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Lundi
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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 June 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 juin 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING RED TAPE TO BUILD
MORE HOMES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
AFIN DE CONSTRUIRE PLUS
DE LOGEMENTS

Mr. Calandra moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi
185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I gather the minister would like to lead off the debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me state, just at the beginning, that I will be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Housing, the member for Perth–Wellington and the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Of course, it is always a distinct honour to be able to rise in the chamber and speak on various issues. This one in particular is a very important one.

Since 2018, of course, the government has been focused on rebuilding the province of Ontario. There can be no doubt that when we were successful in winning government, back in 2018, Ontario was faced with a number of challenges and obstacles, whether it was infrastructure on transit and transportation, whether it was our education system, the finances of the province, a manufacturing sector that was significantly hollowed out, a lack of confidence on investors' part to make critical investments in Ontario. We were losing employment. Our energy costs were rising. There were a lot of challenges that we faced. Of course, all of these challenges also helped lead to a housing crisis across the province of Ontario, a crisis that has been expedited by certain policies enacted largely with the federal government. But, predominately, we've been working since 2018 to begin to remove obstacles so that we could get more shovels in the ground, understanding how important it is that all Ontarians have the same dream that many of us have already been able to have ourselves—that is, to be able to buy your first home, rent your first apartment.

This bill here, in particular, is a bill that really looks at where we are today in the province of Ontario. Now, of course, over the last three years preceding this bill, we had seen housing starts at some of the highest levels in over three decades across the province of Ontario. In fact, purpose-built rental construction was at the highest level that we have ever had in the province of Ontario. That is all really good news, but there can be no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that when interest rates increased at the speed at which they did, it precipitated a new and a more targeted approach to helping get homes built faster. And what did we hear when that started to happen? Of course, high inflation was gripping the country—high inflation, which was a hallmark of some of the policies of the federal government, which led to the fastest increase in interest rates in Canada's history in the shortest amount of time; at the same time, policies of the previous government which restricted availability of land for construction, which made it harder to get shovels in the ground, all led us to a very challenging situation.

So when interest rates spiked the way they did, we knew that we had to regroup and we knew that we had to listen to what the home builders were telling us, what our municipal partners were telling us. And what we heard over and over and over again was that infrastructure and the cost of infrastructure were becoming a massive challenge in terms of getting shovels in the ground for new homes across the province of Ontario.

So we spoke with our municipal partners, we spoke with our home builders and said, "What can we do?" By and large we heard from them that the measures that we had previously taken had led us to some of these really incredible housing starts in the previous three years, but they wanted us to take a more targeted approach—an approach that would allow us to get infrastructure in the ground, that would unleash not hundreds of homes, not thousands of homes but millions of homes across the province, and that is exactly what we did in this bill.

As we said, it is a very targeted approach. It's an approach to remove red tape; it's an approach to get infrastructure built; it's an approach that supports the needs within the province of Ontario. So when you look at this bill, Mr. Speaker, we have heard consistently—I know members from all sides have been hearing about the need to use the existing infrastructure to get more homes built. That is why one of the most important parts of this bill is what we call the use-it-or-lose-it provisions in the bill. Now what that does, of course, is just as it is: You must use the infrastructure that you have been given or it will be reallocated to another builder who is ready to put a shovel

in the ground. We have heard from our municipal partners time and time and time again that they needed a provision like this in order to get shovels in the ground faster and in order to maximize existing infrastructure, especially at a time when interest rates were pricing home builders out of the market and were making it more difficult for our municipal partners to use the funding that is needed to get shovels in the ground.

So the use-it-or-lose-it provision is something we worked on with our friends in the municipal sector, with AMO, but at the same time we worked with the home builders to let them know this was an important provision, that a lot of the other measures we were going to be putting forward in the bill would help to spur on more home building, but this was very important to us. I know that members on all sides were very supportive of this measure, and I think it will make a significant difference in reallocating.

