguards to really clamp down on distractions to protect young people's ability to learn and stay focused in classrooms.

I know that educators welcome this, school boards have endorsed this legislation, and most particularly leaders in cyber security have acknowledged the leadership of Ontario in the nation for stepping forward. This wouldn't have been possible unless our government and the Premier was committed to the protection of children. For that, I just express gratitude. It is the sombre responsibility of governments to protect the most vulnerable, and I am grateful, in partnership with the minister, that we built a program, a legislative document, that sets out a road map that enhances the safety of children and protects our kids learning, playing and interacting online. That is what a responsible government would do.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the debate on the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act. The proposed legislation is an important step in our government's efforts to continue strengthening cyber security and privacy measures that will better safeguard our significant investments in key services such as health care.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is making record investments in our health care system. We are taking bold and innovative action to build a better-connected health care system that is expanding access to key health services and growing our health care workforce

for years to come while providing Ontarians with a better health care experience at every stage of life.

In an increasing digital world, digital tools have become vital to people's health and well-being. Greater access to data will enable better health outcomes. A better health care experience also means connecting people to more digital and online tools that support more convenient care. Strong cyber security and privacy measures are an essential part of the ongoing work to implement new and improved digital health care tools and services.

The Ministry of Health and Ontario Health have been working in close partnership with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to improve health care preparedness by improving the sharing of cyber intelligence across the health sector and the broader public sector and helping to strengthen defensive capabilities and system resilience.

We have also introduced, for the first time in Canadian health privacy legislation, administrative penalties into Ontario's health privacy law, the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This provides the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario with the authority to impose administrative monetary penalties on contraveners of the act, and the regulation will do even more to protect the safety and privacy of Ontarians and the operational security of our health care sector.

Speaker, digital tools are a key part of our government's commitment to build a health care system that focuses on the needs of patients. These tools save time, improve access to services and help people avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency department. This includes the acceleration of an expanded centralized wait-list program for surgical and diagnostic services, which will help take the guesswork out of the referral process and provide faster access to care for patients.

This includes enhancing Health811, the tool through which Ontarians are able to call or chat online with a registered nurse and find the health care services and information they need in one easy-to-use website. Health811 receives up to 90,000 call or chat requests per month, and 95% of those requests are directed to an adviser or clinical staff member in less than one minute. Through Health811, people will be able to save time and better manage their health care journey by booking appointments with select health care providers no matter where they live and utilizing a symptom assessment tool to understand their health concerns and how to access care.

We're further supporting more coordinated connected care that will help people transition between health care providers with the goal of making it easier for patients to transition between providers. Expanded remote virtual care programs will also help people across Ontario to avoid emergency department visits and support independent living. These programs help people with chronic and complex conditions connect remotely with a health care provider, increasing their access to care and improving self-management. They also support people who are recovering from surgery and transitioning home from the

hospital to manage their conditions at home, where they'd prefer to be.

Our government is also making changes that will enable family doctors and other primary care providers to spend more time with their patients and less time on paperwork by expanding an innovative program focused on AI scribe technology to more than 150 primary care providers. This program safely utilizes artificial intelligence to automatically summarize or transcribe conversations into electronic medical notes, reducing the time and effort required, and physicians can spend more time on patient care and less time on clinical documentation. AI scribes will only be used during a visit if the patient gives their consent, and the privacy of patient health information will continue to be protected under the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

These tools and services build on the significant progress we've made in digital health. Over 300,000 health care providers have access to provincial digital health systems to obtain patient information such as lab results and hospital records from the provincial electronic record system. Digital and data tools are also playing a key role in enabling Ontario health teams to provide more connected and patient-focused care in communities across Ontario. We've invested more than \$124 million in digital and virtual care projects for Ontario health teams and health service providers, benefiting over 6.1 million Ontarians.

Ontario has also improved the sharing of health records between hospitals and long-term-care homes, with support from St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. This is saving up to 30 minute of administrative time each time a resident needs to go to the hospital. More than 30,000 digital record transfers have taken place. Over 4,000 providers are also offering online appointment booking across the province. In the last five years, an additional 11,800 health care providers joined the provincial e-services program to send e-referrals, providing people with faster access to care.

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We're also expanding e-services to digitize more referral and consultation forms so they can be conveniently shared electronically in a timely manner to obtain specialist advice. This often eliminates the need for an in-person specialist visit entirely.

We are improving the e-forms platform to use more digital tools that make it convenient for providers to auto-fill and share forms. And the "axe the fax" initiative will replace fax machines over the next few years to speed up diagnosis, referrals and treatment while improving the privacy of patients' health information. These types of initiatives are aimed at putting patients before paperwork and will free up time for physicians.

Over the last few years, Ontario has become a hub of health innovation and technology. There are many examples of innovative, state-of-the-art care taking place across our health care system. We know that a modern, connected and convenient health system is a digital one and that digital tools are critical to supporting people's health and well-being.

Our government will continue to work with our partners in digital health to enhance and expand digital services to ensure front-line providers and health care workers have the tools and resources to reduce their administrative burden and enable them to spend more time with patients while also empowering patients to better manage and have more control over their health and providing them with the right care in the right place.

I encourage all members to support Bill 194 and support the security and privacy of our health care system.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate? If not, we're going to go to questions.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Sorry. I recognize the deputy House leader for a point of order.

Mr. Trevor Jones: On a point of order, pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting has been cancelled.

STRENGTHENING CYBER SECURITY AND BUILDING TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RENFORCER LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ ET LA CONFIANCE DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to questions for the members.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the minister for this important piece of legislation. I would like to highlight that, in today's world, with AI coming strongly in place and more tools coming with AI in them, we need to protect the identity of, and data identity, keeping in mind as well that AI is coming and it's going to be here to help—

Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'm just going to interrupt. There seems to be some confusion. Does the member for Spadina–Fort York have a point of order?

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes. It's the question time. I think the member is actually continuing the speaking.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Does the member have a question? We're in the questions.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yes, that's my question, actually.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Okay. That's what I understood that to be as well.

We were done with the debate. I was confused about the continuation of the debate, but I said we were moving to questions, and he was the member who stood up for a question. So he's asking the question.

I will ask the member to conclude their question.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Minister, can you highlight how this piece of legislation is striking the balance between the importance of AI as a good tool to use and protecting the data identity and identity of the people?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for the question. Of course, that member was parliamentary assistant to the ministry for some time, even before I had the privilege of being appointed minister, so this piece of legislation is very much something that he has contributed to through his efforts.

Now, the bill was crafted in response to valid concerns raised by Ontarians. We recognize, and all Ontarians recognize, the incredible potential of AI—but its risks. So we begin with trust and, of course, the bill contains the words, “trust in the public sector.” Also, schedule 1, which contains the comprehensive definition of artificial intelligence, is the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act—once again, the word “trust.”

The AI definition that we have come up with in this bill is at section 1, subsection 1, paragraph (a) of schedule 1: “artificial intelligence system” means, (a) a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers from the input it receives in order to generate outputs.” That’s the key, and this can include things that influence physical or virtual environments.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Chris Glover: As part of this government’s privatization agenda, they are bankrupting our schools, our colleges, our hospitals and our universities. Just for example, most of our school boards in this province are facing funding shortfalls and having to make massive cuts next year. Eleven of our 23 universities are running deficits next year. And in consultation about this bill on AI and cyber security, one of the things that public sector agencies consistently said is that when agencies are underfunded, they become vulnerable and they become targets for cyber security attacks.

Will this government acknowledge that they are undermining and jeopardizing the cyber security of the data held by public agencies in this province by their agenda of privatizing our public sector agencies?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the question, Speaker. Let me say that, again, the bill is about trust, and it’s about Ontario leading by example. And it’s about leading with the protection of the data of our children in all agencies and government sectors where children have to be protected: hospitals, school boards, children’s aid societies. No parent in the province of Ontario, I submit, should worry about their child’s safety when they’re at school, and this includes digital and online safety.

So we are taking the lead. We have made the investments. We are getting the good advice within the ministry and across the public sector, and so much good advice has been provided. We are building that trust, and we’re getting it done for the children of our province—our future.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Ric Bresee: This government has made a commitment to improve the way that government services are delivered. As our society and economy transition further into the digital realm, there’s growing expectation that

government services follow suit and evolve to meet the demands of the modern world. Our government must recognize and ensure that government services are accessible to all and secure across a variety of delivery platforms. So, Speaker, can the minister please explain how the proposed legislation will enhance the delivery of services in a manner that is both responsive and reliable?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you for the question from the excellent member. Of course, service delivery is about putting the customer first, and we’re all consumers; we’re all customers of the government. And we have to make sure that we have convenience and options, so we’re always developing new service solutions that provide customer service excellence. This includes making sure that the online interactions with government—and we have that; 55 ServiceOntario products, for example, are available online 24/7. But when people of this province need to want or want to come in in person, we have many different varieties of ServiceOntario, including the mobile units in northern Ontario and in Indigenous communities. We have the retail partnerships with longer extended hours and all-day Saturdays. All of this is about putting the customer first, ensuring convenience and ensuring choice and confidence and trust.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Chris Glover: Again to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery: You just said that you want to make sure that children have a healthy and safe experience online, and yet when the Toronto District School Board and other school boards brought a lawsuit against social media giants in this province, citing the number of negative mental health impacts that social media has on children—for example, the director of the Toronto District School Board said, “It leads to pervasive problems” including “distraction, social withdrawal, cyberbullying ... and mental health challenges.”

When this lawsuit was brought forward, this government and its Premier stood solidly behind the social media platforms, and the Premier dismissed that lawsuit as nonsense. How can this government pretend that they are standing up for children’s safety online if they will not support at least an investigation in this court challenge to social media platforms?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you, Speaker, through you to the member opposite, for the question. This bill leads with protecting children in a digital age, and we have worked with both the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Minister of Education on this.

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As the Minister of Education has said, and I completely agree, we prefer co-operation and conversation with all partners in the public and private sectors, rather than litigation. We choose co-operation and conversations over litigation. That’s why this proposed legislation aims to establish data protections for children and minors engaged with public sector organizations. Parents need to be confident that their children are protected. They certainly

can be. We worked carefully with not just the Minister of Education and the—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the response. We'll move to another question.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I'm very lucky to have a beautiful niece and two beautiful nephews. Olivia is seven. Conor is going to be seven in September; he's wrapping up lacrosse season and he's about to start soccer season. And then Shea is going to be three in July, and he actually played his first soccer game. He really likes scoring goals, so we hope that bodes well for him.

But I'm nervous about the impacts of technology, AI and social media—what impacts those are going to have on my two nephews and my niece. Could the minister explain how this bill will help protect Conor, Shea and Olivia?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Brampton North for his care and concern and his excellent advocacy for his riding, and for being an excellent member of this government.

It begins with the definitions, and I already touched on the AI definition. I want to finish where I left off with respect to the answer to the question from the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills. The types of outputs in the AI definition include “predictions, content, recommendations or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments.” That's section 1(1)(a).

And then the cyber security definition—these are comprehensive approaches to these key concepts: “cyber security’ means the security, continuity, confidentiality, integrity and availability of digital information and the infrastructure housing”—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you to the minister. That's all the time we have.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ONTARIO

Ms. Jess Dixon: This weekend, Waterloo region hosted the spring games of Special Olympics Ontario, and myself and my friend Corey attended the opening ceremonies. Frankly, we were blown away. It was held in Waterloo, originally scheduled prior to the pandemic but rescheduled, and incredibly well organized by Waterloo regional police, with Chief Mark Crowell heading it up for the first time. I was amazed by how organized everything was and the amount of passion and dedication that had gone into it.

We were able to witness the law enforcement torch run and athletes entering the arena to light the torch. The torch run is something that has been going on for years now to support the Special Olympics. It's a really interesting

partnership between police as sort of the community members that bring everything together.

The one thing that everybody kept saying as we watched the athletes come in was people saying that their faces hurt, because they couldn't stop smiling, and I was one of those. In a time where people are somewhat dour and cynical, it was quite amazing to see a group of athletes who are so incredibly delighted to participate in something that they love and to have that much enthusiasm.

It also marked the retirement of CEO Glenn MacDonell, who has spent 35 years supporting Special Olympics Ontario. The love that these athletes had for him was just incredible to see. So thank you to Mr. MacDonell, thank you to WRPS and thank you to all of the amazing athletes that competed this weekend in Waterloo region.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today to speak about punishing and mercenary social assistance rates. Even after the 21.6% Harris cuts of the 1990s, people are far, far worse off now. Most disturbingly, these Conservative cuts carry judgment, creating anger and resentment towards those who simply require our help and assistance.

Conservatives try to strip away our communities' desire and responsibility to care for the less fortunate. Poisonous words like “handout” deliberately infected common discourse. After 15 long years of Liberal rule, those on social assistance were worse off than during the Harris regime. Many empty, vacuous words were spoken, but Liberals only decided to help those who need it the most at the end of their rule with the Basic Income Pilot project. Instead of actually fixing the well-known problem with funding, they committed to a study.

Premier Ford promised that he would let the study carry out, but it didn't take long until that promise was broken and it was shut down—shut down because Conservatives didn't want to see the positive results. They took away hope. How can anyone stabilize their life when they're consistently struggling and at risk?

Ontarians on social assistance live in deep, deep poverty and their monthly housing bills are often more than what they receive. This is before even attempting to buy food. It's survival mode for most, if not all.

This government pats itself on the back for indexing people well below the poverty line. Maytree has found that Ontario Works recipients would need \$17,000 more per year just to reach the poverty line.

I want to thank the United Way for their Make It Livable campaign to double social assistance rates. I call on the government members to remember our common humanity, think of those in desperate need and double social assistance rates now.

GEORGE OSEI

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker.

On May 24 and May 25, Chatham-Kent celebrated a rare and unique ceremony in honour of one of our

residents, George Osei, a native of Ghana and proud Ontarian.

In Ghana, the installation of a new chief is marked by a ceremony called an “enstoolment.” This is a significant event in the community. It signifies the transfer of power and authority to a new chief. The ceremony involves playing traditional music, song, dance, a community feast and the wearing of traditional attire. During the ceremony, the new chief is recognized and given symbols of authority, such as a crown and a traditional stool. The event is also a time to celebrate unity and reaffirmation of community values.

George Osei was originally from the town of Atebubu, Ghana, and he can trace his roots back to the region’s royal family. George has been a pillar of Chatham-Kent and has exemplified the virtues of leadership, integrity and dedication to his work and his family, committed to the advancement and the well-being of all people in our multicultural community.

Chatham-Kent has a long history of welcoming those from every corner of the world. Congratulations to George and your family. I thank you for contributing to Chatham-Kent’s rich tapestry as we continue to celebrate the history and traditions of all people who call beautiful Chatham-Kent and Ontario home.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. I will just take a moment before we move to the next member’s statement to ask the members in the House just to keep the volume down so we can hear the members speaking. Thank you. I appreciate your orderly behaviour.

And now I move to the member for Sudbury for the next member’s statement.

CLUB AMICAL DU NOUVEAU SUDBURY

MPP Jamie West: La semaine dernière, j’ai visité le Club Amical du Nouveau Sudbury et j’ai été impressionné par toutes les activités qu’il offre aux personnes âgées de notre communauté. Il offre des jeux, comme les fléchettes, le billard et les cartes. Il planifie des soirées de théâtre, de musique et de danse. Il organise des ateliers, des événements et des soupers en communauté. Il encourage la vie active avec du yoga, de l’exercice, des journées de golf et plus. Et tout ceci est organisé par des bénévoles.

Le club amical compte 333 membres, et ils ont créé une communauté positive et solidaire. Non seulement est-ce que le club est un espace sécuritaire et amusant pour toutes les personnes âgées, mais c’est aussi une place très spéciale pour ceux qui n’ont pas de famille en ville ou qui sont seuls. Cela les aide à se faire des amis, à remonter le moral et à s’assurer qu’on prend soin d’eux comme communauté.

Vous pouvez ressentir l’engagement du conseil d’administration envers le bien-être des personnes âgées dans la façon dont ils s’expriment—ils sont un groupe attentionné. Tu peux vraiment voir ceci par la manière dont les membres sont impliqués avec le club. Certains font du bénévolat depuis plus de 30 ans.

Pour plus que 40 ans, le club amical offre de nombreux services pour aider à soutenir la communauté francophone âgée à Sudbury. Ils et elles devraient être fiers de leurs réalisations passées et présentes.

Mes amis du club amical, merci beaucoup pour la belle visite et pour tout ce que vous faites pour nos personnes âgées de la communauté.

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SENIOR VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. Billy Pang: Speaker, as we are approaching June, we are also approaching the Senior Volunteer Appreciation Week and Seniors Month in Ontario. This is a time dedicated to honouring our seniors.

In 2021, this House passed my Senior Volunteer Appreciation Week Act, establishing the first week of June each year as Senior Volunteer Appreciation Week. I am proud to say that this initiative has since inspired our communities to express their gratitude towards our senior volunteers. It has also encouraged seniors to remain active and involved in community life.

To mark this special week, I will once again be presenting the senior volunteer awards to our cherished senior volunteers in Markham–Unionville. Their efforts have had a profound impact across multiple generations, fostering a spirit of community and continuity. Their selfless sacrifice deserves our utmost respect and recognition.

I sincerely encourage my fellow members to honour our seniors and senior volunteers this June. I am also grateful for the opportunity this legislation has provided to highlight their invaluable contributions.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Recently, I attended a seniors’ tea in Ottawa West–Nepean, with over 200 seniors in attendance, and as I made my way around the room chatting with people, I heard the same thing over and over again: “Can you please get the Premier to fix our health care system?”

It was the same at the General Burns community fun day on Saturday as hundreds of residents stopped by my tent. Person after person told me, “Our health care system is broken. What can we do to get the government to actually care?”

But while Ottawa residents are desperate for action, the health minister says that there is no recruitment and retention problem for family doctors; this at a moment when 2.3 million people in Ontario have no family doctor, and every week, my office hears from constituents who are about to lose their family doctor or have already lost their family doctor.

The Premier has also fought in court for two years against your right to know how many nurses and personal support workers we are short in Ontario, saying it would be “economically damaging” to share this information, even as they don’t care how damaging it is to your health.

The government is also paying more to private, for-profit clinics to perform the same surgeries that are being provided for less in our public hospitals, meaning that taxpayer dollars are going to fund profits instead of increasing the number of surgeries, even though our public hospitals have the capacity to do more.

I agree with my constituents. It's time for the government to stop playing games with our health care system and get to work on fixing it so that you get the health care you deserve.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Graham McGregor: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and highlight some good news we had over the weekend in Brampton, particularly for our Sikh community. The Sikh community have been in Canada for over 100 years and they played a vital role in shaping our province and the beautiful city that Brampton is today.

This past weekend, I spent time at Brampton North's own local gurdwara, the Gurdwara Guru Nanak Mission Centre. The sangat at Guru Nanak Mission Centre has been fundraising for years, with the goal of building a new gurdwara on the site. Countless individuals have given their time, their money and their resources, and on Sunday, we were finally able to announce and put shovels in the ground on the site of a brand new gurdwara, right at Guru Nanak Street and Dixie.

Speaker, a gurdwara is not only a place of worship, but it's also a community hub where all are welcome, and at any time you can drop by for a free warm meal and be greeted with open arms and blessings. Selfless service, or "seva," is an important value for the Sikh community, and the construction of the new gurdwara doesn't just mark a good day for the Sikh community, but a good day for religious freedom in Brampton and all across our country.

I invite all members of this House to come up to Brampton North and learn more about the values of the Sikh community. Join me for the Gurdwara Guru Nanak Mission Centre's annual Nagar Kirtan parade on June 9. I hope to see you all there.

I'll end my speech today with the way I ended it on Sunday, Speaker:

Waheguruji Ka Khalsa Waheguruji Ki Fateh.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. John Fraser: What is it with this Premier's obsession with booze? Spending a billion dollars to put beer and wine in corner stores a little more than a year earlier than planned is simply unjustifiable. You have to ask yourself, who benefits? Well, it's the same people who always do: the wealthy and well-connected insiders and friends and multinational corporations. It's the Premier's billion-dollar boozedoggle—a billion dollars to speed this up by a little more than a year.

What's the rush, Premier? Premier, you could have waited for the contract to end and made a better deal—a

deal that would have benefited all Ontarians, not just the wealthy, well-connected and large corporations.

The Premier gave away the store in his billion-dollar boozedoggle, and Ontarians will pay.

I wish the Premier had the same sense of urgency for the 2.3 million Ontarians who don't have a family doctor, or for fixing our crumbling schools, or for helping children with exceptional needs who aren't getting the help they need in our schools, or for keeping rural emergency rooms and hospitals open. A billion dollars could have been better spent on the things that matter most to Ontario families.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1974 CAMBRIDGE FLOOD

Mr. Brian Riddell: May 17, 1974, is a day that many Cambridge residents will never forget. It started as a beautiful sunny day, but Mother Nature had other plans. On that fateful day 50 years ago, a flash flood swept through the city, literally swallowing up all of downtown Galt. I was a teenager at the time, and I remember my friends and I riding our bikes downtown, where we witnessed the most incredible scenes. There were people in canoes and motorboats rescuing people from their homes and from their businesses. There were cars literally floating down the streets. Fortunately, no deaths resulted from the flood, but it did cause more than \$6 million in property damage. That was a lot of money back in the 1970s.

Recently, the people of my riding gathered at the Fire Hall Museum to mark the 50th anniversary of the great flood of 1974. They reminisced about what they saw and what happened on that devastating day.

Speaker, the events of May 17, 1974, were a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many people of Cambridge. I thank the volunteers in my community who have worked hard to preserve the memories of that day.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: On May 18, the Canadian Egyptian Heritage Association once again hosted Canada's largest Egyptian festival, the sixth annual Discover Egypt festival at Celebration Square in Mississauga. Over 28,000 people gathered to enjoy Egyptian music, listen to entertaining performers, eat traditional foods, and celebrate Egyptian culture. The following day, they visited the Egyptian Museum in Mississauga, where visitors had an opportunity to view many of the artifacts and learn about Egyptian history, with a light and sound presentation of the exhibits on display. This was a great weekend for Egyptian Canadians to showcase their food, music, culture and heritage to Canadians.

I look forward to seeing the festival again next year.

And of course, we are all preparing for Egyptian Heritage Month, which is fast approaching in July.

On a related topic, I want to acknowledge the important work of Philopateer Christian College, a school in Miss-

issauga with over 420 students, which has been faithfully serving our Mississauga community for over 25 years. Throughout this time, they have educated more than 10,000 students. We celebrated their silver jubilee last week by watching a lovely performance by their students at the Living Arts Centre and enjoying a gala dinner.

1030

I am happy to have watched and supported their resilience and success over the years. I thank them for their work supporting the Egyptian, Arabic and Coptic communities in Mississauga.

They will soon be opening a second campus in Ottawa, and I wish them well for the next 25 years.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Graydon Smith: Always pleased to have former municipal colleagues in the House, and today is a great day to do that. Peter Kelley, who's the mayor of the township of Muskoka Lakes, is here and former councillor Barb Bridgeman, who's also a great community champion. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Laura Walton, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, and Joe Tigani, president of Ontario School Board Council of Unions. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to introduce good friends Tracy Burrows Dunford and Nancy Porteous. They're heat pump champions, and they're here to celebrate all the heat pump air conditioners we have in the building that are four times more efficient. Thank you, Gordon Drive, for coming and celebrating heat pumps with us today.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's great to see the galleries full of so many guests today, but I specifically would like to welcome Chief Sherri-Lyn Hill, Councillors Dean Hill and Alaina VanEvery and chief of staff Linda Parker from the Six Nations of the Grand River elected council. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm very proud to welcome again Fikayo Aderoju and his board members from Project Impacting Lives, including Rachel Kasujja, Naimah Raji, Lucky Osunbiyi, Kelly Mgbatogu, Jada McKenzie, Kimberley Okafor, Tofunmi Olowogoroye, Oluwafeyikemi Olusoga, Lorenzo Baitwa, Toni Bodunrin, Chikodili Odinakachukwu and Simi Olomofe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education. They are celebrating a banner year: 85 years. Congratulations, and welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

MPP Jamie West: I want to welcome some friends from CUPE. Fred Hahn is here, Yolanda McClean and Janice Folk-Dawson. Janice, as you remember, Speaker, was the former executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome our page captain, Paige Armstrong from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, a grade 8 student at St. Ursula Catholic

School in Chatham. Paige is supported by her mother, 28-year registered nurse Lora Ann Armstrong, and her brother Richard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome to the House Will Trefiak. He's a cyber security and privacy consultant. Welcome to your House.

Mrs. Robin Martin: This morning, I have the pleasure of welcoming St. Clement's School, who is visiting from my riding: their teacher Elizabeth Boyden, Rose Keenan, Covenant Ezechim, Mia Sonia de Pellegrin Overgaard, Tala Abdo, Allison Cheng, Hailey Finkelstein, Cassidy Bryce and Jocelyn Chen.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. I am so honoured to welcome my mom in the House.

Applause.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It's a special day. It's her birthday today. She's 79 today.

Singing of Happy Birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With the agreement of the House, we'll continue with introduction of visitors. It goes without saying, perhaps.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Speaker. Good morning. On behalf of everybody here in the official opposition NDP, I want to welcome everybody who's here joining us from all across Ontario today for a very historic occasion. I want to particularly recognize all the First Nations leaders, chiefs, elders, young people, dignitaries and, of course, the family of our dear friend and deputy leader, Sol Mamakwa, to the House.

Remarks in Anishininiimowin.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I want to welcome members from the Ontario Forest Industries Association joining us today: Ian Dunn, Mike Martel, Dan Bowes and Rick Groves. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will now ask our pages to assemble for their introductions.

It is my pleasure to introduce this group of legislative pages: from the riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, Paige Armstrong; from the riding of Milton, Archibald Coleman; from the riding of Oakville, Farah Crawford; from Brampton East, Ishan Desai; from the riding of King-Vaughan, Tristan Ehlert; from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, James Elder; from Brampton North, Guransh Ghai; from Etobicoke Centre, Joseph Gomes; from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Farhan Haroon; from Brampton South, Myah Haugh; from Thornhill, Riley Huang; from Kitchener South-Hespeler, Jasnoor Kaur; from Beaches-East York, Hosanna Ledetu; from York-Simcoe, Sophia Mac Sweeney; from Dufferin-Caledon, Grace Milone; from Pickering-Uxbridge, Emily Naassan; from Markham-Stouffville, Westley Tam; from Scarborough Centre, Jessica Wu; from Don Valley West, Victoria Xiong; and from Don Valley North, Ethan Zhu.

1040

Please join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages.

Applause.

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USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recognize the member for Kiiwetinoong on a point of order.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Point of order, Speaker: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow me to speak for 10 minutes regarding the historic significance of recognizing Indigenous languages in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Mamakwa is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow him to speak for 10 minutes regarding the historic significance of recognizing Indigenous languages in the Legislature. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Γ⁹- β"Ρα ΔL βλ⁴

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wrong. Our first order of business was to ensure that we do take action on a progressive path forward, including the necessary supports and benefits and ensuring that they are marked to inflation and the necessary supports are there. Secondary to this is working with Indigenous communities, the expert panels, as has been the plan all along, to remain committed to ensure that there is a significant path forward. This week proves a few commitments that we have on a path forward.

But, Speaker, as I mentioned, this is a very complex issue. It has been a historic issue. It's multi-jurisdictional. But know that this government will continue to correct a wrong and have a path forward.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: It should have been an easy answer: "We're going to stop the poisoning of the people of Grassy Narrows."

But anyway, this question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the NDP revealed that the Premier's chief of staff, Patrick Sackville, was routinely using his personal email account to do government business. This matters because Mr. Sackville told the Integrity Commissioner under oath that he does not conduct government business on personal email.

Well, today, Global News is reporting that Mr. Sackville was using his personal email as recently as late 2023—that's after the greenbelt scandal broke—and that means that Mr. Sackville not only gave false testimony under oath to the Integrity Commissioner about using his personal email, but he then doubled down and kept using it, knowing perfectly well that it was wrong.

So my question to the Premier is, when is he going to demand his chief of staff's resignation for giving false testimony?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question. As I said yesterday, if the leader of the NDP has any additional information that she would like to share with the Integrity Commissioner, I invite her to do so. I have full confidence in the Integrity Commissioner's ability to continue any investigation that he needs to do.

At the same time, we're going to continue to work on the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario: growing the economy, building homes, building schools, reinvesting in health care, transit and transportation—all of the priorities that the people of the province of Ontario elected us to focus on back in not only 2018 but in 2022. We'll continue to focus on those priorities because building a bigger, better, stronger, safer province of Ontario is exactly what we've been focused on, and we will not be strayed from that mission.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: First of all, let me inform the minister that—don't worry—we have already sent all those

documents over to the commissioners, and there will be justice for you one day.

On October 17, 2022, Ryan Amato sent Mr. Sackville a list of criteria for removing lands from the greenbelt on behalf of all of their insider friends, and that was sent to his personal email. The email was dated 10 days before the date that Mr. Sackville told the Integrity Commissioner, again, under oath, that he was first briefed on the greenbelt removal criteria. He also said, under oath, that he had no knowledge of this email and that he had no idea how Ryan Amato obtained his personal email account.

1110

Well, let me shed some light on that, because now we know that Mr. Sackville routinely uses his personal accounts for government business, contrary to what he told the Integrity Commissioner, again, under oath.

So my question, and perhaps the Premier will get up and answer it this time—I want to know: Has the Premier spoken to his chief of staff about the consequences of giving misinformation to the Integrity Commissioner?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, if the Leader of the Opposition has additional information and she says she has provided additional information to the Integrity Commissioner, then I have full confidence in the Integrity Commissioner to undertake his review.

At the same time, we are going to continue to do what is important for the people of the province of Ontario.

We inherited a government back in 2018, supported by the NDP every step of the way; an economy that was faltering; a manufacturing sector that had been—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —energy crisis; schools where kids were discovering as opposed to learning math; 600 schools had been closed. And every step of the way, the NDP supported them. The NDP were so prolific in supporting the Liberals that they also negotiated a 400% increase in child care rates. That's the success of the NDP.

What are we doing? We have a plan to continue to rebuild the economy. It is about rebuilding infrastructure, rebuilding hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, and we're—

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

TAXATION

MPP Zee Hamid: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

I'm proud to be standing here today in this Legislature to bring forward the concerns of my constituents in Milton.

Speaker, due to the impact of the rising Liberal carbon tax, Milton residents are facing unaffordable gas, groceries—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will take his seat. Please take your seat.

We had 15 minutes of respectful dialogue in this Legislature this morning. Let's see if we can keep that up.

Interjections.

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

The government side, come to order.

I apologize to the member for Milton for having to interrupt him. He can place his question.

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At a time when the cost of living continues to rise, the federal government decided to take more money out of people's pockets by hiking this tax by 23% last month. Ontarians do not deserve this punitive tax.

Unlike the Liberals, our government is powering Ontario's growth with clean, affordable and reliable energy.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House why the carbon tax does not, cannot and will not bring us the energy efficiency that our government is achieving through our clean energy program?

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: A day of firsts here—congratulations to the member from Milton on his first question in question period.

Again, I want to congratulate my good friend from Kiiwetinoong, as well, for his words this morning in Ojibwe. To me, he's known as "kitchi-animohsh"—if the interpreter is still there. That means "the big dog." We love the member from Kiiwetinoong.

Speaker, we can do this. We can have the energy that we need in our province for our growing economy without having this punitive tax that the member for Milton is talking about. And we're actually doing it.

There are a lot of firsts in this province. We're building the first new nuclear small modular reactor at Darlington right now. We're building the first large nuclear in the province in over 30 years. That's going to be happening out at Bruce. We're building a beautiful transmission line. Wataynikaneyap Power is here. We see the wonderful people—Margaret is here from Watay Power, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about some of the things we're doing in northern Ontario in my—

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

The supplementary question.

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you to the minister for his response. It is encouraging to see our government's progress in meeting Ontario's growing energy demand. More importantly, we're getting it done without imposing a costly carbon tax.

Families in Milton and across Ontario are looking to enjoy summer months without having to pay more for food, fuel and other necessities. We're asking the federal government to show some compassion and not burden Ontarians with another costly carbon tax hike.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting businesses, families and workers in Ontario as we fight the carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the great new member from Milton. Well, we're not imposing a tax—not a carbon tax, not any tax. We're actually reducing the cost of living in the province with things like One Fare in the transit system, cutting taxes, cutting fees, toll roads.

They're all gone. And we're building the infrastructure that we need to support our growing economy.

One of my favourite events since becoming the Minister of Energy was with the member from Kiiwetinoong and the folks from Wataynikaneyap Power in northwestern Ontario and Kezia, actually, in her home community of Kingfisher Lake First Nation, when I was there with the member and we linked that community to our green, emissions-free electricity grid that we have in Ontario so they can prosper in places like Kingfisher Lake, North Caribou Lake First Nation, Wunnumin First Nation. I actually look forward to joining the folks from Watay next month when we celebrate the completion of that product, linking 16 First Nations communities to our clean provincial grid.

Those are just a couple of examples of how we can do this without—

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

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, the Red River Métis, Inuit and Ontario First Nations are calling on Ontario to retract its 2017 identification of the "six new historic Métis communities" in the Ontario region. There was never any consultation with First Nations to recognize these new communities in areas across Ontario where Métis never existed.

Will the minister explain why his ministry refuses to share evidence with First Nations about these so-called Métis communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to congratulate the member on an extraordinary and historic day. Way to go, Sol.

I have met with the Chiefs of Ontario as well as a number of Indigenous leaders, chiefs from across the province. I'm seized of this matter. There have been many discussions, and my ministry as well as a couple of other ministries are gathering information to provide for those chiefs at an appropriate time. Some of the elements of this matter are before the courts, Mr. Speaker, but we will continue to ensure that the interests from section 35 rights and so forth of First Nations people in this province are preserved and protected.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have said Ontario must consult First Nations about Ontario's attempt to create new historic so-called Métis communities on First Nations lands.

This government needs to consider their evidence. When will Ontario stop providing misinformation to proponents about consultation owed in First Nations territories to these Métis communities when there isn't any evidence they existed historically?

Hon. Greg Rickford: As a matter of substance, this government has not recognized additional Métis com-

munities, and there has been some historic basis in law for the recognition of the existing ones. That said, we will continue to work with the First Nations leadership, particularly some that are here today, who are addressing matters of potential new Métis organizations, and we will continue to support, preserve and protect the section 35 and any other rights as well as a robust consultation process with First Nations leadership on any issues or opportunities related to this important question.

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TAXATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question, the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: This is awkward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Speaker. I actually would love to be the member for Brampton North—such a great community—but truly my heart is with the people of Windsor–Tecumseh.

My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. There is fierce competition from across the globe to land job-creating investments. When the Liberals were in charge, Ontario wasn't even on the short list of places companies would consider investing and expanding in. My community of Windsor–Tecumseh was ground zero for the economic loss that resulted from that.

By reversing the Liberals' high tax policies, we've made sure Ontario is top of mind for global companies who are looking for their next destination to expand in. And Windsor-Essex has renewed hope for the future.

But the federal government's carbon tax threatens the progress that we've made. It's as if they want to take us back to the days of the previous Liberal government where workers and businesses had to flee our province.

Speaker, can the minister please highlight how by scrapping the carbon tax, the Liberals can follow our lead and create the conditions for economic growth?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we just returned from a successful mission to Korea and Japan. I must say that we met with leading global companies who were intrigued by Ontario's success story.

In our auto sector, we went from zero to \$43 billion in new EV investments in just four years. We added over 700,000 jobs since we took office, including 25,000 just last month alone. None of that would have been possible if we hadn't reversed the Liberals' high tax policies that chased 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of the province.

We've reduced the annual cost of doing business by \$8 billion every year, creating the conditions for businesses to succeed in these good-paying jobs.

Speaker, we've shown the Liberals the way: Lowering taxes is the way to new investments in job growth. We need them to listen and scrap the carbon tax.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: There's truly never a good time to hike taxes. But with the rising cost of living and high interest rates, the Liberals have picked the worst time to continue to hike their carbon tax.

Our government has taken action to lower costs for hard-working people of this province while the Liberals continue to move in the opposite direction. It seems that every time our government moves to put a dollar back in the pockets of the people who earned it, the federal government announces a new tax hike to try to take it away. Their tax-and-spend ways are rooted in the Liberal belief that the government knows how to spend money better than the workers who earned it.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why we believe the hard-working people of this province should not be penalized with a Liberal carbon tax?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley West will come to order. The member for Niagara West will come to order.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, in the first four months of this year, Ontario has added 80,000 good-paying jobs. These are jobs that are being created in every sector in every region of our province. We want these hard-working men and women who are fulfilling these jobs to keep more of what they earn. And that's why we've acted to put more money back in the pockets of these people by cutting the gas tax, introducing the One Fare program, removing the licence plate renewal fees and so much more.

But unfortunately, Speaker, the Liberals are moving in the opposite direction by continuing with their carbon tax. We need the Liberals to listen to us. We've shown them the way that lower taxes is creating this economic prosperity. We want them to listen to us and listen to the hard-working people of Ontario and scrap the carbon tax today.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Every year, workers in Ontario are hospitalized because of heat stress. Some of them die.

Last year, you carried out a consultation on new heat stress regulations and you didn't increase protection for any workers. This year promises to be another summer of climate-driven record heat. You can increase protection for workers right now. Will you do it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, section 43 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act ensures that any worker in Ontario who feels that they're subject to unsafe working conditions has the right to reject work.

We're working across Ontario to ensure record investments to build the infrastructure of tomorrow. We've got working-class men and women on the job working to build a better, stronger future for Ontario, and they're protected by robust protections in the Occupational Health and

Safety Act, I would add, that has been strengthened under this Premier and the leadership of this government.

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

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, the dangers of heat stress at work are real. Without meaningful legislation, Ontario's workers will continue to face the threat of heat-related injuries, sickness and even death.

Everyone deserves to be safe in the workplace. Everyone deserves to come home safe from work when the day is done. The growing threat to human health and worker safety posed by climate change must be taken seriously. We need more than work refusals.

My question, Speaker: Will the Premier begin this crucial health and safety work by better recognizing heat stress under the Occupational Health and Safety Act?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: Again, Speaker, we've got strong protections in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and we work with our prevention council. We work with labour groups across Ontario. There's also an element of common sense. We're going to continue making the investments to support a growing Ontario.

We've got countless men and women in building trades who, I would add, are now supporting this government because of the record protections, because of the steps we're taking to bring women onto job sites, removing barriers for women and for racialized communities. We're going to keep doing that, keep strengthening the Occupational Health and Safety Act, continue to strengthen protections under the Employment Standards Act and ensure Ontario is a competitive province that is booming once again with record housing, record transit and record investments in hospitals and schools, all of which are going to ensure a growing working middle class.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. The Ministry of Education asked the Toronto District School Board to submit business cases for schools that urgently need a renovation or a rebuild. The priority was for shovel-ready schools. The criteria included accommodation pressures, school consolidation, facility condition, and access to French-language schools.

Nowhere in the list of criteria do we see the requirement for the school to be in a Conservative riding, but alas, that seems to be the main stipulation for success. Speaker, my question to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member will take her seat.

The member for Beaches–East York has the right to ask a question, and I need to be able to hear what she is saying. And I'll need to hear the reply from the minister, if there's a minister who's going to reply.

I apologize to the member for Beaches–East York. Please start the clock again. She has the floor.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the Premier: What was your actual criteria for choosing a school in Etobicoke as a capital priorities project when other schools were higher up on the list with more dire needs?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, let's answer the question straight up. Under your government, no schools were built. As a matter of fact, 600 schools were closed.

1130

We have a growing population in Etobicoke. Kids are in portables. They need a place to go to school.

I know they cut funding under education under the Liberal government. I know they cut 600 schools. I know they fired teachers, as opposed to what we're doing. We're investing over \$16 billion into building new schools over the next 10 years.