Look, in ridings such as mine we have allocations of sewer and water that have held up development for over 10 to—in one case—over 15 years. It stops another developer who is ready to go from building homes. This bill will help us reallocate that, and I think that is a very important step.

We also heard that we needed to take action with respect to the Ontario Land Tribunal and how we can make it better, more responsive to the needs of our community, how we would make it fairer for not only our municipal partners, for home builders, but for the communities and partners within the communities. So the bill has taken a step in the right direction by limiting third-party appeals, while at the same time amendments were brought in that allow us to preserve the rights of landowners to appeal amendments that may be made that disadvantage them, Mr. Speaker. This is something that we heard from individual landowners, and we made that move in committee to address that challenge.

The move of limiting third-party appeals, in and of itself, will unleash some 67,000 applications that are stalled before the board right now, and that will make a huge difference in helping us get shovels in the ground faster.

0910

Let's be clear. That is the goal of this bill: removing red tape using a targeted approach—an approach that underlines the fact that we are in a housing crisis, a crisis that is spurred on in part by the fact that interest rates have climbed to such an extent in such a short period of time that it is pricing individuals, it is pricing home builders and pricing communities out of the housing market. The bill addresses the tribunal. It addresses use-it-or-lose-it provisions. I think they are two very, very important steps.

The other part of the bill that I think is extraordinarily important—and I know colleagues on both sides of the House, if I'm not mistaken, are in agreement on—is the provision that allows us to expedite the construction of student housing on our university campuses across the province of Ontario. This is a provision that our colleges have had for many, many years. This will help us expedite that construction as well.

We have had instances at U of T, right here in the city of Toronto, waiting over 10 years for approvals to construct a student residence. This policy will expedite that construction at the same time because as we know, when we build student housing on campus, it also opens up additional housing within communities. It makes apartments that were otherwise taken up by students available to members in the community, so I think that is also a very, very important—again, very targeted—approach to getting housing built faster.

At the same time as we were doing that, we introduced the provincial planning statement, which, in itself, is a very, very important document. It helps guide our efforts at building homes faster. It helps unleash housing along major transit areas. It helps revitalize those types of areas that, in many of our communities where you have old plazas—for instance, on major corridors—it allows us to rehabilitate those, to put higher density on those plazas while still preserving the commercial or retail that is available on the main floor.

We've all had them. There are many in Toronto. You can look at Brimley and Eglinton in Toronto, what's called the Knob Hill Plaza. It is a block and a half of stores on the bottom, two apartments on the top. It may be a couple of kilometres away from the Kennedy GO train station. That is a prime type of example of what the provincial planning statement allows us to rehabilitate quicker, and I think that is also going to be utilized by municipalities across the province and by home builders who want to do more in those communities.

The other part that I think is really important—and, again, I thank all members because I'm under the impression that all members on all sides are supportive of the measure to eliminate parking minimums along major transit station areas. This will help significantly reduce the cost of housing in those areas, and I think it is also another measure that will help expedite construction of homes in a time when interest rates are where they are at.

The other part of this, of course, are a number of red tape measures which were brought forward, again, just as that, to eliminate red tape, whether it's the Line Fences Act; whether it's some of the changes we're making to update the boards of some of our universities at their requests; whether it is the siting of pipelines so that we can have shovels in the ground faster. That is also a major part of this red tape bill.

But it's not just in isolation. When we say that we're bringing a bill forward to unleash construction, when we said that it's targeted, that it's about removing red tape, there is more to it than that. Also, simultaneously, we brought in, of course, the Building Faster Fund, which is helping to incentivize those communities which can get shovels in the ground faster. It's helping support them in their efforts to do so. At the same time, we have brought forward in the budget a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure plan that will help to get not only sewer and water in the ground but help support the roads and bridges in those communities that will be building homes.