Since Etobicoke was ignored for 20 years under their government—they aren't being ignored anymore. They're going to be treated fairly, like the rest of the province.

Interjection.

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

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, here's the TDSB list of capital priority projects:

(1) Kapapamahchakwew, Wandering Spirit School—a step forward for truth and reconciliation—in Toronto–Danforth;

(2) St. Margaret's Public School desperately needs a rebuild, with a long-term care already partnering with them, in Scarborough–Guildwood;

(3) Secord Public School, the largest and oldest portapack system, waiting for a rebuild since the Premier and I were at city hall together, in my riding, Beaches–East York;

(4) Etobicoke Centre Elementary—say no more—fourth on the list, but with the golden ticket of having a Conservative MPP to trump all other criteria.

My question to the Premier: Whether it's hospitals, long-term cares or schools, why does the gravy train only stop in Conservative ridings?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it's just flabbergasting to hear this question from the Liberal Party. Honest to God, are you a revisionist that just came down to Earth? After cutting funding for capital, closing 600 schools, having the worst EQAO standards in Ontario history, you are lecturing this Premier on academic success and building anything?

In Scarborough on Friday, in the NDP riding of Doly Begum, I stood with our Scarborough colleagues to announce a new French elementary school for the people

of Scarborough. It happened to be an NDP riding, but we don't care because we're investing in what matters to families.

I've been in TDSB. I was in London with the member just sitting across—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Talk to me, and conclude your answer.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I was in [*inaudible*] the member across from me, who actually attended a capital funding announcement in her riding, if you can believe it.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to building—

Interjections.

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

I'll remind members that they need to make their comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question. Start the clock.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The Liberal carbon tax harms hard-working individuals, businesses and farmers. People in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and across the province rely on Ontario farmers to grow high-quality and healthy food for them and their families. But the federal Liberals, supported by the Liberal members sitting here in this House, continue to disrespect farmers through their unfair tax schemes.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is supporting men and women who are producing food for our growing population. It is time that all governments do the same. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House why farmers in Ontario want to see the carbon tax scrapped immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I knew from day one he would see you here in this House.

To answer his question, ladies and gentlemen, the fact of the matter is, as we heard yesterday from the president of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, they are being stressed. The emotional toll of Liberal ideology is really becoming palatable. Last week, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture actually just released results of a survey that said what worries farmers most across Ontario—from Essex to Cornwall to Atikokan, they are worried about tax burden.

Speaker, I stand in this House every day proudly representing farmers across this province. But I stand in front of you today for the first time to say I'm worried. The corn is barely popping out of the ground, and I'm hearing

across the province farmers worrying about the cost of drying that corn this fall. The cost is going through the roof, especially since the Liberal ideology saw the carbon tax increase 23% April 1. It's a travesty.

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

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you to the minister for that response. It is disappointing that the federal Liberals seem to be more interested in taxing our farmers than helping them.

Ontario's agriculture and food industry contributes over \$48 billion in our province's GDP and economy, representing more than 800,000 jobs. It's essential that our vital sector continues to grow and produce more food for our growing population and export markets. We cannot let the Liberals and their carbon tax continue to add unnecessary costs that reduce competitive advantage at our global level. They need to finally start listening and show our farmers some support instead of trying to tax them out of the province.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our government is supporting Ontario farmers as they fight against this carbon tax?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely. Again, as farmers worry about the affordability and worry about affording drying their grain corn later this fall, it's our government in Ontario that's listening and standing up programs that are addressing how we can assist farmers and for our associated food and beverage industries to continue to grow.

I was so very proud when I joined the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex just last week, when we celebrated a provincial investment of \$2.4 million into Parkhill Meats. We're bringing processing close to the farmers. And that huge crowd that was there that included farmers that are going to benefit were celebrating our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford.

Furthermore, we have introduced a \$25-million Agri-Tech Innovation Initiative. We also have a Biosecurity Enhancement Initiative. We also have a program to enable farmers to grow future opportunities. Again, we are standing up programs that are resonating and assisting farmers to offset the ridiculous pressure that is coming from Liberal—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Later today, I will be debating my PMB, Bill 191, Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee Act. The bill seeks—

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. It's a very important day for the child care workforce in this Legislature.

The bill seeks to address workforce issues impacting child care in Ontario, mainly the staffing shortages operators have been reporting. Families deserve to have

affordable child care that they can rely on. Early childhood workers deserve jobs that they can turn into careers, and operators deserve a funding model that secures a future for child care.

My question is to the Premier. Will this government commit supporting my bill so Ontario families can access the child care in this province that they need?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: So, the question is, will the Progressive Conservative government support an NDP plan that will preclude 30% of the market and 70,000 families outside of the program? The answer is no. We can confirm it's a total no. We will absolutely not support a program for which you will have literally made the problem that defines your question, of wait-lists, profoundly worse.

To the Speaker: The members opposite want the government to sign on to a private member's bill, duplicative fundamentally in its nature, to actually undermine choice of parents. That is not a position supported by mainstream families, who want their choices in how they want they raise their kids to be supported. Non-profit, for-profit, home care: The government's policy is to support them all. The members opposite should get outside.

1140

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): [*Inaudible*] come to order.

Supplementary question: the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, Gabrielle lives in London West and has been on a child care wait-list for two years. She was only able to return to work because she found home child care, and she and her husband adjusted their work schedules so that one can do the 8:30 drop-off and the other can do the 4:30 pickup.

Gabrielle works at London Health Sciences Centre and told me that many nurses want to get back to work after their mat leaves, but they can't because they can't find child care.

Speaker, does this government understand that a child care plan without a workforce strategy is not going to help women like Gabrielle get back into the labour market?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Let's take a step back, Speaker. We inherited a child care program that costs, on average, \$50 to \$60 a day. It was our government, under our Premier's leadership, that cut that by 50%, saving \$6,000 to \$12,000 per child per year. We then committed to build spaces: 86,000 spaces for which the government is on track, 41,000 spaces created since 2018.

The member opposite speaks about supporting our staff. It was this government that just increased wages this year by 19% in the first year, achieving wage parity with the ECEs in kindergarten, because that was a fundamental priority: to reduce the exodus of staff going from child care into our school system. We now have wage parity. We're increasing wages by \$1 per hour per year, every year; this is going to make a difference as we retain more workers.

As we build more spaces, we continue to reduce fees for the people of Ontario.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Premier announced that the government will be spending \$225 million to introduce and expedite alcohol sales into convenience stores and gas stations.

Meanwhile, in northern Ontario, we continue to see opioid-related deaths rise. In fact, the north has three times the mortality rate from overdose compared with the rest of the province.

The priorities in Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Sioux Lookout, Elliot Lake and every community across northern Ontario is not a quicker access to alcohol. They would rather see these millions go towards supervised consumption sites and addiction centres that have been working on shoestring budgets to save people's lives in northern Ontario.

Why is the Premier prioritizing alcohol sales over dying people from opioid overdoses?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To respond, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: To the member opposite: Thank you for that question. It's an important question and it is something that is being addressed by this government in a very substantive way.

When you think about the amount of investments that we're making—over \$525 million in annualized investments, \$90 million specifically focused on building treatment and recovery beds, withdrawal management, treatment beds and supportive housing—all of these investments are creating a continuum of care.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Now, past governments—and I hear the cackling on the other side. Let's just look and see what they did versus what we're doing. We are making investments in northern Ontario because northern Ontario needs significant investments. Out of the investments that we've made, 54% have gone to build 400 beds in the province, 7,000 treatment spots, with 54% of them in northern Ontario. We are building a continuum of care to help everyone in the province with all addictions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the Premier. Developmental services, rates—ODSP, OW—home care, unfunded hospitals, growing ER wait times, supervised consumption sites that are closing: These are the priorities that I hear from people across Algoma-Manitoulin and northern Ontario.

When I speak with people in my riding, they want to know—not what we are doing about a five-minute wait at the liquor store but what we're doing about a five-hour wait time in ER rooms.

Speaker, this Premier is spending \$225 million to expand alcohol sales while hospitals in northern Ontario

continue to struggle with inadequate funding from this government.

Last week's press conference sounded a lot like a campaign launch to me, Speaker. So I would like to know: Does the speaker plan to run on more alcohol being sold in Ontario or does he plan on eventually addressing the health care crisis in northern Ontario?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: With all due respect to the member, he's worried about an early election. He should be worrying about who you're running for: As an independent? Are you running for the Liberals? Are you running for the NDP? That's what you have to determine, my friend, because you probably won't be here next round.

But you know something, Mr. Speaker? Under the Liberals: the worst contract I have ever seen in business in 35 years. They were losing hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars every single year.

What we're doing, we're going to see new revenues of \$895 million to \$1.16 billion. That's hundreds of millions of dollars that we can put towards health care, on top of the 30% increase we've already put to health care. We're going to make sure we help people go to detox beds, rehabilitation centres. That's where that money's going to be going. It's not going to be wasted like the Liberals in the worst contract I've ever—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

I'm going to say this: It's not helpful to speculate on the outcome of the next election in individual seats or the timing of the election, possibly. That doesn't add anything to the debate.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Mines. The Liberal carbon tax is punishing families and businesses in northern Ontario by driving up costs and making life more unaffordable. To add insult to injury, the opposition members that represent northern communities continue to support this harmful tax.

The agriculture, forestry and mining sectors are all big job creators and economy builders in the north. They also happen to be the main targets for this NDP-backed Liberal cash grab. Unlike the opposition NDP and independent Liberals, our government continues to demonstrate support for the people and businesses in northern Ontario. We won't stop fighting until the federal government finally scraps that tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain the burden this harmful tax is putting Ontario's mining industry in?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question from the member from Peterborough-Kawartha.

This starts with exploration, and exploration starts with flying aeromag surveys or perhaps lidar surveys—carbon tax, carbon tax. When they find something, they marshal the drills into the bush, which are pulled in skidders—heavily, heavily fuel dependent; carbon tax. From there, it goes into camps, and it's then core-and-split. Then it goes to places like Lakefield in Peterborough and in places like Oakville. What are they looking for? Critical minerals that will power the EV revolution. And why do we need the EV revolution? To reduce the carbon footprint.

This tax is counterproductive. It should be scrapped. The Liberals and their partners, the NDP, have to scrap this tax.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for his response. Business owners across Ontario continue to face financial challenges driven by the Liberal carbon tax, and mining businesses that drive major economic growth in this province are no exception.

We have the opportunity of a lifetime to build the supply chain for electric vehicles right here in Ontario that will fuel prosperity, create a better future for generations to come and reduce our carbon footprint. The made-in-Ontario supply chain starts with mining, and the carbon tax is taking a toll on this process with more increased expenses.

Everyone in this chamber knows that there is not a green economy without electric vehicles. Can the minister please explain how the Liberal carbon tax is threatening Ontario's mining sector, as well as our entire electric vehicle supply chain?

1150

Hon. George Pirie: Thanks again very much for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we're very lucky that Ontario has the minerals to power the EV revolution. We've got nickel deposits in Timmins, of course, that are huge. The next round of drilling will, of course, make Canada, Ontario—give us the highest nickel resource globally. Not only do we have nickel in Timmins, but we have nickel in Sudbury and the Ring of Fire.

We don't want the nickel from Indonesia. The Indonesian nickel is financed by the Chinese. It's powered by coal, and the tailings go right into the ocean. We don't want that nickel. We want the nickel from Ontario.

These companies are burdened by the carbon tax.

On top of that, we've got rare earths in the Ring of Fire—so we secure the supply chain for our national defence, as well. We've got the minerals to secure the supply chain from northern Ontario into southern Ontario.

We have to scrap this tax. The Liberals must scrap this tax.

SMALL BUSINESS

MPP Jill Andrew: Over the last four years, many of our small businesses have been abandoned, while this government was busy bailing out big-box stores and

granting funds to some businesses that weren't even located in Ontario.

We called for a ban on all evictions by commercial landlords for the duration of the pandemic and a utility payment freeze for small and medium-sized businesses to help them survive.

A recent Better Way Alliance report on small businesses found some business owners had seen rent hikes of 10%, 50%—some of them doubled from one year to the next.

In 2022, we promised to create a standard commercial lease to help protect our small business owners.

We've even called for rent control.

My question is to the Premier. This government denied too many small businesses the support they needed during an unprecedented pandemic. Today, what will you do to protect our small businesses and our commercial tenants?

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

The Associate Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for the question, because it does allow us to highlight some of the things that our government is doing to support our small businesses across the province.

Just in the 2024 budget, we added an additional \$6.8 million over the next two years for our small businesses—for those who want to start their businesses through the Starter Company Plus Program with grants of up to \$5,000; for many of our young people who want to have a Summer Company program.

Just yesterday, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development had a young man, 16 years old, who was actually producing freeze-dried fruits and ice cream, and it was just a great opportunity that he was taking—one of the programs that we support.

Our regional innovation centres are providing great services for those who wish to export their products.

Our Small Business Enterprise Centres are there on the ground helping people who have great ideas and want to get them off the ground.

We're investing in women's futures and women's economic—

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Speaker, over the weekend, we said goodbye to Oakwood Hardware, a small business in our community. It was more than a restaurant. It was a gathering place where we all felt we belonged.

Many small businesses in St. Paul's, of course, like Oakwood Hardware—a family business deeply rooted in our community—are hurting. The affordability crisis has hit them, and it has hit their customers. It has hit the artists, the musicians, the single moms, the youth—everyone who calls these businesses a part of their home, a part of their community.

My question is to the Premier. Will you take a moment today to extend your condolences to Oakwood Hardware and a number of other small businesses and families in

midtown, in Little Jamaica and across Ontario that have had to see their doors shuttered during your tenure?

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

The Associate Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to once again thank the member opposite.

Yes, many, many businesses are struggling. But there is one thing that the member opposite, her party, the provincial Liberal Party can do: They can call on their federal counterparts to scrap the carbon tax, which is adding massive expenses to all of our businesses across this province. It's hurting our growth.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade travels the world and brings amazing investments into Ontario. The Minister of Colleges and Universities, the Minister of Agriculture and I were just in Indiana, talking about how we can attract more businesses to come here, start and grow. And we're having tremendous success, but you know what hurts all of that? The federal carbon tax.

So once again, we ask you: stand with us, call on your federal counterparts and tell them to scrap the tax today.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. Ontarians have had enough of the Liberal carbon tax. It is driving up the cost of daily necessities for communities across the province, especially in the north.

Speaker, it's unfair that individuals and families in northern Ontario are being hit hardest at the gas pumps as well as at the grocery stores, and it's even more unfair that the opposition members representing these communities are ignoring their own constituents and supporting a punitive tax.

The federal government needs to listen to Ontarians and get rid of that carbon tax today. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the Liberal carbon tax is driving up costs for northern communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Constituency week, as everyone knows, started with the May long weekend, and me and my little girls have a ritual: We jump in the water no matter what the temperature is. It was 49 degrees—shocking to the system. I'm just proud of those little girls for taking that jump.

Similarly, boaters and the like were shocked at the price of gas for their boats and for their quads. These aren't just features of tourism and relaxing on the lakes and cottages; these are forms of transportation for the people in my riding. So the repining persists.

Most people describe this tax as a “royal pain” and they want the king of the carbon and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, to do what we want to do, and that's scrap the tax.

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

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It's my great pleasure to introduce and welcome an important guest, Mr. Harmeet Singh, president of Hart College of Cardiac Sonography and Health Care Inc. Also, he runs cardiac medical services not only in the GTA but across Ontario.

Thank you for the wonderful services you do during this difficult time, and welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Steve Clark: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and various other Acts / *Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille et diverses autres lois.*

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present a report on Value-for-Money Audit: Ontario Energy Board: Electricity Oversight and Consumer Protection, 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rakocevic presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I do, Speaker, thank you.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee and substitute members who participated in the public hearings and report-writing process.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and legislative research.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

PETITIONS

LABORATORY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: It is unfortunate that I have to bring this petition forward, and I want to thank—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the members that we don't allow any debate or editorializing on presentation of petitions. The new standing order requires members to briefly summarize the petition, and they can indicate how many signatures have been attached to it as well as whether or not they support it. "Brevity" is the operative word.

I'll once again recognize the member for Hamilton Mountain to present her petition.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to thank the thousands of people who have signed this petition created by OPSEU that discusses the public health labs that are scheduled to close. We have six public health labs across the province, in Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Peterborough, Kingston, and Orillia. These labs collect specific water tests and other important natures for sensitive medical tests that are needed in our community each day—like I said, the water tests, and testing for infectious diseases in our local hospitals and long-term-care facilities. People are calling to stop the closures in the six municipalities that I spoke of and to invest in true public health measures to ensure that Ontarians are kept safe.

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Archibald to bring to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, I have a petition: "A Future for Childcare in Ontario." As you would know, currently, there are as many as 65,000 new child care workers needed to meet the expected child care demand.

I had a child care day in my riding, and so many people told me that they are unable to access important child care so that they can go to work. The biggest problem is that child care workers—they're having a difficult time retaining child care workers.

So, to address the workforce shortage, including increased salary, this is an important provision to make

sure that we are able to provide the child care that we need in this province.

This petition calls for the immediate establishment of an early years and child care working advisory commission, as part of our ongoing efforts to make sure that parents and children are able to access adequate child care in this province.

I have many, many people in my riding and across Ontario signing this petition. I wholeheartedly agree with this. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Ethan to give to the table.

ADDICTION SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank all of the supporters of the Spot—this is the supervised consumption site—for their signatures on their petition. You can sort of hear them because they're outside of the Legislature right now.

Did you know, Speaker, that in Sudbury the overdose death rate is three times higher than in the rest of Ontario?

They submitted an application in 2021 for funding for a supervised consumption site, which we call the Spot, but the government refuses to fund them. They were operated for a while by money that came from the municipality and then by donors, and while they were operated, they had over a thousand visits. They reversed all 17 overdoses that happened on-site, and they helped decrease the amount of overdoses throughout our community because they tested drugs.

I agree with the petition to immediately approve funding for the supervised consumption site in Sudbury, to save lives. I will add my name to it and ask my good page Myah to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This petition has been signed by a few people here on the sheet that I have. The petition is a solution to a problem that we have in this Legislature, in the province of Ontario. The solution is, we need to pass Bill 191. It's a bill that creates a child care worker and early years workforce committee to help develop a workforce strategy so that we can promote and create and retain and recruit a child care workforce. There are 65,000 new workers that we need in Ontario in order to meet demands of child care spaces, and so this petition is a solution to that.

The signatures on this petition are asking the Ontario Legislature to pass Bill 191 so that we can actually address the workforce and get the workers in the spaces that we need, so people can access affordable child care in this province.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition and would once again like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer from McMaster University, who continues to send these petitions here our

way to have read in the Legislature. This is to raise the social assistance rates.

We know that people who are living on social services, Ontario Works, ODSP in this province are living in legislated poverty. A person on Ontario Works makes \$733 a month; a person on ODSP is \$1,338 a month—well below the poverty line.

We know that during COVID, the CERB program was \$2,000 per month, which was the reasonable rate for a person to live off of. And yet, the Ontario Works rates have had zero increase, and a small increase to ODSP—again, still below the poverty line.

So folks here are asking that the Legislative Assembly double social assistance rates for Ontario Works and ODSP.

1510

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and—

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the 8,000 people from the Muskoka area who have signed this petition. Basically, they wrote up this petition because the board of directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is looking at closing the hospital in south Muskoka and moving all of the beds to Huntsville. The residents and the people in south Muskoka, the 8,000 people who signed the petition, are opposed to this. They want to keep the hospital in south Muskoka open, with an emergency room, with in-patient beds. So they are asking for two things. The first one is that they want changes to how the board of directors for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare—that's the hospital corporation that looks after south Muskoka and Huntsville—to be duly elected, so they have a say. Second, they want to make sure that the hospital in south Muskoka stays open.

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

LABORATORY SERVICES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition here entitled "Prioritize Public Health: Keep Our Community" Public Health Ontario "Labs Open." This was signed by thousands and thousands of people across the province. Their concern is that this government is closing local public health labs in Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Peterborough, Kingston and Orillia. They want to ensure that we invest in public health infrastructure by keeping these labs open.

We certainly must have learned from COVID how important it is that we are able to do timely and quick testing when it comes to public health emergencies.

This petition says that these public health labs are critical and that the government's plan to privatize and/or close them is unwise, and we certainly agree with that.

I'm going to add my name to those of all of these concerned citizens who have taken the time to sign this, and I'm going to give it to page Hosanna to take to the table.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the members of Beaver Lake fire services for these petitions. The petition is called "911 Everywhere in Ontario." We all know—and the pages know this—that if you get into trouble, you dial 911, and either an ambulance, firefighters or a police officer will come to help you. But did you know, Speaker, that in most of my riding and most of the north, we don't have 911? The services are there—the ambulances are there; the police are there. But you have to memorize a 1-800 number that nobody knows. So they want 911 to be available everywhere.

Every other province in Canada has made agreements with Bell Canada to make sure that 911 was available everywhere. It is time for Ontario to do this.

The tourist season is coming in my riding. If you're good enough to swat out the mosquitoes and blackflies, you're welcome to Nickel Belt—and I hope you don't run into problems, but if you do, remember to memorize the 1-800 number, because 911 doesn't work.

I support what Beaver Lake is trying to do. I will affix my name to it and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next petition?

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Putting Patients First: Fix the Doctor Shortage."

As you will have heard, Speaker, in the House, Ontario currently has about 2.4 million Ontarians who do not have access to a family physician or primary care, and we know that puts their health at an imminent risk, and we know that primary care helps keep patients out of emergency rooms.

We want to encourage the government to do everything they can to address, to fix this doctor shortage. Certainly, we would like to see the government have a strategy to increase the number of staff support for primary care providers, so they can spend their time treating patients instead of doing paperwork.

I agree, again, that this doctor shortage should be a major concern of this province. I think our health care minister said it's not a major concern; I disagree, and the people who signed this disagree.

I'm going to add my name to this and give it to page Ethan to take to the table.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Dan Bazinet from my riding for these petitions.

There are about 200 people who have signed because most of them live either on Joe Lake East or on Dixon Lake Road. Those two roads in Nickel Belt used to be maintained when they were part of the city of Valley East. When the city was amalgamated to become part of the city of Greater Sudbury, the city of Greater Sudbury only maintained a part of Joe Lake East, and they are supposed to maintain it all. The Dixon Lake Road has been graded and plowed on occasion but not maintained on a regular basis. So they want the province to make sure that the city of Greater Sudbury respects the act that basically said that they have to maintain the road.

I'm happy to sign this petition, and I will ask page Farah to deliver it to the Clerks.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Stand Up for Local Conservation Authorities." I would say that this petition addresses the major concerns the people across Ontario have about this government's devastating changes that they've made to the Conservation Authorities Act, particularly in Bill 23.

I think we all need to understand the importance of our conservation lands that protect us from flooding and that clean our water. The government's changes that would allow not only development on this land but the sale of conservation lands, which threatens endangered species and certainly their habitat—these changes are not helpful when we're facing climate change. They will increase our risk of flood, fires and droughts in our province, and this is a major concern for people across the province. Once they hear that our conservation authority lands are at risk, they certainly are prepared to sign it, as they have done here. I agree that we need to protect conservation lands in this province.

I'm going to add my name to the signatures and send it to the table with page Hosanna.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Suzanne Legault from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Let's Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant."

As you know, Speaker, in northern Ontario, we don't have access to all of the health care services that exist in Ontario, but we do gain access through the Northern Health Travel Grant that pays for part of the travel and accommodations when we have to come to Toronto or Ottawa or London for tertiary care that is not available in the north. Unfortunately, the rates for compensation for your travel and accommodation are so low that a lot of people end up in a situation where they cannot afford to come down south. They will forgo the treatment and the care that they need because they can't afford it. The accommodations used to be \$100; it will soon be \$170 a night—but it is impossible to find a hotel room in Toronto for \$170 a night; the same thing with the mileage. They

are asking for a full review of all of the different parts of the travel grant, so that people in the north have equitable access.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PRÉVOIR DES ROUTES ET DES COLLECTIVITÉS PLUS SÛRES

Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 197, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 197, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off the debate? I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'd like to state before starting that I'll be sharing my time with the Solicitor General, the Associate Minister of Transportation, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America. In fact, for decades, our province has ranked among the top jurisdictions with the lowest fatality rates on the roads. And we are certainly proud of that track record.

1520

But that is not to say that our work is done. There's always more that we can do. That is exactly why our government has tabled legislation that would introduce the toughest penalties in Canada for impaired driving. And we aren't stopping there.

We have all seen the epidemic that car thieves have caused in our province. It needs to end.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act would crack down on these criminals. It includes measures that, if passed, would strengthen commercial vehicle safety and enforcement. It will provide e-bike safety. And, most importantly, it shows that our government is taking decisive action to make Ontario's roads safer. We're taking the action that previous governments have failed to do, that the federal government has failed to do, and that our opposition has been silent on for too long.

On average, one in three roadway fatalities involves impaired driving by alcohol or drugs. In 2022, more than 20,000 Ontarians had their licences suspended for impaired driving. So far, just this year alone, 10,000 impaired driver charges have been laid by the OPP. Compared to 2022, that's an increase of 16%. That's one driver every 26 minutes. It's completely unacceptable.

In 2022, our ministry conducted a roadside survey of Ontario drivers. That survey found that one in five drivers tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both. The same survey

found that since 2014, the number of drivers who were testing positive for drugs had increased by 55%.

And if that isn't enough to see the immediate need for change, the Office of the Chief Coroner determined that the percentage of drivers who were killed and tested positive for cannabis more than doubled between 2012 and 2020.

This is why we say enough is enough. Our government is determined to get tough on impaired drivers, to get them off the roads, and we will, if the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes. This act would introduce a lifetime suspension for driver's licences for anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death under the Criminal Code. If you are convicted of killing someone while impaired behind the wheel, you will forfeit your privilege to drive, for life. We are ready to do everything we can to make sure those dangerous drivers cannot get back on our roadways. There's absolutely no excuse for alcohol- or drug-impaired driving—not under any circumstance.

Our message to Ontarians is simple: Our government will not tolerate putting other people's lives at risk, and a lifetime suspension for impaired driving causing death makes that clear. These measures would make anyone in this province think twice before driving while they are impaired.

That's not the only measure in this bill aimed at cracking down on impaired driving. Our government plans to introduce supporting regulations that would require anyone convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock device upon licence reinstatement. Currently, those convicted of impaired driving can voluntarily install an ignition interlock device to reduce their licence suspension. Alternatively, they can sit out the ignition interlock requirement by refraining from driving for their full licence suspension and ignition interlock term. Combined with the measures in this bill, our government plans to introduce future regulations that would eliminate the sit-out period, requiring anyone convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock for a prescribed length of time. If you get behind the wheel impaired and put other people's lives at risk, you should have no choice but to install an ignition interlock. This is a vital tool to make sure impaired drivers are closely monitored and rehabilitated before being permitted the privilege to drive on their own.

We know that making interlock devices mandatory doesn't go far enough. So we're taking further steps to send a clear message.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act would introduce a time-limited zero-tolerance condition for alcohol and drugs for anyone convicted of impaired driving. If the bill passes, the zero-tolerance period would begin after a driver satisfies the ignition interlock and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Back on Track requirements.

Impaired driving is never okay—even if our opposition chooses to stay silent. We are going to make sure that people who choose to drive impaired and put other lives at risk are held accountable. Our government will never take

any chances when it comes to road safety. That's why these drivers will have to work hard to get their licence back.

To drive that point home, the Safer Roads and Communities Act would introduce longer roadside licence suspensions for first- and second-time drug- and alcohol-related offences. These suspensions would apply to young and novice drivers who violate their zero-tolerance condition, as well as drivers who perform poorly on field sobriety tests or have a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 or higher.

Currently, drivers receive a three-day roadside suspension for their first occurrence and a seven-day suspension for their second occurrence. This just isn't long enough. We need to teach people who drive under the influence that their recklessness in endangering Ontarians' lives will not be tolerated.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, drivers would receive a seven-day roadside licence suspension for their first drug- or alcohol-related occurrence, and if they do it a second time, that would result in a 14-day suspension.

In addition to these measures, the Safer Roads and Communities Act would align the look-back periods for all drug- and alcohol-related offences or occurrences. A look-back period determines the escalation of sanctions for repeat offenders. Currently, administrative monetary penalties and licence suspensions have a five-year look-back period. Ignition interlock and remedial education requirements have a 10-year look-back period. If this act passes, all look-back periods would be harmonized at 10 years. Our government has a long memory when it comes to drivers who put others at risk. We want to align all look-back periods to 10 years to take a stand against impaired driving and those who choose to do it repeatedly.

Policing is central to keeping our roads safe. Safe roads are not possible without making sure that the police have every possible tool they need to combat impaired driving, so that is exactly what we are doing. The Safer Roads and Communities Act includes several measures that will support our front-line police officers. The Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, would amend the Highway Traffic Act to clarify that police can stop drivers for sobriety testing whenever they are driving, whether that is on or off the highway. If you're driving impaired, pulling off the highway to evade the police isn't going to work. Our government is making that crystal clear: If you get behind the wheel impaired, there will be nowhere for you to hide.

In recent years, we've also seen auto theft become a growing problem across our province. Actually, calling auto theft a problem doesn't seem to convey the gravity of this situation. It's an epidemic. In Ontario, a vehicle is stolen every 14 minutes. From 2021 to 2024, auto theft increased by 72% across this province. In Toronto, auto theft increased by 81% over the same period, and violent carjackings rose by 78% from 2021 to 2022. Brazen thieves are using weapons to carjack hard-working Ontarians, compromising the safety of our communities

and roadways. Nobody should exit their car with a gun to their head, and the chilling reality is that this could happen to anybody. We've had enough.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, anyone convicted of auto theft would face a driver's licence suspension for 10 years, a 15-year suspension for their second offence, and a lifetime suspension for their third.

The fact of the matter is that motor vehicle theft has become a plague in this province. Our government is looking to step in in every possible way so that this doesn't become the standard for Ontario's future. The Solicitor General has done an exemplary job of providing our enforcement officers and partners with the tools they need to crack down on car thieves and put them behind bars where they belong.

1530

Of course, car thieves aren't the only cowardly criminals putting innocent Ontarians in danger on our roadways.

Stunt drivers are constantly putting innocent lives at risk with their blatant disregard for the safety of others on the road. Those who threaten safety have no place on our roads, and we want to make sure that they face the consequences of their reckless actions. In 2021, we passed the MOMS Act, which increased the licence suspension and vehicle impoundment periods for anyone engaging in stunt driving, street racing or aggressive driving. The Safer Roads and Communities Act is taking that a step further. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it would amend the Highway Traffic Act to ensure that anyone convicted of stunt driving faces a mandatory minimum licence suspension. Currently, courts have the discretion to suspend a driver's licence following a stunt driving conviction, which means minimum suspension lengths aren't applied in all cases. We want to change that and apply minimum licence suspensions. By willingly engaging in these dangerous driving practices, these drivers must have a minimum suspension, full stop. The proposed legislation would ensure that anyone convicted of stunt driving receives a mandatory minimum licence suspension. That means one year for a first conviction, three years for a second, and a lifetime suspension, reducible to 10 years under certain criteria, for a third. Any subsequent convictions would be met with a lifetime suspension that cannot be reduced.

Stunt driving is not a harmless act. It can lead to dangerous and even fatal consequences. Anyone who disregards the safety of others should face a stiff penalty. If you're convicted of stunt driving, you don't get the privilege of getting behind the wheel again with a light slap on the wrist. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, stunt drivers will learn that lesson the hard way. The legislation shows that we are taking concrete action to protect families and people on our roads. If you put others at risk, you will pay the price.

We also urge the federal government to toughen penalties against auto thieves. For far too long, as the province has done—we have used every tool at our disposal to ensure that car thieves are held accountable, whether it be taking away their licence or improving and increasing

funding to our law enforcement officers across this province. But it's time for the federal government to take these criminals, keep them in jail and not let them out to terrorize our streets. It is about time they step up and put these criminals behind bars.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act also includes measures to improve e-bike safety. If passed, the bill would create regulation-making authority under the Highway Traffic Act that would allow e-bikes to be categorized into distinct classes. Each class would have its own prescribed vehicle safety requirements such as speed and weight limits, as well as operator requirements such as the minimum age for drivers and passengers. This proposal is a key step toward addressing safety concerns raised by stakeholders and community members and risks associated with heavier throttle-assist e-bikes. Today these e-bikes often exceed permitted weight or power-assisted speeds.

Our government has been at the forefront of e-bike safety, continuing to embrace innovation to improve outcomes for road users. The Cargo E-Bikes Pilot Program, for example, allows municipalities to choose where and how cargo e-bikes can be used. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, we'll take another step toward improving e-bike safety.

And it doesn't end there. We're also taking bold action to strengthen MTO Transportation Enforcement Officers' ability to carry out the ministry's commercial vehicle enforcement program. We need all hands on deck to keep our roads safe. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, enforcement officers would be permitted to exceed posted speed limits for enforcement purposes; traffic would be required to move over for MTO enforcement vehicles when their lights and signals are flashing; and MTO Transportation Enforcement Officers would have the authority to seize fraudulent or suspended driver's licences.

These legislative measures would build upon our tremendous success at improving commercial vehicle enforcement. Last year, the Ministry of Transportation increased enforcement activities on our northern Ontario highways. Additionally, we mandated the use of electronic logging devices for all commercial vehicles.

Madam Speaker, the results speak for themselves: MTO officers laid more than 3,600 charges and took more than 1,200 unsafe vehicles off the road.

Last month, we opened a new vehicle inspection station in Shuniah, near Thunder Bay. This \$30-million state-of-the-art facility ensures that commercial vehicles are in good working order and takes those that aren't off the road, helping make Ontario's northern highways that much safer.

We're also making upgrades and building new rest areas across our highway network so drivers can take a break.

At the end of the day, everybody deserves to get home safely, and our government is doing everything in our power to make sure that is the reality.

By enhancing MTO's Transportation Enforcement Officers' ability to carry out commercial vehicle enforcement, our roads will be that much safer.

Despite Ontario's track record of 20-plus years as one of the safest jurisdictions in North America, we will never sideline our efforts to make our roads even safer. That is the least we can do. We owe it to the hard-working people who call this province home. Even if the previous government sat idly by when change was waiting to happen, we will pick up the pieces one by one, because that is what Ontarians deserve.

Our province proudly welcomes hundreds of thousands of newcomers each year. They come here for a better life, to contribute to our economy, and to raise families. By 2051, the greater Golden Horseshoe will have a population of almost 15 million people. As our roadways become busier and busier with the growth, we need to make sure that everyone on Ontario's roadways is protected.

By introducing the Safer Roads and Communities Act, our government is drawing a line in the sand when it comes to drivers who put other lives at risk by getting behind the wheel impaired. We're getting tough on violent criminals terrorizing our roadways to steal cars for profit. We're cracking down on stunt drivers who threaten the safety of our roadways. And we're taking bold strides to improve e-bike safety and commercial vehicle enforcement across the province.

Our government is not one to back down from a challenge, and we are not one to stop working towards even more goals. When we tabled the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act in 2021, we ushered in a new era of road safety that improved the lives of families across this province. But our work is far from over, and the Safer Roads and Communities Act shows that we are constantly looking for new ways to protect people, families and communities. The passage of this bill would have a positive impact on this province that reverberates for generations to come. Road safety is not a political issue, and as minister, I will work with all members of this House to ensure that our communities remain safe. Our government is proud to table this legislation.

With that, I want to hand it over to my colleague the Solicitor General, who has been an integral part of putting this together.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the Solicitor General to continue debate.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to follow my colleague the Minister of Transportation and speak on Bill 197.

I want to congratulate my colleague the Minister of Transportation, the Associate Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant for continuing the government's message that public safety matters. It matters to Ontarians morning, noon and night.

When the minister just spoke, he spoke of the government's commitment to extend our confidence in public safety by addressing a few issues that are very important.

1540

The minister spoke about those people who think it's okay to steal our cars; it's not. And regardless of where we sit in this chamber, we all agree that no one should confront somebody knocking down their door at 5 in the morning who demands that the keys be turned over so they can steal our cars and send them off to another place in the world. This is completely unacceptable.

And when I stood with the Minister of Transportation just a couple of weeks ago, we highlighted that for those people who steal the cars, there would be maximum sentencing of suspending licences. The minister spoke of that, and I want to thank him.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk for a minute about why stealing cars is so unacceptable and why Bill 197 makes consequences for people who think it's okay. Let me take you back to the recent auto theft summit in Ottawa.

Madame la Présidente, comme je l'ai dit récemment, lors de la conférence à Ottawa sur le vol des voitures, je prends la sécurité publique très au sérieux. Nous sommes préoccupés par l'augmentation récente des vols de voitures. Je suis préoccupé par l'augmentation de la criminalité. Mais, en même temps, notre gouvernement propose des solutions et des stratégies pour assurer la sécurité de l'Ontario.

When I went to that conference, it became obvious that we have an auto theft crisis. Bill 197 acknowledges this threat to our inherent right to live safely in our communities.

Again, I want to say, and I've said this before, we've never had a Premier, we've never had a government in my lifetime that has prioritized public safety more than our government, led by Premier Ford. And thanks to the minister and the associate minister, we have prioritized having some of the safest roads in North America.

Our new legislation would improve safety and protect families and communities by targeting road users who engage in reckless behaviour, including impaired driving and stunt driving, as well as those convicted of auto theft. And that is absolutely a preoccupation of this government—eradicating auto theft. Nobody should be confronted with having their car stolen, and this government is doing something about it.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, would also introduce measures to improve safety for e-bike users and enhance commercial vehicle enforcement.

Impairment still exists in our communities, and it's totally unacceptable. A driver's reflexes and decision-making abilities are slowed, making it difficult to react quickly to sudden changes or hazards on the road, such as pedestrians and other vehicles. This often leads to risky driving behaviour such as speeding, aggressive driving or failure to obey traffic signals.

When speaking to police services, we see that impaired drivers are more likely to be involved in high-speed or head-on collisions, which tend to result in more severe injuries or fatalities. The aftermath of such accidents involving impaired drivers has profound consequences on the families. And I have to tell you, too many of us in this

chamber have heard stories of people who have been impacted by somebody who was drunk or impaired and should not have been behind that wheel.

That's why this government is introducing legislation that, if passed, would implement the toughest sanctions in Canada for impaired driving.

We have to tackle auto theft. I'm proud to be part of a government, led by Premier Ford, that came forward with the provincial auto grant. This \$51 million—monies that are flowing across Ontario today in municipal and First Nations and OPP police services are proof of how seriously we're tackling it. The \$51-million investment over three years has started to pay dividends.

Just yesterday, Peel police service, as an example, made an announcement of a tremendous auto theft bust. I want to give a shout-out to Chief Nishan Duraiappah and everyone at Peel police service who made a difference, found our cars and are sending a message to those people who are stealing them: We're going to put you on notice, and we're putting you out of business.

Impaired driving in 2022 alone caused 110 fatalities and over 1,000 injuries.

We live in a province that everyone needs to feel safe in, especially those people who come here to discover Ontario, to see what our province is all about. We have people coming into our province as guests, as tourists, and we want to make sure they know that they can feel safe here.

It's also unfair to the front-line people who keep our communities safe every day—and I'm thinking of our police officers, our firefighters, our correctional probation and parole officers, the auxiliary and special constables, and the 911 call operators. There is a network in the Ministry of the Solicitor General that works hand in hand with the Ministry of Transportation to ensure that our roadways are kept safe by being vigilant.

As part of the bill that we're talking about today, we want to make sure that convicted drivers who operate a vehicle without regard to being impaired are aware that there will be substantial consequences. I might add that they may also be charged further under the Criminal Code of Canada or the Highway Traffic Act for improper use of a vehicle, and that's something that's important.