At the same time, the Minister of Education has brought forward the largest investment in schools in the province's

history, upgrading some of those older schools that needed to be upgraded at the same time, all in areas where we are building more homes, because it's about building communities and the infrastructure that is required to support those communities. At the same time, of course, we have updated the MZO, ministerial zoning order process across the province of Ontario. We've unified it. We've made it more accountable and more open. As you know, Speaker, the new process, of course, is that any MZO request must be posted on the ERO for a minimum of 30 days so that everybody can make their comments—so people can see the who, what, where and why of a particular proposal.

So I know others will speak more thoroughly on some of the issues in it, but overall, this bill really reflected an important need. We were able to move quickly to bring forward a bill that was focused specifically on reducing red tape, a bill that was targeted to the circumstances that we find ourselves in today—targeted because we heard from municipalities, we heard from home builders that high interest rates were pricing them out of the market. They couldn't get shovels in the ground for a home builder. People who wanted to buy their first home could not afford to buy their first home because of high interest rates, and our municipal partners were having trouble with infrastructure, because the high interest rates and the speed at which that happened were making it more challenging for them to get that job done as well. So this bill is reflective of that, Speaker. It is nimble and quick and targeted. It will not be the last step in our goal of meeting that challenge of building 1.5 million homes. It's an important step, it is a targeted step, and it is, as I said, reflective of the times that we find ourselves in today.

With that, I will yield my time to the Associate Minister of Housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we'll have the Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: It's a great honour to be here this morning and speak to this great bill, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Red Tape Reduction has already stated, there's a strong need to cut more red tape for both people and businesses across this province and the minister has explained how the proposed initiative in Bill 185 would precisely meet this need. I'm going to take a targeted approach this morning to my remarks with respect to how we can get more homes built faster. As the Associate Minister of Housing, I naturally want to focus on initiatives in this bill that, if passed, would support building more homes in communities across our great province and build them faster.

Since day one, housing has been one of the top priorities of this government. We inherited a housing supply crisis—I emphasize the word “supply” here. We've taken action to get more homes built faster. I'm mentioning this to provide context to the bill we are discussing today. As such, this requires giving a brief overview of the successful work our government has accomplished to date on creating an environment that encourages home building throughout Ontario.

Speaker, I'll start with what we've done to support our municipal partners, a key relationship in getting more homes built faster. Our government's partnership with Ontario's municipal governments is a crucial part of how we are getting more homes built faster. In this year's budget, we are investing in helping municipalities across Ontario get shovels in the ground on new housing projects—I personally call the 2024 financial budget for Ontario an infrastructure budget, and I think I'll explain why in the coming minutes. We did this through a historic investment of more than \$1.8 billion of investment in infrastructure. This was to help our municipalities pay for this infrastructure, such as water and waste water lines and new roads—investments that enable more homes to be built in communities across Ontario. We refer to this as housing-enabling infrastructure.

Speaker, I want to go through in more detail about the \$1.8 billion announced in the budget. That \$1.8 billion includes the \$1-billion Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program for roads and water infrastructure, and the \$825 million, the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, which is an application-based program for municipal water infrastructure projects that will enable new housing.

0920
But our investments do not stop there, Speaker. Recently, we have been presenting financial funding to municipalities across the province that have made significant progress towards their housing targets. These funding awards were part of the \$1.2-billion Building Faster Fund, as the minister just explained, which provides incentives to get shovels in the ground for new housing. Speaker, our three-year Building Faster Fund rewards the municipalities that meet 80% or more of the provincially assigned housing target year over year. These awards went to municipalities across Ontario, from Thunder Bay to St. Catharines. They went to large cities like Toronto and Ottawa. They also went to smaller communities like Sarnia and Chatham-Kent, and I had the pleasure of participating in handing out those cheques.

We know that building housing-enabling infrastructure is something all communities, both large and small, urban and rural, require to grow housing needs. That's why the Building Faster Fund reserves \$120 million for our small, rural and northern communities to access this funding, and access it they will. This is designed to meet their unique needs in these important communities in Ontario, and we've just completed the announcements of the Building Faster Fund distribution in the 2023 calendar year.