This legislation will also tackle stunt driving. Stunt drivers, as the Minister of Transportation said, are problematic because of their reckless behaviour—and they do so speeding; they do so weaving through traffic and performing dangerous manoeuvres. These actions not only endanger the drivers themselves, but everybody else on the road. Stunt driving contributes to anxiety and reduces road safety. Street racing also creates a public nuisance, and the minister spoke about that. It often generates excessive noise, disrupting the peaceful enjoyment in our local community.

Madam Speaker, I'll end where I started. This bill is another example of our government's commitment to public safety, our government's commitment to accept our inherent right to live safely in it, to drive on our roads safely, to ride our bikes safely, to be able to go to work

safely and to come home at the end of the day, and to shop and to play in the park and to pray, and to do so safely. Road safety is just as important. It has been a privilege to work alongside my colleagues the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation to make sure that the message across Ontario is uniform. We live in the most amazing province and jurisdiction anywhere in the world, but it should be safe for everyone.

Madam Speaker, it has been a privilege to speak on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Over to the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to my colleague and friend the Minister of Transportation and the Solicitor General for this bill and for their overview of the Safer Roads and Communities Act and its potential to revolutionize road safety in this province.

Madam Speaker, our government is proud to take a stand against criminals threatening the safety of hard-working Ontarians.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, will have some of the strongest penalties in Canada for impaired driving.

I would like to use my time today to draw attention to the serious issues of impaired driving. This is not just a lapse in judgment. Impaired driving is a choice—a terrible choice—that costs innocent lives, people's lives, and causes irreparable damage to the families impacted by these tragedies. We have all heard heartbreaking stories about impaired driving leading to catastrophic results, and many of us have seen them first-hand or have been personally impacted by these stories. Our government has a responsibility to do everything within our power to protect road users so that they can get home safely each night. We take that responsibility seriously. Impaired driving is something that we will not stand for.

1550

Between 2012 and 2022, the number of fatalities on our roadways increased by 7%. Much of this blame is given to impaired driving, a factor in one third of road fatalities in Ontario.

As my colleague the Minister of Transportation mentioned, the Ministry of Transportation conducted a roadside survey in 2022 that found one in five drivers tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both. This is simply unacceptable.

To create a safer environment for all road users, we must take bold, decisive action to deter unsafe and high-risk driving and to hold those who jeopardize the safety of others accountable.

When we introduced the Safer Roads and Communities Act, we were proud to have an endorsement from Steve Sullivan, the CEO of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada. Mr. Sullivan echoed our sentiment, that, frankly, too many people are still making the dangerous and life-threatening choice to drive impaired.

We also heard from Carolyn Swinson from MADD Toronto, whose son and father were both killed by impaired driving in separate collisions. These horrific

tragedies have had life-altering impacts on Ms. Swinson and her family, and she's not alone in this.

People who have first-hand experience with the devastating consequences of impaired driving have thrown their weight behind this bill. They have put their stories forth to underscore the importance of this legislation.

We need to ensure that sanctions for impaired driving hold drivers accountable, and we need to ensure that we come down hard on repeat offenders, plain and simple. That's the only way to send a clear message.

With this bill, Safer Roads and Communities Act, we are using every tool in our tool box to prevent fatalities and other tragic outcomes on this province's roadways. That's why we are toughening sanctions for impaired driving across the board. If you kill someone while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you will face consequences.

These criminals do not just magically understand the weight of their actions; we need to be tough on these individuals who choose to drive impaired and put lives at risk. We need to send a strong and clear message.

That's why the Safer Roads and Communities Act would introduce a lifetime driving suspension for anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death under the Criminal Code. That is the harshest penalty at the Ministry of Transportation's disposal, and it is what we need to do to deter impaired driving. Going to prison is not enough.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act—if this bill passes, you will forfeit your privilege to drive if you're convicted of killing someone while you are impaired behind the wheel. If that sounds like we are being tough on crime, it's because we are. It is only fair. Our government has no sympathy towards these criminals who choose to open their car doors, sit in the driver's seat and put their foot on the gas. It is a choice, and that choice must have lasting consequences. That is especially true when they take the life of an innocent individual. In fact, every day, I think of the innocent Ontarians whose lives have been destroyed by impaired drivers. These tragedies are already unimaginable for most people, and we need to do everything we can so no one else has to experience them.

If you kill someone while you're driving impaired, the criminal court will deal with you, but the Ministry of Transportation will also apply severe consequences to your driver's licence. We're going to use every option available to come down as hard as possible on individuals who selfishly make the choice to drive while impaired. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, that's exactly what we'll be able to do.

Anyone who makes the terrible decision to drive impaired and doesn't end up killing someone should count themselves lucky. They could have destroyed the hopes and dreams of an entire family, but they didn't, and we're going to make sure that they think twice before they ever take that risk again. They will not just get off scot-free and think, "That was a close call." We are keeping our eyes open, ensuring convicted drivers install an ignition interlock device.

Currently, drivers convicted of impaired driving can bypass the ignition interlock requirement by choosing to sit it out and not drive during their ignition interlock term. But why should we give them that option when they could have killed someone with their recklessness? What kind of message does that send if we're trying to deter people from driving impaired? What message does that send to families whose lives have been upended by impaired drivers?

We are sending a clear message by requiring anyone convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock device for a prescribed period of time, varying based on occurrence. If you want to drive again, you will have to work hard at it. You will have to pay to install an ignition interlock device, and your car will not start if you're about to make the same poor decisions again.

We don't want anyone convicted of impaired driving to complete their ignition interlock requirement and then go back to their old ways. That's why we're also going to subject people convicted of impaired driving to a time-limited zero-tolerance condition once they've completed their ignition interlock period. The zero-tolerance condition would apply to the presence of both alcohol and drugs.

Our government is not going to let impaired drivers off the hook with a slap on the wrist. The people and families across Ontario deserve our best foot forward, so that is what we are doing. We're coming down hard with these proposed measures in this bill. The longer suspensions for drug- and alcohol-related occurrences are another tool that we can use to keep roads among the safest in North America.

Currently, drivers receive an immediate three-day roadside licence suspension for the first drug- or alcohol-related occurrence. For the second occurrence, they receive a seven-day roadside licence suspension.

Those suspension lengths are simply inadequate if we want to take a tough stance against impaired driving in this province. That's why, if this bill passes, first-time drug- and alcohol-related occurrences will get you a seven-day roadside licence suspension. Make the same choice a second time—you will face a 14-day roadside suspension. These suspensions are all in addition to monetary penalties, reinstatement fees, remedial education and treatment requirements, which escalate for every occurrence.

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Make no mistake; if this bill, the Safer Roads and Communities Act, passes, there will be absolutely nowhere for impaired drivers to hide from the police. Some drivers may think they can pull off a highway onto a private property to avoid a Breathalyzer test when they are being followed by a police officer, Madam Speaker. However, I will say now and time again that this is simply untrue. If this bill passes, we are going to make it eminently clear and by enshrining it in law. The bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act to clarify that police do have the authority to stop a vehicle that pulls off a highway for the testing. So you may try to run, but, for sure, you cannot hide. If you have got drugs or alcohol in your system and you're hoping to evade the police, if this bill passes, that is not happening anymore in this province. As my friend

and colleague the Solicitor General stated, our government is proud to give the police the tools they need to be tough on crime, and that's what the Safer Roads and Communities Act would do.

In addition to cracking down on impaired driving, the bill will ensure harsh penalties for stunt driving. In 2021, our government passed the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, also known as the MOMS Act. The MOMS Act introduced one-year licence suspensions for those convicted of stunt driving. Two-time offenders are subject to a minimum three-year suspension, and subsequent offences are subject to a lifetime driving suspension. But these suspensions require a court order, which means drivers convicted of this serious crime that put lives at risk don't always face a licence suspension. But this bill, this Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, would amend the Highway Traffic Act to ensure anyone convicted of stunt driving would face a minimum mandatory licence suspension. That's one year for the first conviction, three years for the second and a lifetime suspension for the third conviction.

Stunt driving has the same potential to destroy families' lives, as I mentioned impaired driving does, and these are serious crimes. Ensuring licence suspensions for anyone convicted of the crime will help make our roads safer.

Every action our government takes, whether it's building new highways or building subways or improving access to transportation in the north or enhancing road safety, is done with one goal in mind: We want to make sure Ontario remains the best place to live, work and raise a family. That means rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty to build the transportation infrastructure we need to support our rapidly growing population here in Ontario. It means jumping into action when we see any barriers to making Ontario the best it can be. And it means taking bold steps, decisive action to keep roads safe so Ontarians can get home to their families each and every day.

No one should have to live in fear when they get behind the wheel or take their family on a road trip, and no driver who knowingly puts the safety of others at risk should get away with slap on the wrist. That's why this bill, the Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, would forge a path towards a safer and more prosperous Ontario.

We take our responsibility to protect road users with the utmost seriousness. By getting tough on impaired driving, we'll send a clear message to anyone who even thinks about getting behind the wheel with alcohol or drugs in their system. By cracking down on stunt driving, we'll protect people across the entire province.

This bill also includes measures to combat auto theft and bolster commercial vehicle enforcement, which my colleague and friend the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation will discuss now, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Ric Bresee: It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the people of Hastings-Lennox and Addington and to

join the excellent Minister of Transportation and Associate Minister of Transportation as well as the Solicitor General and add to their words on the Safer Roads and Communities Act.

Speaker, this legislation has the power to transform road safety by taking criminals off our roadways. This bill, if passed, would not only help to maintain Ontario's position, already amongst the safest jurisdictions in North America, but it could also raise Ontario's position—and it demonstrates how our government is working every day to protect the hard-working people across Ontario.

Motor vehicle theft has become an epidemic in Ontario. This isn't just about cars being stolen from driveways; it's about violent criminals that are terrorizing our roadways, making everyone feel less safe behind the wheel.

Since 2021, Toronto has experienced a 78% increase in violent carjackings. Can you imagine arriving at home from work only to have a gun pointed at your head to give up your keys? No one deserves a traumatic experience like that.

In Ontario right now, a car is stolen every 14 minutes. This hits home in the big cities and the smaller communities. Just next door to my riding, according to the city of Kingston police's 2022 annual report, there were 178 incidents of auto theft in 2021 and 284 in 2022, more than a 60% increase. Earlier this month, over \$3 million worth of stolen vehicles were found in the small town of Stirling, right in my own riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

These numbers are simply unacceptable—and our government will not just sit by while car thieves run wild in our province. We're focused on finding innovative ways of deterring automotive theft and using every tool that we can get our hands on to get thieves off of our roads.

If passed, the Safer Roads and Communities Act would do just that by introducing licence suspensions for those convicted of motor vehicle theft under the Criminal Code. If the court finds that there's an aggravating factor—such as violence, use of a weapon, threat or pursuit for financial gain—that was involved in committing the offence, then we don't think car thieves should be allowed to drive. My friends and my neighbours deserve better than that. Your communities deserve better than that. Families across all of Ontario deserve better than that. We will not let convicted car thieves continue to terrorize our roadways.

To deter potential car thieves, we need to come down hard on people convicted of these cowardly crimes in order to keep our roads safe. Escalating licence suspensions will serve as a strong deterrent. A 10-year suspension for the first offence, a 15-year suspension for the second offence and a lifetime suspension for subsequent convictions show that we mean business. This is exactly the type of innovative policy we need to address this crisis of auto theft here in Ontario.

That's why the Safer Roads and Communities Act has such widespread support from so many stakeholders across the province, and I do hope the members opposite will join us in that support. The Insurance Bureau of Canada, auto retailers, vehicle manufacturers and big city

mayors have all voiced their support for this bill. Just like myself, the minister and the associate minister, they see this bill's potential to make Ontario that much safer—and they appreciate what our government is doing to protect families across this province.

No one in the province deserves to live in fear. That's why we're putting our foot down to say enough is enough. We're showing the people of this great province that its government has your back and will continue to have your back.

1610

Auto theft is a crime we've all had enough of, so we're taking swift and decisive action to keep dangerous car thieves off our roads. But, Speaker, there's actually more. The Safer Roads and Communities Act aims to improve commercial vehicle safety and enforcement, as well. One of the best ways we can do that is by enhancing MTO enforcement officers' ability to carry out the commercial vehicle and enforcement program.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it will amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow MTO officers to exceed posted speed limits for the purposes of enforcement. Drivers would be required to pull over to the side of the road when MTO enforcement vehicles have their lights and signals flashing, like other emergency vehicles. These measures would build on the progress we've made at improving commercial vehicle safety, particularly in northern Ontario, Speaker.

As the Minister of Transportation mentioned earlier, our increased enforcement presence on northern Ontario highways last year was met with great results. Our new commercial vehicle inspection station at Shuniah marks another milestone in our ongoing mission to make our roads as safe as possible. Every time we take an unsafe commercial vehicle off the road, we're preventing a potential tragedy. We're preventing lives being changed forever, lives ended too early.

Our government will continue to do everything within our power to keep our roads and highways safe. That means giving enforcement officers the authority they need to carry out their duties effectively.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act would, if passed, take an important step towards improving e-bike safety, as well. The bill would create the regulation-making authority in the Highway Traffic Act to categorize e-bikes into distinct classes with their own operator and vehicle safety requirements such as speed and weight.

Ontario has long been at the forefront of e-bike innovation, with our cargo e-bike program demonstrating our willingness to embrace these new ideas and this modern technology. The Safer Roads and Communities Act represents the next step in that journey, a journey to improve safety for those who ride e-bikes and the other road users around the province.

Speaker, I'd like to emphasize the tremendous potential this bill has to make our roads safer than ever before. The bill shows the people of Ontario that our government is not just talking about coming down hard on impaired driving; we are serious about it. We're here to make this happen.

There's absolutely no excuse for getting behind the wheel when you're under the influence of drugs or alcohol. And if you make that terrible decision, you will pay a steep price—a price you deserve to pay. From longer roadside licence suspensions to mandatory ignition interlock requirements and a lifetime suspension for impaired driving causing death, our message is loud and clear: If you are convicted of impaired driving, there will be real and severe consequences for your actions.

We're also coming down hard on stunt drivers. Stunt driving has the same potential to kill innocent law-abiding Ontarians as does impaired driving. Speaker, it is not a victimless crime. It's putting the lives of Ontarians at risk. It's why we're taking action to ensure that stunt drivers face mandatory drivers licence suspensions following a conviction.

It's truly difficult to think of a more selfish act than stunt driving. I personally can't fathom the mindset of someone who has absolutely no regard for the safety of others. My father always taught me that driving is a privilege, not a right. So the people practising stunt-driving—if you don't mind the pun, it really grinds my gears. And I would like to reiterate that with this bill we are steering in the right direction. If stunt drivers don't realize just how dangerous their actions are, we are going to make them realize it. Mandatory minimum licence suspensions will make everyone think twice before putting innocent lives at risk.

Speaker, we are very proud of our road safety track record, but it doesn't get there from just sitting by and watching it happen. Top road safety comes from concrete action and determination. That is exactly what our government is doing. Consistently ranking amongst the safest jurisdictions in North America, it is a testament to the policies and programs that we have in place to protect Ontarians.

But even one fatality, one injury, is too many. We need to use every tool in our tool box to continue to make our roads safer, and the Safer Roads and Communities Act will allow us to do just that.

To the members: We have an incredible opportunity here to protect Ontarians across this province, to improve safety outcomes for all road users. Speaker, I reiterate, driving is a privilege, and it comes with a great responsibility. It is not a right. Those who disrespect the rules of the road, if this bill is passed, will simply lose the privilege of driving. I hope this House takes that step.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll now move to questions for the members.

Miss Monique Taylor: Our person who was going to do the question had to step out, so she left me, just in case—it talks about how Bill 197 proposes to get tough on car thieves by threatening them with longer suspensions if convicted. But would it not be more effective to identify vehicle identification numbers to prevent stolen cars from being registered with fake VINs? We've heard from the member from Oshawa several times on this, so it's not a new question to you. We know that transferring VIN numbers, erasing VIN numbers, creating new VIN

numbers has become a new way that is quite easily done. Would it not be easier to take care of these VIN numbers in the registration instead of this legislation today?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): To respond, the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member opposite for the question. I do recognize that the VIN number challenge is out there. But we need to understand that 80% of the vehicles that are stolen in this province are shipped overseas. We continue to fund our police. We've added more funding. I believe it's \$18 million—I don't have the note in front of me—added to our police services to ensure that our police have the tools to track, find and prevent car theft in this province. We must do our part as well.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good afternoon. Thanks to my colleague for a great presentation. Part of this legislation includes trucking—the trucking industry. We understand on this side of the House how critical commercial vehicles and large trucks are in keeping our economy moving and keeping them safe as well. Can the member explain how this proposed legislation improves commercial vehicle safety?

Mr. Ric Bresee: The ministry has identified three authorities that will require inclusion in the Highway Traffic Act to enable MTO transportation enforcement officers to effectively deliver the commercial vehicle enforcement program. They need to be able to exceed posted speed limits when they're needed for enforcement, just like other police officers have. They require that traffic, the general public, pull over and allow the vehicle to continue moving forward for their safety and for everyone's safety, just like every other emergency vehicle. And they need to be able to seize fraudulent licensing and paperwork involved with the drivers. With those three authorities included in this bill, we are improving the commercial vehicle safety.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'd love to address my question to the Minister of Transportation.

This is a penalty-heavy piece of legislation that the government has brought in. But most motorists who kill or seriously injure someone are not necessarily impaired. They may not face criminal charges and usually can plea down to lesser charges carrying little more than a fine of a few hundred dollars.

I have a bill that is stuck in committee, Bill 15. We've also proposed Bill 40.

I'd like to know what this government, focused on the penalty side—shouldn't drivers also face increased consequences, as the NDP has proposed with Bill 15 and Bill 40?

1620

Mr. Ric Bresee: The opening part of the member's question referenced that not everyone who dies on our roads dies because of impaired driving. But over a third of all fatalities on our roads are the result of impaired driving

due to alcohol or due to drugs. That is a decision being made by some drivers in this province that needs to be addressed. This legislation will continue to address that and make more severe penalties for people who make the wrong decision. I'm always reminded of the statement that driving is a privilege. And if you blow it, you lose that privilege.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleague for his comments this morning—along with the minister, the associate minister, and the Solicitor General.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of attending the automotive theft summit in Ottawa, and we learned a great deal. What we learned is that of the 80% of the stolen cars that are going overseas, that's through organized crime; and that the money and the returns on that are fuelling other aspects of organized crime in our communities; and that it is also siloed in terms of a chain right from the theft of the automotive to getting it down to the port in Montreal and shipped out of there.

So my question to the member is about how these increased penalties are going to help to stop that food chain. We're seeing not only vehicles being driven to Montreal, but if they are getting pursued, they go over 160 kilometres an hour. The police stop the pursuit. So there's stunt driving involved, but there are also accidents with fatalities involved. How is this going to increase the safety of Ontarians?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member for his question.

This bill is about the safety of individuals who are making the good choices, but it's even about the individuals who are making the bad choices. People who have made bad choices will lose the privilege of driving in this province for extended periods. If they continue to act in this way, they will lose that privilege for a lifetime. Keeping those people off the roads will not only keep the other drivers and the other road users safer, but it will actually, in many cases, save their own lives. It is sometimes the criminals themselves who face the stiffest penalty of their own stupidity, that being the injury or death in that accident. So we want to ensure that everyone is safe by making sure that, as much as possible, these criminals are off the road.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As the critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways, it was my privilege, not quite a joy, to sit at committee for Bill 282, the MOMS Act. We sat through clause-by-clause—which I'll share in my speech—dealing with e-bike regulations. The government got it wrong, now is repealing those, and now is back in consultation. I have questions, because the definition of “power-assisted bicycle” has been removed now from the HTA with this bill. It will mean e-bikes will now fall under the definition of “motor-assisted bicycle,” with vehicles like mopeds that require class M licences, plates and insurance.

I guess my question, because it has been such a mess for so long—can the government provide more details about its plans for new e-bike regulations? Do you agree that e-bikes provide a safe, non-emitting alternative to gas-powered cars; that their use should be encouraged, without imposing needless red tape? Tell us more about these regulations, please.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, I thank the member for highlighting the fact that we don't want too much red tape, certainly. That would be a hallmark of this side of the House.