And the numbers for last year, Speaker, are terrific. In 2023, Ontario reached 99% of its target of 110,000 new homes, which includes housing starts, new long-term-care beds and additional residential units built on existing properties, including laneway homes and basement suites.

In my personal travels, I can say, Speaker, in talking to our municipal partners, this is very important funding. Let me give you a quick example. In part of my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, the community of Dutton Dunwich, in 2019, were going to expand their waste water treatment facility at a cost of about \$3.3 million. They

didn't do it. They didn't do it because they felt, at the time, that they couldn't afford it. So they waited. A new council just got the funding—was given the final bid on what it would cost them to raise this infrastructure now: \$13.5 million. So infrastructure is crucial for these communities. The prices have gone up, as we know, so we need to continue to help these folks get shovels in the ground faster, to get infrastructure in the ground so we can get these homes built.

The number would actually be 104% last year, Speaker, but the former mayor of Mississauga and current leader of the provincial Liberals failed to get the job done and had one of the worst housing records in Ontario. Bonnie Crombie claimed that she would meet her housing target of 8,800 homes. Did Bonnie Crombie come close to that housing target? Absolutely not. She missed the target by over 5,000 homes, failing to get even halfway to her promise. Mississauga's housing target requires them to build 120,000 homes over 10 years. If the next mayor is to succeed in this task—and it is an important task—I would encourage them to abandon this plan of anti-housing policies which saw fewer than 25,000 housing starts in Mississauga over the last 10 years. I'll say it again: less than 25,000 housing starts in 10 years in one of the largest cities in Ontario—not a good record at all.

Ontario broke ground on almost 19,000 rental starts in 2023. That's the highest number of rental starts on record. It breaks the old record, which was set in 2022, by 27%. Under this government, in less than six years, Ontario has already had more housing starts on rental units than it did in 15 years under the previous Liberal government. We saw nearly 10,000 new and upgraded long-term-care beds and on top of that, the province saw nearly 10,000 additional residential units, ARUs, created in 2023. While these are not counted as housing starts, these property conversions allow for the creation of new housing on existing lots. That includes changing single-family homes into multi-unit residences or converting commercial office space into residential use, an important tactic and strategy to get more homes built faster.

What these results show, Speaker, is that our government's housing initiatives are working. And with our new and ongoing supports to municipalities for housing-enabling infrastructure, Ontario will continue to see more homes built. Historic investments in infrastructure and legislative and regulatory reforms are giving municipalities the tools they need to give more Ontario families a place they can call home.

Our government is also helping homebuyers. We've worked to prevent speculators from driving up home prices by expanding the non-resident speculation tax province-wide and increasing it to 25%. And we've worked to better protect buyers of new homes by setting new standards for builders and increasing the fines for unethical behaviour.

We're also supporting the building of more homes in other ways, which the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be discussing a little bit later.

Our government is also working to support people who rent their homes. We've set a 2.5% limit on rent increases in 2023-24 for rent-controlled residential units, and we are setting the groundwork for building more rental housing. Again, our plans are working. Rental housing starts hit the highest level on record in 2023. By lowering development charges and removing the provincial portion of the HST on new purpose-built rental construction, we've seen Ontario build new residential units at an unprecedented rate.

I want to make sure this point hits home: Our government's work paved the way for the most rental housing starts in one year ever recorded in Ontario. Ontario has made more rental housing starts under this government than it did under the previous government. In five and a half years of this government, we've surpassed what the Liberals took 15 years to accomplish. The evidence is in: Our government's actions are working when it comes to building more market housing right across Ontario.

Our government is proud of the foundation we've laid to help partners build more homes faster. This proposed legislation, if passed, will further that trend.