More specifically, on e-bikes, we know that this is an industry, this is a transportation tool that is growing in use and continues to evolve. It has evolved very quickly over the last little while, which is why it is most appropriate that the minister work with his people, work with his staff, work with all of the stakeholders to take the time and get the regulations right so that we have the categories of the various bikes and ensure that we then apply the appropriate safety measures both to the vehicle and to the drivers. I'm sure that the minister will take that task very, very seriously.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): One last quick question.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member: It has been very interesting to listen to you and our colleagues who were speaking to this bill this afternoon.

We know that almost a third of the fatal accidents that we see on Ontario roads involve a driver impaired with alcohol or substance abuse. In light of the fact that we have now legalized cannabis, I think a lot of young people, or people of all ages, are not necessarily acknowledging the fact that they can drive impaired if they are using cannabis.

Can you speak to the importance of this bill in tackling impaired driving—alcohol-related and drug-related—on our highways?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

One of the benchmarks, one of the milestones in most people's lives is the moment when they get their driver's licence. It is something to seek to achieve in most teen lives. Unfortunately, when people are teenagers they don't always make great decisions.

With this legislation in place, we will be making a very, very clear statement to those teens, to those young people who are relatively new drivers, that they cannot—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We're out of time.

We're going to continue to further debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to be able to rise in this fine Legislature and add my voice as the critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways and, of course, as the representative of Oshawa—and I'm going to blend those two things in this speech.

I'm glad to be able to speak about Bill 197, which is the Safer Roads and Communities Act, 2024. This bill makes various amendments to the Highway Traffic Act relating to impaired driving, high-risk driving behaviours, car theft and a few other important areas.

There has been much talk about this bill because there have been a lot of announcements, and the government certainly has done a few press conferences to get people interested in the topic of car theft and impaired driving and stiffer penalties. All of that is important, but there are a few other things that we want to raise today in this House about ways to go that extra mile—pun intended—with the roads, but also to listen to the folks who have been weighing in on these issues when it comes to road safety for a very long time.

The rise in auto thefts has been a nightmare for communities across the province, especially in the GTA. We need to see real solutions to prevent auto theft, like cracking down on re-VINing stolen cars, and working with manufacturers on tracking technology and various other options.

Policies like this put in front of us are important, but will they deter car thefts? I guess it remains to be seen, and we'll talk more about that.

This government is, on the one hand, claiming to be very tough on crime, with the toughest penalties against impaired driving, and yet we're downgrading driving-while-impaired charges in court.

Ontarians need a government that can deliver the promises they make—not just providing lip service.

I will say, as someone who went through this process with a very similar bill—it feels a lot familiar, actually. It's reminiscent of Bill 282, the MOMS Act, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act. We spent a lot of our time talking about stunt driving, we spent a lot of our time talking about dangerous driving behaviours and the need to crack down on that, and we talked a lot about e-bikes. We're having the same conversation that we had before, with a few more pieces thrown in. The problem, as someone who still remembers the MOMS Act and recognizes that, at committee, there were a number of thoughtful amendments to fix the problems that the government had put into that legislation—and the government at the time basically told us we were wrong. However, those changes to the e-bike classification stuff and all of that never got proclaimed. There was another consultation launched at the same time as committee, and now that whole section is being repealed in this act. So we're starting the same chapter again, but with a new consultation. It turns out there were problems back then. But don't worry; I have an hour, and I'm going to lay them out for you.

1630

What I will say is that this government speeds through the process and creates awkward legislation, which is what we saw with Bill 282 and the e-bike section of the MOMS Act.

Here we have another bill where they are trying to figure out how to write effective government legislation, and I'll talk more about that, because the process on the e-bike consultation or how we're going to classify them is yet to be determined. Again, we're here with statute, but we'll figure that part out later.

Much of this bill deals with penalty and punishment after a crime, which is very on-brand for the Conservatives—that they're going to rain down when someone makes a bad choice or when someone breaks the law. Fine. But nowhere in this bill is there anything preventive to keep road users and drivers safe, like the NDP has put forward with Bill 15 and Bill 40. The threat of losing a licence may or may not deter car thieves. I'm going to hope that I'm wrong when I say that I don't know that it's going to be an effective deterrent.

I think, though, that frustrating organized crime by protecting the VIN registry might be a practical solution to implement. As the minister said, it is not okay to steal cars, but I will say that in the province of Ontario it is easy, and that's a problem.

At the front end of this, we should be looking at preventive solutions, not only the flashy, stomp-and-declare-after-the-fact, crime-and-punishment piece.

Speaker, I've got lots of thoughts. I'm going to come back to the bill specifically and break it down.

Section 1 of the explanatory note in the bill says, "A new section provides for the indefinite suspension of a person's driver's licence if the person is convicted under the Criminal Code ... of operating a vehicle while impaired and causing the death of another person."

Steve Sullivan, the CEO of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada, said in the release that he is pleased by the proposed new measures. He said, "Despite progress, too many people are still making the choice to drive impaired, and we need to ensure sanctions hold drivers accountable while focusing on reducing recidivism."

Let's talk about ways to reduce recidivism, which is what Mr. Sullivan said is needed when we're fighting the fight against impaired driving.

I would say what would support recidivism, not reduce it, would be to make alcohol far more accessible. I don't think it's going to make recidivism—people aren't going to find it easier to stay away from alcohol when it's in 8,500 convenience stores or whatever the number is, everywhere. These convenience store booze nooks are going to be in front of drivers all the time.

On the one hand, the government says, "Nobody should ever drive impaired." They have said that the opposition has chosen to stay silent. That is malarkey—and I can withdraw it if I need to, but that is malarkey. The opposition has never stayed silent on anything—especially me. We are going to say that we're adding a challenge to those individuals who are trying to make good choices, by putting beer and booze in front of them at every turn.

"Beer, beer, beer, beer, beer, beer, beer" needs to be the bumper sticker for this Premier, because the beer Premier, his plan—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Wow. You said "beer" 12 times in your speech.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The beer Premier.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Stop, all of you. It's my turn. The Premier is spending a lot of money—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, help me out here.

This Premier is spending a lot of money and prioritizing spending a lot of money, whether it's \$225 million, whether it's half a billion, whether it's a billion—there are lots of numbers out there—to break a contract to get beer and booze in the convenience stores faster so that people can grab a roadie, which is the Premier's plan, I guess, for re-election. I don't know. That's not something I would vote for, however.

We're supposed to believe that impaired driving is a concern for the beer Premier. His priority is selling—what do kids call them these days? Is it a “traveller,” a “roadie,” “one for the road”—at the convenience store in cute packaging. But this government is going to rain down if you get caught.

Speaker, another part under this act—currently, under the act, a driver's licence may be administratively suspended for increasing periods of time if the driver is found to be driving while having a specified level of alcohol or drugs in their body. The bill increases the periods of time from three days to seven days for a first suspension, and from seven days to 14 for a second suspension. So stronger, stiffer penalties—there's no argument here.

But in the MOMS Act, didn't we try to deter criminals with penalties? I don't know if it has been successful. We were talking a lot in this House about stunt driving and how stiff the penalties were going to be if they got caught. So my question is, what has that looked like? I don't know the answer, which is why I'm asking. Has that been a roaring success? Did you catch them all? Have they all stopped? Why are we here talking about stunt driving again if it was effective? Let's do this, but what else could we be doing?

I will say, though, that it's one thing to say we're going to crack down, but during COVID, the government lowered the charges for impaired to help with the backlog—we're still seeing lesser penalties for impaired. So what is the message here?

The police chiefs in discussion with the government over impaired driving downgrades—this bill proposes to get tough on impaired drivers, but when the government has a policy allowing impaired drivers to plead down to non-criminal offences under the Highway Traffic Act, avoiding criminal convictions, what message is that sending?

While the bill proposes to get tough on impaired drivers, many impaired drivers can avoid those criminal convictions thanks to this government's policy that allows drivers to plead guilty to lesser, non-criminal charges. This policy was put in place during COVID, during a pandemic, in an effort to relieve court backlogs. The policy remains in place, as does the court backlog, resulting in even more serious criminal cases being tossed out due to unconstitutional delays, including sexual assault cases, which we have been talking a lot about in this House—not enough, but some.

The bill hopes to deter car thieves by threatening longer licence suspensions but does not address the Ford government's failure to verify VIN identification numbers—I'll come back to that—and it is unclear that the risk of a suspended driver's licence would be much more of a

deterrent for a prospective car thief as compared to the existing penalties under the Criminal Code. If a car thief is not deterred by the prospect of spending 10 years in prison, are they going to be deterred by the prospect of spending 10 years taking the bus? I don't know.

There are new sections in this bill that provide for the suspension of a person's driver's licence if the person is convicted of motor vehicle theft under the Criminal Code and the circumstances of the theft include certain factors such as violence, weapons or the pursuit of financial or material gain. The suspension is for 10 years upon a first conviction, 15 years upon a second conviction, and there is an indefinite suspension for a third subsequent conviction.

Okay. Again, and it's sort of the obvious question, if people aren't deterred by a 10-year prison sentence or jail sentence, are they going to be deterred by the prospect of 10 years of public transportation, or having somebody drive them and dropping them off at the car theft location?

I have to be careful because I don't want to mock this because I do want people to get in trouble for doing terrible things. People are living in fear of having their cars stolen. As the government has talked about—is it every 14 minutes that someone in Ontario is having their car stolen? That's the number I'm repeating, I think, from the minister. That is not okay, but we do have to be creative in approaching this, in solving it. Because, after the fact, once you've had your car stolen, are there other things we could do to deter it so that you don't get your car stolen?

1640

The penalty is important. Again, the prevention also needs to be important, and we don't see that. Car theft is huge. It's also driving up insurance rates, so there's the fear—no one needs the fear. I mean, be fearful if we're at risk. But we're also having people not be able to be insured when they accidentally buy a stolen vehicle because it's been re-VINned. There are all sorts of things going on. We're creating market conditions here in the province—or we're allowing a very lucrative scenario for would-be car thieves to become car thieves.

Telling them that if they get caught, they're going to lose their driver's licence for 10 years, maybe somebody who's a rookie—look, I don't know anything about organized crime, but I imagine that a low-level person who wants to make a name for themselves, if they lose their licence, they're going to get a driver, aren't they? So if you lose your licence, someone is just going to drop you off. Then, you don't have an extra car to deal with? I don't know. So the logistics beg a few questions.

Interjection: Use an e-bike.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm not convinced that they could use an e-bike because after the last—so I'm being heckled by my own about e-bikes.

I will say, though, that if the folks lose their drivers' licences and have to turn to e-bikes, I'm telling you right now that the MOMS Act made basically all popular e-bike models illegal. So that's maybe not any better.

Speaker, I'd like to share from this opinion piece in TVO: “Auto Theft Is a Serious Problem. But”—I'm not

supposed to say people's names—the Premier's "Approach Won't Solve It."

"The Ontario government is proposing to suspend the drivers' licences of convicted auto thieves in a bid to look like it's taking crime seriously.... A first offence will earn offenders a 10-year licence suspension. A second offence escalates to 15 years. A third offence will result in a lifetime driving ban. The suspensions will apply when the thefts are accompanied by aggravating factors such as violence or stealing for organized crime.

"Politicians love to get 'tough on crime.' It's cheap and easy policy. Never mind that it rarely works and, indeed, often makes things worse ... it's very much in keeping with" the Premier's "approach to governance—lots of showmanship, lots of faux-populism and few results."

He goes on to say, "Ontario is also planning to suspend the licences of stunt drivers ... Stephen Hebscher, a lawyer with the Criminal Law Team in North York, suggested the penalties may violate the constitution by creeping into criminal-law territory.... Hebscher, like many others, also notes that the penalties may not work—that is, they won't reduce thefts...."

"The government would like to remind us of that as it repeats the line that a vehicle is stolen every 14 minutes or so in Ontario. That is a problem, as are the violence and organized crime inextricably linked to growing theft...."

"As we often see with" this "government, it's not quite clear what its plan is here beyond trying to look like it's tough on crime and treading on federal territory to do so."

It goes on; it's the same thing: "Governments ... ought to be more concerned with results than adopting show policies that won't do anybody any good."

For the folks at home who want to read that one, it's: "Auto Theft Is a Serious Problem. But Doug Ford's Approach Won't Solve It." That's David Moscrop in TVO.

Speaker, another one, Toronto Star: "Car Thieves Could Lose Driver's Licence for Life ... Government Says."

"Adam Weisberg, managing partner at Weisberg Law Criminal Lawyers LLP, called the proposed law 'misguided' and 'completely ineffective.'

"The perpetrators of these crimes are already not deterred by the prison sentences they face.... There is little that the provincial government can do to combat auto theft, other than direct police resources at investigations into these auto-theft rings," he said, adding, "It's just a frustrated attempt from our province to signal that frustration to the public."

Not flattering stuff, but the government can't be surprised to hear it. People are desperate to have this be effective, to have legislation be effective, to be able to sleep at night knowing that they are protected.

Here's a piece, "'Slap on the Wrist': Critics Call on ... Government to Scrap Impaired Driving Rule." This one is interesting, though. This moves into—actually, hold on. I've got way too many different pieces here, and I don't want to lose any. I'm going to hold on to that one. Can you give that back when I need it?

MPP Jamie West: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thanks.

One of the things I'd like to talk about, as I have said, there's a need for preventative measures, right? An ounce of prevention is worth getting to keep your car, to coin a phrase. This is not the only solution, but it is one that I tripped over and I want to give voice to this issue again here today: Having a VIN solution would help.

The government doesn't have any solution suggestions in this piece of legislation. I'm going to assume for a moment that the various ministries involved in ServiceOntario counters and VIN registry—I'm hoping that they're talking because when I have asked questions in this Legislature about protecting the VIN registry, it has been answered by just about every minister over there. I actually had the minister responsible for ServiceOntario, so the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, who wasn't allowed to comment, didn't answer either of those questions. I saw him at a community event and he said, "Oh, I want to talk to you about that. I know the answer to that one." I was like, "Cool," but we didn't have time to talk. So I am willing to concede that the government knows this issue and hopefully is talking about it, and I really hope they're going to do something about it—again, a missed opportunity in this piece of legislation.

But my question has been, in recognition that car thefts are on the rise, why aren't we doing everything we can to prevent theft? OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique told a House of Commons committee that inspections of vehicles with problematic VINs should be mandatory, but Ontario doesn't do it. In Ontario, someone can steal a car, register it and no one checks. That's not just a loophole; that is a drive-through lane for car thieves, and people are understandably worried about having their vehicles stolen. It is so common, Speaker. For those Jeopardy fans out there, we didn't feel very good as a province when we were a punchline on Jeopardy about, like, how prevalent car theft is.

The stolen vehicles in shipping containers—we see that on the news, right? There's the federal component that has to happen. I get it. But 10% of stolen vehicles are staying right here in Ontario. They're being re-VINned, being resold and re-registered at ServiceOntario like any other vehicle. It's been reported that there is no VIN verification in Ontario. There's no system for flagging suspicious registrations for inspection, and the integrity of the VIN database is not being protected. It's currently being flooded with false records and stolen vehicles.

I asked those questions of the government and I got all sorts of nonsense back, but I hope that that was just kind of show and not a lack of understanding, because this is an easy—I won't say it's an easy fix, but it is a fix. It is a piece that needs to be tackled.

I asked again about protecting the VIN registry, and this time the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery—I asked that ministry. Car thieves are actually gaming the system. They're able to get new VINs for stolen vehicles at our ServiceOntario counters. This government has reportedly been getting advice from current and former law enforcement and insurance experts

about how to prevent re-VINning. As I said, it's more than a loophole; this is a highly lucrative scam that this government knows about, but isn't fixing.

Speaker, I want to say, though, that three years ago, in June, the government posted a summary of proposals seeking feedback on how to improve the assigned VIN program. The stated objective was "to reduce fraud and help recover stolen vehicles by preventing bad actors from fraudulently applying for an assigned VIN."

1650

I asked this government then and I'll ask them again: What did you learn and what are you doing with it? Why aren't you protecting the VIN registry and its integrity? Because, again—so I've never been in organized crime and I've never stolen a car; I've never even wanted to steal a car. But if I wanted to, I'd move to Ontario, where we don't look after our VIN database. Come on.

This government, for at least four years, according to reports, has been hearing from former and current law enforcement and insurance folks.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You mean the people they're supposed to listen to the most?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The people that they're supposed to listen to the most, and the people who know what's going on and are measuring it and are tracking it. So, work with them, please.

Even in your own summary proposal—and this is from Ontario's Regulatory Registry 21-MTO039. The posting was dated June 24, 2021. Comments were due August 8, 2021. I guess I have questions after reading the summary proposal, because this was based on the meetings that the previous Minister of Transportation—meetings that she was having with the former law enforcement folks who know what they're talking about.

So, the ministry at that time, that version of the ministry, with those folks, were curious and wanted information—not this current ministry; not this version of it; a totally different group, by the way. I'll get to that later.

If the government members are thinking, "Is what she's talking about real? Do we actually have a problem with our VIN registry? Hmm, I wonder where she heard that," let me tell you. Here's an article that folks can follow along with—CBC. It was posted April 24 of this year—called "Just Bought a Used Car? There's a Chance It's Stolen, as Thieves Exploit Weakness in Vehicle Registrations." Derek Crocker is the focus of this article, who bought a truck.

I'll pull some pieces from this story. It's an interesting one. "Derek Crocker bought a used Ford F-150 pickup truck from a dealership in Toronto in 2022." Then he went on the app. He tried to enter "what should have been the truck's unique VIN in Ford's app," which would remotely start the vehicle. It "never worked" and, in fact, that app told him that his truck was "located in the United States and indicated a different amount of fuel than his own vehicle tank was holding." Curious. Curiouser and curiouser, Speaker.

"But it wasn't until his F-150 was in an accident and required body work that the problem with the VIN was

revealed. The repair shop ordered parts based on the VIN it saw on the dash. But the parts did not match.

"So I Googled the VIN number that was on my truck, and I found a truck for sale in Utah," said Crocker.

"It turns out that was the true VIN, which thieves had cloned, placing fake VIN stickers with the Utah truck's VIN on top of the true number for the truck Crocker bought."

Crocker bought a new-to-him truck from a dealership in Toronto. He bought a stolen vehicle with what looked like a good VIN on a truck at a dealership.

"Crocker's own insurance would not cover his loss because he'd—albeit unknowingly—purchased a stolen vehicle. After a long discussion with the dealership that sold him the stolen truck, his money was returned."

So, Speaker, how could two cars with the same VIN be registered? "Provincial centres that administer vehicle registration, such as ServiceOntario, do not have a system that checks if VINs already exist in other jurisdictions." Basically, it's that simple. We don't check.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. To the gentlemen to my left, I—sorry. I'm easily distracted. Please also don't start chewing gum, because that would drive me nuts too.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We're listening.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Graham, go sit down. Oh my God, you're killing me.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I'll ask the members to please respect the member.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: His talking is right in my teacher ear. Okay.

MPP Jamie West: The member's riding.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, right. I'm not supposed to say his name. How do I not remember? Oh, yes, Brampton North.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I will thank the members for respecting the member's time to speak. You can ask questions when there is time for that. Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. Sometimes I tap into my grade 7/8 teacher version of myself, and the member from Brampton North brings it out more often than most.

Okay, Speaker, I will continue. This is the crux of what I'm talking about. This article was the first one by CBC. Andrew Lupton wrote this piece. He had reached out for comment from the official opposition, from me, and it just started this unpack of quite a story. It's called, "Other Provinces Inspect Vehicles with Problematic VINs, Why Not Ontario?"

"Former OPP officer says lack of inspections makes it easy to sell stolen vehicles in Ontario.

"After a 32-year career as a theft investigator with the Ontario Provincial Police, John Tod started working for a business that helps provincial governments sniff out phony vehicle registrations as a way to curb vehicle theft....

"The 17-digit VIN is a vehicle serial number, intended to help governments, police and insurers link a vehicle to its owner to prevent all manner of auto theft and fraud.

“In Alberta and Saskatchewan, in cases where a clerk in the vehicle registration office or insurance company finds an issue with the VIN of a vehicle being registered, the vehicle is flagged for inspection....