First, let's look at student housing, an important part of the housing continuum. When someone's daughter or son leaves home to attend an institute of higher learning, they still need a place to live. However, due to the limited amount of student housing, they are often competing with families for housing. That's why our proposed legislation would remove publicly assisted universities from the Planning Act, including when building student housing. It would reduce timelines and increase the number of housing units allowed to be built in a student housing development. This proposed change would make sure that these universities get the same treatment already given to publicly assisted colleges. It could save years in approvals for student housing. It would avoid planning and application fees. And it would remove barriers to higher-density student residences.

What's more—although not part of this bill—we would also require all colleges and universities in Ontario to publish student housing policies. We want to make sure that students have access to and are aware of the student housing options that are available to them that are safe, affordable and within a realistic commute to their campus.

Another very important benefit is that building more student housing frees up more housing for individuals and families in their communities.

To further help get more housing built quickly, our government is proposing to create a regulation-making authority that would exempt standardized housing designs from certain planning provisions. This is key for speed. Standardized designs are housing design options would be readily available to Ontarians and home builders for different types of housing projects and would range from single-family homes to low-rise and mid-rise apartment buildings.

We envision exempting standardized designs from sections of the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act such as those dealing with zoning. If passed, we would

make regulations that would speed up approvals for standardized designs that would get more homes built faster without compromising safety. That's because these designs would have already gone through the relevant approval processes.

Going one step further, we see Ontario potentially partnering with other jurisdictions—and potentially with the federal government—to create a catalogue of standardized housing designs. We would then leverage these standardized designs to build housing faster by using modular or factory-built construction. Making it easier to use factory-built homes will create more housing options and potentially provide more opportunities for manufacturers of these factory-made homes. They could allow companies to become more efficient and pass the savings down to homeowners and/or renters.

There would be multiple benefits from standardized and factory-built designs across all jurisdictions. We would have greater speed in construction and economies of scale from a wider market.

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These innovative initiatives I just outlined could be complemented and bolstered by Ontario's new building code, which our government recently released. Not only that, but we also plan to soon amend the new building code to enable the use of encapsulated mass timber in buildings up to 18 storeys in height—a great addition. The use of mass timber provides a great opportunity to build more homes, and it could be a great boost to our northern communities, supporting good-paying jobs in forestry, and growing our economic base. Encapsulated mass timber construction offers an environmental solution for quieter, less disruptive and faster construction. It's another option to get more homes built faster. I want to emphasize this: Even though buildings use wood, they have the same fire and structural protection as other building methods. It will be a tool for the future.

Speaker, the updated building code also reduces red tape and increases harmonization with the national construction codes. In fact, the next edition reduces red tape in Ontario by harmonizing with the national construction codes on over 1,730 technical provisions. Doing so allows for greater consistency, reduces interprovincial trade barriers and helps streamline manufacturing.

Speaker, these are the types of changes, both small and large, that our government is proposing to help tackle the housing supply crisis and to ensure more homes are available to the people of Ontario. Increased housing supply of all types will improve housing affordability for Ontario families, and it will support homegrown industries—this is key—supporting our homegrown industries and businesses that provide quality jobs. In fact, I was just up in the Minister of Agriculture's riding of Huron-Bruce a couple of weeks ago and saw three wonderful examples of how this will help our economic base in southwestern Ontario.

Our government is committed to making it simpler to build new homes. We want to end needless delays. That's why Bill 185 is focused on cutting red tape, to get shovels

in the ground now so we can get more homes built and built faster.

The housing market is experiencing some headwinds, as we all know. Interest rates are punitive. They need to change. But we have created an environment—an even better environment—to support community home builders and municipalities through the benefits of this great Bill 185. Getting the job done is priority number one.

Speaker, I want to thank you and turn it over to the parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs and housing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member for Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's an honour today to rise in the House to speak to the contents of Bill 185 and share some of the work that our government is doing to cut red tape and build more homes faster across the province.

As I go through some of the targeted measures—as the minister mentioned in his remarks, we're taking targeted measures—in the proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, you'll notice that promoting a culture of partnership rather than a culture of delays is a thread woven throughout this piece of legislation. We're working to ensure that our municipal and other housing sector partners have the tools that they need to get shovels in the ground to build more housing across the province.