“However, those inspections do not happen in Ontario, which makes it easy for thieves to sell stolen vehicles in Canada’s largest province with little fear someone will ever check on the vehicle’s history, Tod said ... he said the lack of an inspection program in Ontario is actually making the province a destination for thieves to register vehicles stolen in other jurisdictions.

“I’ve been warning the Ontario government about this for four years,” he said.”

This is a former OPP officer. You guys have one of those. He and I have talked in the halls. I wish more of you would really focus on this, because this is a fix that the ministry could put into legislation.

By the way, the former minister—and I’m going to say this once: I had many times called for the resignation of the former Minister of Transportation, and I meant it when I did it. But I kind of miss her, because she would answer emails.

Also, this individual, this former officer, Tod, had the government’s ear at the time, the ministry, and that’s where the summary proposal, the call-outs for people’s input, came from—those discussions about what Alberta and Saskatchewan were doing and what did people think about doing it here.

So I will ask you again, because your government did this consultation, what did you learn? Is it not okay? Are we not going to do it? And why? Look, I’m a lefty New Democrat; I’m all for strengthening the public sector. I think that we could do inspections in-house. I’m not looking to farm that out. But we don’t even check. If someone at ServiceOntario thinks, “Ooh, I don’t think this is a real VIN,” what happens then? Does the clerk say, “Oh, well. Here you go”? Because there is no flag system, to my knowledge. Someone can correct me if I am wrong, but I keep asking in this formal space and everybody stares at me blankly.

So, maybe if the ministry staff are watching—I keep sending letters and emails. I’ve walked across to the minister to ask this a number of times, various issues, and I cannot get the courtesy of a response. So I don’t know what’s going on with the ministry these days. I kind of miss having access to ministry staff under the last minister, and I will admit it.

Okay, moving on—yes, I just totally derailed myself in there.

Anyway, coming back to this article, this former OPP officer said, “We’re now talking about 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles a year being entered onto the Ontario registry that in other jurisdictions would require a mandatory inspection. That undermines the integrity of the registry. We know for a fact that there are vehicles being re-VINed that are stolen.”

Police are starting to raise the issue, particularly in response to the growing auto theft problem.

“OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique, speaking in his role as head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, told a House of Commons committee ... that mandatory inspections of vehicles with problematic VINs should be mandatory. He also called for a national system of vehicle registrations. Right now, each province manages its own system.”

1700

Arguably, Ontario manages its own. Well, it manages its own, but there are problems. And if I’m wrong and I don’t understand the system, you guys should be able to stand up and defend it.

“CBC News reached out to Ontario’s transportation ministry for comment about the issue ... but did not receive a reply.” So it’s not just me; it’s the CBC too.

Speaker, we want to know that the vehicles out on the road are safe. We want to know that they’re not stolen. The concerns that have been raised by police, former police, insurance, me—these are concerning. The concerns raised about the VIN database are concerning. And if the government isn’t sure what their system is, we have a problem. Fix it.

Speaker, I want to talk a bit about stunt driving penalties.

“Amendments are made to the penalties imposed for driving in a race or contest, on a bet or wager or while performing a stunt. The court is given discretion to extend the period for which a person’s driver’s licence shall be suspended.” That’s in this piece of legislation.

As we learned during the MOMS Act process, people are stunt driving right now—maybe not right this second; probably later tonight, when it gets a bit darker. People are stunt driving without insurance, and often they’re driving someone else’s vehicle. So what makes us think that they’re going to worry about driving with a valid licence? That was what we were hearing from road safety experts, from the law enforcement folks who came to committee who weighed in on this. Those were their concerns. So the idea of prevention has to enter into this; not only the law-and-order penalty side. I think you can’t have one without the other. We do have to work to make it not so easy to steal a car. As I said, the minister was very clear that it’s not okay to steal cars, but I will add, it is easy.

Speaker, I had a meeting not that long ago with our local police services board. One of the issues raised—and there are many. Of course, we all know that when we meet with our local police, there are a number of priorities. Regarding Highway Traffic Act offences—I’d like to know, where is the investment in the justice system?

In Durham region, of which Oshawa is a proud part, only two out of the four courtrooms are open on a good day at the regional headquarters in Durham. We can’t handle the cases that we have.

I want to know why the government—and obviously, it’s not in this bill; this is a transportation bill. But broadly, why isn’t the government investing in our justice system? There’s a lot of interest in King’s Counsel or ensuring judges have gotten the partisan nod. But there isn’t enough money to staff our courtrooms, and that is absurd.

I'll tell you, one of the things raised at the police services board meeting—they talked about how many cases had been tossed, the POA mass withdrawal, and I thought, what are they talking about?

We've been talking in this room about, I'll say, high-profile, very big cases that have not had their day in court because of the backlog; sexual assault cases that didn't get to go to court; terrible things like that. That's not partisan. That's upsetting to everyone.

And not to make light of it, but most people who get a speeding ticket are going to be happy when that is thrown out, when they don't get their day in court for their speeding ticket.

With that in mind, I'm going to read from an email that had been sent to DRPS legal earlier in the year. This was shared with me so that I could have the clear numbers.

March 2024: "Prosecution services has scheduled approximately 11,000 part 1 and part 2 certificates to be marked withdrawn. This is a combination of charges laid by all our enforcement agencies in years 2021-2023"—so from 2021 to 2023, 11,000 part 1 and part 2 certificates to be marked withdrawn.

"The region of Durham POA Court cannot accommodate these matters within the time frame as set out in the" Supreme Court of Canada "decision of R v. Jordan.

"Despite a concentrated effort to prioritize the most serious cases involving high public interest, our region is facing an unprecedented backlog that cannot be solved without provincial intervention.

"Durham region is a four-courtroom POA model location. Since 2021, it has been reduced to one to two courtrooms. This is less than half of the customary judicial resources in a jurisdiction that is growing in population and enforcement activity. In fact, our charge volumes have doubled since 2019." So, more charges—but from 2021 to 2023, 11,000 gone. We can't imagine that that's all speeding tickets; there's no way.

"With only one to two courtrooms functioning, there has been a growing lack of judicial resources.

—"In 2022, there were 28 presiding days where no justice appeared for scheduled court.

—"In 2023, there were 27 presiding days where no justice appeared for scheduled court.

—"This year, there have been 15 presiding days where no justice appeared, and an additional eight days where courts were combined due to one courtroom not having a justice available."

These are our courtrooms, guys.

"The regional municipality of Durham is faced with a significant lack of judicial resources due to the province of Ontario not allocating sufficient justices of the peace to adjudicate in this region."

So the Durham Regional Police Service received this, and it said, "Of the 11,000 charges being withdrawn ... approximately 35%-40% of those were laid by DRPS." So our local police laid 35%-40% of those 11,000 charges that are being thrown out.

"We will continue to prioritize our most serious cases involving high public interest."

So people who break the law—albeit, if it's a speeding ticket, I will say, a lesser Highway Traffic Act infraction—are going to think it's a happy day when they don't have to go to court.

When the government stands on the principle of "If you break the law, you will"—I don't know—

Interjection: Consequences.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: "There will be consequences. We are going to get you." But those charges are going to be thrown out 35%-40% of the time if they are lesser Highway Traffic Act infractions.

I'm not a police officer, and I won't speak for them, but I must imagine it would be frustrating to lay a charge and know that "Oh, well"—I don't see it as respecting the work that they do.

Also, you have to have a strong and supported justice system, especially if you are going to mete out all these punishments to the lawbreakers. You do have to fund the justice system so that there can be justice and access to it.

While we are talking about justice and access to it—while the bill increases penalties for drivers convicted of certain criminal offences, Bill 197 fails to establish additional consequences, like hearing victim impact statements, for drivers who kill or seriously injure a vulnerable road user. Think of vulnerable road users, like a pedestrian, cyclist, a flag worker who is marking a construction site, the people who have business on our roads either because they are working on them or beside them or they are playing on them—well, we don't play on roads, kids—riding their bicycles, walking. Those are vulnerable road users.

I'm very proud to have introduced legislation—this incarnation of it is Bill 15, the Fairness for Road Users Act. This bill started in 2002 when a couple was killed. I'll give the backstory. William James Duff turned left in between three motorcycles on Highway 17 near Batchewana, Ontario. The resulting collision immediately claimed the lives of David and Wanda Harrison, tourists from the United States. Mr. Duff was convicted of an unsafe turn and received the maximum penalty allowed under the Highway Traffic Act at the time, which was \$500.

1710

The Bikers Rights Organization has been advocating for the increase of penalties since the Harrisons were killed in 2002. And the Bikers Rights Organization—I've met with them a number of times. They have been to the Legislature a lot of times—

Interruption.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: For the folks who are wondering why I just stopped suddenly, the lightning and thunder that is going on—I think I have full universal support for what I'm going to say.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes. This is cosmically agreeable here. Okay.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I was like "woo, okay."

Speaker, I tabled Bill 15, but I had introduced it before under a different name. This is a bill that comes from the advocacy of the Bikers Rights Organization, a group of bikers who are very concerned about road safety and advocacy. They have written letters to the Ministry of Transportation over the past 17 or 18 years. They've gathered and presented petitions; more than 6,000 signatures they have garnered. The bill was introduced, I think, first in 2015. It was Bill 154. That was the member from Niagara Falls who first tabled it. I inherited it, tabled it as Bill 122, and then I think it got another number. I reintroduced it as—I don't even remember—Bill 62, I think, and then most recently Bill 15, which is the Fairness for Road Users Act (Contraventions Causing Death or Serious Bodily Harm).

Speaker, this bill would make it so that—its intent is that judges have tools to reach for at sentencing. If someone sets out in the morning, they don't intend to kill someone, but if they make an improper left turn, if they flip an illegal U-turn, if they do something that's a lower violation of the Highway Traffic Act and someone is catastrophically injured or killed, right now the only thing that the judge can reach for is a maximum \$500 penalty. Anecdotally, we heard from the families, and they were hearing in the courtrooms that the judges said, "I wish I could do something else." I think, on a case-by-case basis, the judge would be able to use his or her discretion. Maybe this is a familiar face, somebody who drives like a menace on a regular basis. And there are other, I'll say, mitigating factors. But there's nothing else that can enter into the decision at sentencing—that is the most.

This is a government that is focused on punishment, and here is a bill—my bill—that is focused on the penalty, on increasing the penalty framework so that judges have different tools.

I met with the former Minister of Transportation—talked her ear off, chased her into elevators kind of thing—and met with her staff. Her staff was accessible to me on a regular basis, and we worked this out. And do you know what? This government and that ministry called my bill to committee, and that was kind of a first. There have now been a few others of us, but it was a big deal for me. It was the very first time that I sat and not only defended the bill but got to discuss it, brought voice and invited community to come and talk about why this was important. Brian Burnett from BRO, Gerry Rhodes from BRO—

Interjection: BRO?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Bikers Rights Organization—who came and spoke, and other community members who had questions about how this would be effective, or would it be effective—fair questions; I'm asking the same questions of this government.

It was a great committee process, but it isn't over yet. We're on a break, so we didn't get to clause-by-clause, because there were some challenges during committee that came up, and I'm trying to figure out with the government—I'd love to figure out with the government—and the minister, his last comments were, "We'll work with all members of this House." I was so excited to hear that

today, because I now have the third letter in the series—sorry, no props. Whatever. There it is—letters to this current Minister of Transportation. I want to find out how we move forward with that bill, or I want to be told, "Forget it, Jen. You can't. We're done with that. That was the last Minister of Transportation's priority." I don't know. We're just left in limbo. It went through committee and stopped before clause-by-clause, admittedly because there were some challenges that needed to be fixed. So I've worked with legislative counsel on various amendments and told the minister, but I can't get a call back and I can't meet with staff to even figure out if any of them are workable, or if there is a better way forward.

I thought maybe, when I saw this bill—I went over to the minister and I said, "Hey, is my Bill 15 in this one?" Because I don't need my name on it. I don't actually need my bill to pass—I'd like it to—but I need it to be law. I need the government to take it and put it into legislation. If they're not willing to give me credit, whatever. Been there, done that. It needs to be fixed.

The letter that I had written to Minister Sarkaria:

"Dear Minister...

"Congratulations on your new cabinet portfolio. I'm hoping to work with you and your ministry to find a way forward for my private member's Bill 15, the Fairness for Road Users Act...

"I was pleased to work with the previous minister on the need to pass this legislation, and am hopeful we can work together to see it through the legislative process.

"This is a bill about fairness for survivors and families who have suffered unimaginable harm and loss on Ontario's roadways. It is the result of listening to advocacy groups and vulnerable road users who know our courts do not have the tools they need in terrible cases where someone has been killed or suffered catastrophic injury.

"It was a big deal that my private member's bill was brought before committee on July 12, 2023. It was clear at committee that there is an interest from all parties in addressing the harms caused by the existing penalty framework. I was pleased to present my bill to the committee and to learn from the safety advocates and community voices who spoke on this issue.

"I believe that we both want safer roads in Ontario, as well as improved justice for survivors and families of those who have been injured or killed on our roads. My bill has been frozen in time and I would ask the minister to please let me know how we can work together to find a path forward."

I thought the government might have had ideas on how to fix it, because the last ministry team did—and that was October 26.

And on March 26, it was like, "Hey, it has been a busy session. Remember me? I'm over here." Sorry—more eloquent than that:

"I am eager to work with your ministry to move Bill 15, Fairness for Road Users Act forward. My staff and I would be very glad to meet with your team to come up with a plan to make that happen.

"I have attached my previous letter...."

And May 28:

“We are approaching one year since Bill 15, Fairness for Road Users Act was brought before committee. There has been interest from all parties in passing this legislation and addressing the harm caused by the existing penalty framework. I know that in collaboration with your ministry, we can improve this bill and ensure better justice outcomes for those most gravely affected by contraventions of the Highway Traffic Act.

“I have attached my previous letters....”

Really? I'm not trying to shoot myself in the foot here by ticking them off, but I have never, in the 10 years that I have been doing this job—I've chased ministers into elevators, and sometimes they even hold the door for me and pretend they're letting it close on me. That was Kevin Flynn; I remember that day. I have worked, and will continue to work, with ministers, but I can't answer my own emails or call myself back. I am hoping that the government will hear me and do something about this. Anyway, enough about me.

Speaker, there are a lot of folks out there who are interested in vulnerable road user protections. The member from Ottawa Centre has been an active transportation enthusiast and advocate. In fact, he toured communities from Ottawa to Toronto and stopped in Oshawa. He rode his bike and was stopping in communities along the way to talk to folks about active transportation and the need to keep vulnerable road users safe by educating others, by adding vulnerable road user classifications, and by prioritizing people who use our roads.

There's nothing to support vulnerable road users in this bill. This has been a priority for New Democrats since I got here, and there has been zero willingness by any of the governments that I have seen to actually bring that vulnerable road user piece into legislation. The vulnerable road user community wants better from this government, so we're planning to put forward amendments, and I really hope that the government pays attention to that and passes them.

Speaker, I'm glad to talk about amendments. This government has not provided any details about its proposed e-bike regulations following years of ineffective consultations and false starts, including the MOMS Act, Bill 282. I got hundreds of emails from moms and families that rode e-bikes that said, “Hey, government, these changes that you're proposing in Bill 282 are going to make my popular e-bike illegal.” “Hey, government, the cargo e-bike pilot that they are proud of? You're making those bikes illegal.” Like, with the statute and the classifications and the dimensions and the weight limits and the wheel dimensions—what is a wheel? Does it include the rim? Like, we were so in the weeds during that process. I still have dreams about e-bikes, and I don't have one, but a lot of people do, and there were concerns.

1720

During the MOMS Act, this government heard from hundreds of e-bike users worried about their e-bikes, that they were going to be deemed illegal due to this government's absurd and unsupported, unresearched, arbitrary

classification change—which, by the way, those changes in Bill 282 haven't been proclaimed and now you're repealing them in this bill.

Miss Monique Taylor: We tried to tell you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, we actually did, and looking back at the MOMS Act—I see, unbelievably, that I'm running out of time—that legislation had raised flags for people. They were quite concerned. The London Bicycle Café, Ben Cowie—we were having middle-of-the-night phone calls with these advocates, trying to figure out what the amendment should say to fix the problem based on the wording of what the government had put forward, and it was a wild ride. The London Bicycle Café had put out a call: “We're concerned about the MOMS Act. We need your help, and your stories.” They got hundreds of people to send us pictures of themselves with their dog in the front basket and their groceries in the back and saying, “Please don't make me illegal,” and everybody remembers those pictures. It was highly effective.

During our clause-by-clause part of committee—like, when we were breaking it down—the government launched a side consultation. I wasn't even sure that that was allowed or that we were doing our due diligence, but that consultation—it's continuing. The government is still consulting on e-bike classification, and I want to read something—God, if I had hours. I would take two hours if you let me.

During clause-by-clause, I said, “I will just remind all committee that we are debating these amendments in statute today, but we won't have a second kick at the can. Once we do this today, we can't amend it again, so I know that with the consultation and a lot of the community involvement in this bill—if anybody thinks that we can go back and change what's written in legislation after today, we can't, so just factor that in when we've got thoughtful amendments before us. That's all. Please pass the amendments that we will never get a second chance to pass and that are needed. Thank you.” And I said that a bunch in different ways.

Anyway, it turns out I was wrong. You can redo legislation. You just have to repeal the whole last chunk and then start over. Not the best use of people's time, kids. Okay.

I wanted to read so much more of that, but I guess—we have questions. Like, can the government provide more details about its plan for new e-bike regulations? Does this government agree that e-bikes are welcome in our community, that we should be encouraging them without imposing needless red tape? This government removed the definition of power-assisted bicycle. Are they now going to be considered mopeds? We have questions, and we don't have answers, and I would love it if the government would talk about that.

The government has signalled it intends to use the new regulatory authority in Bill 197 to make new regulations governing e-bikes, but it hasn't provided details except “the proposed legislation would enable the government to categorize more dangerous e-bikes into distinct classes such as by maximum weight or speed.”

It's possible these new regulations may continue to allow the use of lighter, lower-speed e-bikes without licences, vehicle plates or insurance, but it isn't clear. It is not even clear what the government considers to be an e-bike, never mind a dangerous e-bike. So I'm going to say it, and I mean it: This government doesn't seem to know what it's doing with respect to e-bikes. You didn't back with Bill 282, and here we are again. Those e-bike provisions remained unproclaimed. Now they're being repealed. When we raised concerns of e-bike advocates and made a number of thoughtful amendments that they felt would have fixed it—these are the people who ride them, the people who sell them, the people who make them—the government basically made us feel like, “You have no idea what you're talking about. We're right.” And here we are, and we were right and the government was not—

MPP Jamie West: With e-bikes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, with e-bikes.

Okay. Speaker, there are other pieces in this bill that I won't have time to get into, specifically around the Ministry of Transportation enforcement officers. I had submitted four questions on the order paper, written questions, about transportation enforcement officers, regarding speed rules, understaffing, their job descriptions. I asked about a PAVA launcher pilot.

I had raised important issues, because they are stretched too thin. There are 14 transportation enforcement officers with mechanics licences. They cover over 13,000 registered inspection stations—148 TEO officers for the whole province of Ontario. It's generally not more than 100 working at any one time. You've got the Kingston district, which covers from the 115 in the west, close to Ottawa and Pembroke in the east and as far north as Chalk River. It's served by 17 officers, one officer per 1,000 square kilometres.

I can go on about how thin they are stretched. But this is a government that's talking about safe roads, and I would encourage them. I mean, has it made a change in here that has been asked for? Sure, but they've been asking for a lot more that would make all Ontarians who use our roads and highways feel a lot safer and actually be a lot safer. So I will ask for the government to continue to talk to those who want to keep the rest of us safe.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I greatly appreciate the presentation by the member opposite. She obviously has spent a great deal of time working in this realm with previous bills, etc.—that she spoke very much to things outside of this bill.

One of those items was the issue around the VIN numbers. The member's own statements spoke about the fact that the ministry is seized with working through the VIN number issues. She talked about the consultations. She talked about the efforts that have already been made, reading out the documents from the government.

My question then, Speaker, does the member recognize that, although it is only 20% of the stolen cars that we're

dealing with at this time, all of that VIN issue is something that is a very complex international, inter-jurisdictional conversation that will be significant—?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you for the question.

We're going to return to the member for Oshawa to respond to the question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay, just so that I am not leaving that understanding out there. I have no idea if the government is doing anything with this. What I said was back in August of 2021, the government put forward a summary proposal asking for people's input on VIN inspections. I don't know what you did with that. So that's what I was referencing.

The other thing is I'm going to assume, because so many ministers were answering my two questions, that the government is indeed talking. But I can't see that. It's not in the bill. And when law enforcement, former law enforcement and insurance companies are quoted in articles saying that they are raising this issue with the government, it needs to be fixed and it hasn't, but they don't want to go on record, because they don't want to besmirch the good name of the Ministry of Transportation, this government has a problem that they need to fix and I did not suggest it has been fixed.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I can tell you that when my constituents saw that there was a bill called safer roads and communities, they were very encouraged. My constituent Deb Rowes, who lives in Geneva Lake off of Highway 144, reached out, and she wants to know how many people need to die on Highway 144 before the government makes the roads safer. You see that, two weeks ago, there was a crash that closed the roads. A 43-year-old man from Sudbury died. On May 1, earlier, the highway was closed due to an accident. There were three road closures in March due to big accidents, followed by three accidents in February that closed the road. There was another three-vehicle accident in January where a 61-year-old man died. That is nine road closures—two deaths—in five months on Highway 144. Do you see anything in this bill that will make Highway 144 safer for the people I represent?

1730

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No.

I do see that the government is making announcements about training, but we don't see it in the bill. We've certainly heard from Truckers for Safer Highways—I've heard it directly from the transportation enforcement officers—that there is a need for better training for truck drivers, that there is a need for inspections. When you have so few transportation enforcement officers, then you're unable to staff those truck inspection stations. And when truck drivers know that that one is always going to be closed because there are cement barriers out in front or the weigh scales haven't been calibrated in how long, then we've got a problem as Ontarians on those roads.

So I'm focusing on trucks because when something goes wrong with a transport truck, things go really wrong.

People die. A number of solutions and suggestions have been raised to this government on keeping northern roads safe. We should be seeing it in this bill, and we should hear it from this government moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I know it is the role of the opposition to criticize legislation that we bring forward, but, Bill 197, if passed, will provide some of the toughest legislation when it comes to impaired driving anywhere in this country. I was just doing a quick search on the number of repeat impaired drivers that we see in headlines across Ontario. The first one that popped up: “Frustrating Is an Understatement. Repeat Drunk Drivers Ongoing Problem in Caledon.” And this headline is repeated over and over again.

If passed, this legislation will restrict drivers from driving at all. It will take away their licence, and it will also include a lock on the steering wheel. I’m just wondering if the member opposite could speak to the measures that this bill proposes and whether she would support toughening legislation against impaired driving.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think that tough legislation is important, and I think that impaired driving is terrible and has unbelievable consequences, so a firm and definite penalty? Yes. But as I raised in my speech, the option to downgrade drunk driving charges in Ontario remains—that was brought in during COVID to address the backlog that remains. So that’s a piece that this government needs to look at. Drunk drivers or impaired drivers are able to plea down to avoid criminal charges—currently—so if this matters to you, fix it.

The other thing is, putting these booze nooks in every single convenience store in the province, give or take, is going to put alcohol in people’s—what, gloveboxes—more easily? I don’t know. But I think the government does need to factor in prevention as well as punishment.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member for her very thoughtful, well-researched presentation and debate of one hour. Thank you for that.

I want the member to tell us how hardened criminals—people willing to rob, steal, home invade and maybe even do worse—will be deterred from stealing cars by taking away their licence. Tell us how this is going to work.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I can tell from the member’s tone that I don’t think he has faith in this solution put forward by the government.

Look, I’d like it to be effective. We don’t want car thieves out in our communities. We don’t want people breaking the law and doing harm. I don’t know if a licence suspension is going to be effective.

A lot of these individuals who break the law on a regular basis—we learned it from the MOMS Act—those who stunt drive, many of them are driving other people’s cars. They’re driving without insurance. Why on earth do we think that they are not going to drive just because they don’t have a licence?

So, that’s stunt driving, but I think, car thieves—if you’re going to take away the licence of a car thief, what if they’re the ones who got dropped off to steal your car? Do you get the guy who drove the getaway car? I don’t know, and I’m not meaning to make light of it, but I don’t know how effective it will be. I do think, though, that making it not so easy to steal a car in the province is also a place to focus. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. John Fraser: I’d like to thank the member for her very thoughtful presentation, and for her comments. Right now, it’s really a problem of organized crime. That’s where you’re going to have to get at these car-theft rings. Just simply saying you’re not going to allow them to drive—but if they’re already stolen a car and they’ve already got a record, I’m not sure that that’s going to be a deterrent. I’m not saying that’s not why they do it. I don’t think it’s going to solve the problem.

The question that I have, though, is, we all want tougher rules around drunk driving, and the government made that very clear about two weeks ago, and then we find out three days later that they’re pleading down impaired driving charges, and then on top of that, they can’t tell us how many. They can’t tell us how many people are repeating the offence because they’re not measuring it. So, if you’re serious about stopping drunk driving, don’t you think the government would try to do something like that?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think when I also, along with everybody else in the province, had my attention drawn to the fact that we in the province have that option to downgrade drunk driving charges in Ontario as a holdover from the pandemic, that that remains, that the government has not been measuring, that they don’t know how many people have avoided, have dodged criminal charges because of this option, that’s a problem.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving have done a quick guesstimate on the number, and it’s massive, right. Anything we can do to keep people safe is important, but also, if this is a government that is going to talk about penalties and going to talk about being tough on crime, then people who are charged with impaired driving should be able to have the criminal charge that goes with it and not dodge that, as this government has allowed.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. That’s time.

We’re going to move to further debate.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It’s always an honour to rise on behalf of my lifelong home community of Humber River–Black Creek and very happy to be debating this legislation before us today.

We’ve heard submissions from a government that loves to talk about growth—growth at all costs. We hear from the Minister of Job Creation talking about growth in certain industries, jobs and all that happening, but there are some forms of growth that this government doesn’t talk about: growth of people waiting in food bank lines, growth in terms of the lineups waiting for a surgery in a hospital, growth in many different ways. But there has been a

growth in—I don't want to call it a sector, but one area that incidentally dates back to the beginning of when this government took their first oaths of office in 2018, and this has been a steady growth we've seen year after year, increasing, increasing, increasing. It's gone up 100%, 200% and, in some cases, some have said 300%, and that—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Three million dollars.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Exactly—and that growth has been in auto theft.

Now, I can tell you, I was so excited to hear that we would be debating legislation to tackle auto theft in Ontario, truly something that I've heard government members talk about as an epidemic. They said they were going to take decisive action, and the members got up and they were proud. You could see. They stood straight-backed, ready to talk about the solutions to this scourge in Ontario. So I'm so proud because, I'll be honest, I was a little worried, because as I've watched these numbers continue, and I was looking for leadership from this government to talk about the scourge, and we waited and we waited and nothing was coming up, and I began to think that the only part of the car they were interested in was its battery. But no, now we are debating legislation around auto theft to, in some cases, say that they're going to be taking car thieves completely off the road, and I'm so excited about this.

There's a lot of solutions to that, right. The member from Oshawa has talked about VIN registration. In fact, we're not just a hub where car thieves from around the world are coming to Ontario under the sleepy watch of this government; stolen vehicles are coming here because we're not bothering to inspect the VIN, right? So, of course, the legislation is going to be dealing with that, and I know that that's what we're dealing with here, right? It's the VIN?

1740

Interjections: No.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, okay; sorry.

So we know that it's an issue and we're going to stop cars at the borders, right? Now, I know the ports are in Montreal and the west coast. But people have been tracking stolen cars by police, and where do they end up? In the back of a rig, a trailer, a container. We all saw that frustrating episode of Marketplace where a guy tracked his car to a railyard and the police couldn't get into it because of jurisdictional issues. So, of course, this is probably going to be an appeal to the federal government to deal with those jurisdictional issues, right?

Interjections: No.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Really? Okay, I guess we're not going to deal with it. I guess that's a federal issue, and they never talk about federal things here ever, right? Oh wait, bail reform: Yes, we've heard about that. Carbon tax—a hundred times a day on carbon tax.

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Probably. That's an angle. Maybe they would have.

Okay, all right, so maybe they're not talking about that. How about stiffer penalties? When you watch on the occasion when these criminal rings are captured—it's usually not one guy; it's usually 20 faces. You see them on the screen, on CP24. I mean, are we talking about tougher penalties and punishments? Because, you know, it's not just the person stealing the car. Sometimes, it's a young person compelled by organized crime, a gang. How do they end up in these rings? How do they end up in a container? Are we talking about maybe going after shipping companies, ensuring that we get to the bottoms of these rings, and stopping it in many ways? We're talking about that, right?

MPP Jamie West: No.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Guys, come on, seriously, because I heard them talk about decisive action, taking car thieves off the roads and everything else.

All right, so they're not coming up with stiffer criminal penalties. How about—okay, I've got one. This is something that's been working in Quebec. We know that as we increase technology of these—for car thieves, now, you just have a remote starter and they can capture your signal or they could plug into a port. There's lots of stuff that they can do in that area. So, surely, we're debating legislation here where this government is going to be reaching out to auto manufacturers and ensuring that cars sold in Ontario are of the highest standards and protections, right?

MPP Jamie West: No.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No; sorry.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Guys, seriously, come on. I mean, really, to the government: That's got to be in the bill, right? Some of these things? You know that they convened—the feds and provinces across the country got together and talked about this. I mean, we're now a source country for auto theft. Certainly they've been taking decisive action in this case.

Government members, that stuff I've talked about is in the bill, right?

MPP Jamie West: No.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh.

This is a government that really talks tough when it comes to at least blue-collar crime because we know that they consider white-collar crime as innovation in some cases, but I'll leave it at that.

But the thing is there is no way because this is a government that loves police so much that just to spend more time with them, they're willing to be investigated even, right? And so I'm expecting that there's got to be more to this. Does someone have a copy of the bill?

MPP Jamie West: Yes.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay. Sorry, Speaker. Okay, so we have a small portion of this bill about auto theft. That can't be right. We talked about taking car thieves off the road, decisive action, really powerful words to essentially say no to car thieves in Ontario.

Okay, let's see, section 41.0.2, Suspension related to theft of a motor vehicle—suspension of their licence? Oh, and we've got three—so, first conviction, 10 years; 15;

and then an indefinite suspension of your licence as a deterrent. That will take the thieves off the road? No, this is not possible. Is this the bill?

MPP Jamie West: That is in the bill.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay, I don't know what to say. Leave it to Conservatives to think that a lifetime of public transit is worse than jail. Is that what we're debating here?

So, Speaker, let me understand this. Hardened criminals willing to go to a person's home, home invade them in some cases, rob them maybe while they're in their vehicle, or do worse, are going to be deterred by losing their licence indefinitely, not on their first—

Hon. David Piccini: Buddy, the Criminal Code is federal, man. Come on. You know that.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, I'm sorry. We have a minister that's getting frustrated about us talking about auto theft here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: We're discussing the fact that hardened criminals are going to be deterred. Now I get it, it's three strikes, you're out, because you might steal a car by accident the first time. We are not going to reach the maximum penalty. Maybe on the second time—and that happens, right? Sometimes you go to a parking lot, there's a car that looks exactly like yours, and you decide to use the remote starter or plug into the jack and steal it—sorry, I mean borrow it or whatever—put it in a container and leave it for the owner somewhere in another country. But on the third time, a lifetime suspension.

No, you know what? Upon thinking about it, you know what? Maybe this is a very serious resolution. I mean, imagine never being able—and of course, we know, for a criminal, the last thing—I could see some of these hardened criminals; you could imagine them on those police shows. I mean, really, we're talking beyond sociopathy, psychopathy. There are lines for a criminal. There are some things you're not going to do, right? There's a line you're not willing to cross in some cases, and I think everyone here has got their line, whatever it is. But I could see someone, certainly a thief who's willing to go to your house, break in, assault you to get those keys to steal your car and drive away with it—but no way they're going to leave their house without their licence. There is no way of that. I could totally imagine that right now. I mean, some thief that day has decided they're going to go out there and make the world a worse place by stealing someone's car, and they're going to get into that car; now they're going to say, "I can't do this. What am I going to do? Take a bus? Am I going to have to ride a bike, maybe a unicycle or, even worse, walk?"

Imagine that. Or imagine the embarrassment of having to reach out to someone and say, "Look, can you give me a drive?" "What do you need to do?" "I've got to steal a car." "Oh, okay. No, I'm not going to"—and maybe other thief friends or whatnot. It would be a massive embarrassment to them to actually have to do that.

So, to give credit to the government, forcing criminals to have to rideshare—imagine. And getaway drivers are

going to be put out of business. This could be an end to getaway drivers, and that is serious. That is serious. That is, I guess, a big deterrent.

This government—usually, we criticize them for consulting. Once in a while I find out they consult. Of course, they don't always consult the people you want them to consult. So I don't know if they reached out to the car thief syndicates or organized crime—

MPP Jamie West: Uber.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Uber. That's true. Maybe you will have car thieves having to use Uber. What are the other services?

Hon. David Piccini: Lyft.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Swift, Lyft. You might see an uptick. In fact, you will be able to tell how effective your legislation is following, if—and, of course, we always say "if," even in a majority government. If this passes royal assent, you could get statisticians to look at an uptick in terms of the use of other programs, like rideshare, cycling. In fact, maybe you'll have more people willing to get on bikes to be able to advocate for more bike lanes in other areas, but I really—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: That's right. That's right.

Maybe I'm not being fair. Maybe this is, in fact, a deterrent. I can see how, if you're a hardened criminal, the one thing that you're not going to do is leave your house without a licence. When you steal a car, when you're about to commit crime, you're going to ensure that you have all your full documentation with you: licence, health card, maybe passport, whatever it is. This is a piece in a puzzle of taking that away from them, so I can see that it could be a little bit of a deterrent when it comes to doing that.

1750

I guess I would love to understand, too because this does beg the question: Who writes some of this legislation? I want to know whose angry uncle gave them this advice to put this as a solution, or what was it? Which armchair—we all got those people that will tell you how to fix all the problems.

Mr. John Vanthof: Blue licence plate.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: On the subject of licence plates, I have to say, upon reflection—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No reflection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You're right, actually. Ironically, the licence plate that did not reflect or reflected so much you couldn't even read it.

I have to say that under the sleepy watch of this government when it comes to auto theft, the fact is most people have been left on their own. And the police divisions have been left on their own, begging for the supports that they need in many different ways: "Come on, give us help."

Let us fix these jurisdictional issues. Yes, I heard someone say that this is a federal issue, not like—I don't know how many government questions there are a morning; they're literally all about carbon tax, a federal issue. But, of course, on this one thing, "No, we're not going to talk to anyone about it. The last thing is we're going to talk to auto manufacturers."

But when I think about it, most drivers and the enforcement agencies, when it comes to auto theft, are left on their own. So much so that I fear, on the issue of licence plates, if we continue under this sleepy watch, we may have to change the Ontario licence plate motto from “Yours to Discover” to “Yours to Recover,” because that is literally where we are. That’s what it is. That is essentially what is going on. Because if you want to get your car back, you’re going to have to track it, you’re going to have to find it in a container—I don’t know what—come there with a blowtorch, a bulletproof vest maybe, whatever else, and call all your friends because you don’t know what you’re going to end up with.

I want to thank my friend for giving me the bill. And I apologize to the government because I was really taken in. I was almost captured by the resolve they had when they said they were going to deal with this auto theft issue because they really sold it. They really sold it as an end to auto theft in the country and in the province where we continue to set records in terms of the thefts that have happened.

So, to the government: You want to say that you are the party of getting tough on crime—again, ironic, because they are being investigated. But the thing is, if you want to do this, there are solutions that are out there. They’re literally in every single newspaper. Other jurisdictions are doing it. We’re talking about the VIN registration, where we are now a hot spot for stolen cars to come in here. It’s such a fast way to deal with it. We know that over 70% to 80% of these cars get shipped out of the province. So that means in some way, shape or form, they end up in the back of a truck, on a container, at a border somewhere. We know this has been happening since 2018.

So, to this government: Please do it on behalf of our enforcement agencies. Provide them the support in this effort. Reach out to the federal partners. Maybe as you repeat the words “carbon tax” over and over again, if you literally repeated anything else—if you said, “car theft, car theft, car theft,” in the same way you talked about carbon tax, I’m sure we would actually see a steep decline. If you showed even a fraction of the energy of repeating yourself on that every single morning in terms of some of these other issues—and I could name all sorts of them. And yes, the other thing is beer. I know we heard about that. Carbon tax and beer is really what I got from them—and embarrassingly walking back legislation.

But the thing is, this should be all you. You could do something about this. You want to talk to big business? You know, I’ve raised this to government members—about talking to auto manufacturers. Let’s talk about the highest standards of theft protection in the province of Ontario. You know what I get back? “It’s not our role.” Meanwhile, they will want to talk to businesses and say they want to attract business here, so it doesn’t really make any sense. Because it seems like they will talk to auto manufacturers about batteries and nothing else. Making these vehicles actually safer so that you or a loved one isn’t on the receiving end, God forbid, of some weapon for them to get at your vehicle—no, that’s not part of the

conversation. I just can’t understand that, for a Conservative government.

The last thing is to say that they must all know, Speaker, that these are really lukewarm solutions to any of this. Because the reality is, we all know that this is not going to be a serious deterrent. If a person is willing and has worked themselves up to do serious harm to someone else, they are not going to be deterred from the simple matter of losing their licence indefinitely on not just the first, second, but on the third attempt. I’m sorry, but this is not scarier than jail for criminals. It literally is not, and I think the government knows this. So, if they’re going to get up, puff out their chest with pride and declare that it’s an end to auto theft in Ontario or even a serious dent, let’s be serious: It’s not.

There has been work. There have been conversations at the highest levels. Please listen to the enforcement officers that you talk about respecting everyday. There are solutions out there, like our member from Oshawa has talked about here and in the media and everywhere else. Deal with the fact that these VIN numbers are being stolen. That is leading cars to come here, making us not just number one for car thieves but for stolen vehicles too, which is kind of ridiculous, because you’re imagining cars are being stolen from here and then other cars are being welcomed into the province. It makes no sense. It’s an embarrassment.

This is not the kind of growth that you want to see under your watch. There are actual, real solutions. Please, come back with more serious legislation. I don’t know how much time we have left in this session, but you can put a serious dent when it comes to auto theft and you can make Ontarians feel safer, whether they’re actually behind the wheel of their car or waiting—some of them literally fearful every single night that they may wake up in the morning and have no vehicle to drive to work or to go somewhere else. The ball is in your court. Come on. Let’s get serious on crime. Let’s get serious on auto theft, not this bumper sticker stuff. Come on. You can do better than that.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Moving on to questions.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to thank the member for Humber River–Black Creek for his remarks. House duty is never a chore when the member from Humber River–Black Creek is speaking.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Very much so. And I listened very intently. I was trying to do some work here, but I was drawn into his presentation. There’s this question that I have because I don’t quite understand it: What kind of car thief needs a getaway driver?

Mr. Guy Bourgooin: One with no licence.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Right.

Under the current system, I guess, presumably, a car thief goes with their full identification, their licence and everything. They drive to a prospective home to steal a

car—maybe park their own vehicle in front of that property, steal the car and leave.

And now, under this new system—because we know, there's no way that a criminal is going to try to steal a car now that they no longer have a licence—we will actually see an increase in demand in getaway drivers under this legislation. So we may see some more openings for actual getaway drivers as a result, and this might be one of the unintended consequences we've seen as a result of

legislation in this House. So thank you so much for the question.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Unfortunately, we don't have time for more questions.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): It is 6 o'clock. We need to move to private members' public business.

Report continues in volume B.

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Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
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	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, 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	