To begin, I would like to highlight the aspects of this bill that address our goal of improving consultation and providing municipalities and builders with greater certainty to get homes built faster. Our government is proposing a change through Bill 185 that would, in some cases, reduce project delays by up to 18 months. Our proposed changes to the Planning Act would streamline certain third-party appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal. This is a change that could help the housing projects in communities receive planning approvals quicker. As the minister mentioned, we would maintain the rights to appeal for groups such as First Nations, aeronautic governing bodies—airports, in the common tongue—and public bodies.

All too often, we're seeing housing proposals get tied up in lengthy approvals processes. Of course, this is frustrating for all types of projects, but it's especially frustrating when the proposal could have a positive impact in a growing neighbourhood—a neighbourhood with existing amenities like grocery stores or hospitals or one that is close to transit.

Speaker, approximately 67,000 housing units were subject to third-party appeals of official plans and rezoning between 2021 and 2023. Our proposed change could mean getting shovels in the ground a full year and a half earlier, which could then allow more families to move into new housing faster.

We have another proposal that we believe is needed in order to change with the times. We're proposing a regulatory change to enhance public engagement on new planning applications and other Planning Act and development charge matters. We would do this by modernizing the public notice requirements to enable municipalities to give notice on their website if there is no local newspaper available. As we all know, the media landscape in Canada,

and especially in our rural communities, is changing. Many now do not have weekly newspapers, unfortunately, and many are now virtual or websites online. This change will allow those consultations that are required to continue in the 21st century. It's part of broader changes the government is making to improve accountability and transparency and part of the changes we're making to ensure municipalities have the tools they need to grow their communities.

We would also work with our municipal partners to develop best practices for modernized public engagement and consultation. This could include expanding our reach to include notices in multiple languages to support culturally diverse communities so that more people can have their say when notices go up that affect where they live.

As the minister mentioned, we've also made changes around parking requirements. These changes could speed up getting shovels in the ground on housing faster. Through Bill 185, we're proposing to lower the cost to build by removing the requirements to have a minimum number of parking spaces for developments in certain areas near most major transit stations. This proposed change to the Planning Act would apply to the lands, buildings or structures that are located within certain areas near transit called protected major transit station areas. It would also apply to other areas where municipalities plan to accommodate more housing and jobs around subways, rail and bus rapid transit stations.

Instead of mandating minimum parking requirements, our proposal would let homebuyers and home builders decide the number of parking spaces for new residential development near transit based on market needs. This is something we heard often from our municipal partners. I'm thinking of the mayor of Guelph, who has advocated strongly for the reduction in parking minimums. We've also heard it from our builders as well, which will help reduce their costs.

This form of decision-making exists in Toronto already. Our proposal would allow homebuyers and home builders across the province to weigh in, ensuring that these parking minimums do not hinder the development of new housing. If this Legislative Assembly chooses to pass this bill, this proposal could remove construction costs for a building between \$2,000 to \$100,000 per parking space per project, helping to make more projects viable in these challenging economic times. Under existing requirements in some municipalities, this could reduce costs by up to \$50 million for a 500-unit development, making it cheaper to build and purchase new homes near transit. It will also make transit more accessible to more people across Ontario.

While we aim to cut red tape, in the process, our proposals aim to make building homes less expensive. We're proposing changes to the Planning Act that, if passed, would enable future regulations that could help eliminate municipal barriers to building additional residential units. As those in this place know, we did make three as of right across the province under past legislation, and this legislation builds upon those important steps—

buildings like garden suites, laneway homes and basement apartments, which are becoming very common across Ontario, whether it's our urban centres or our rural communities.

By providing the government with the regulation-making authority related to additional residential units, we would be able to reduce the barriers created by the maximum lot coverage or rules around setbacks to preserve angular planes—in other words, the distance between buildings to allow light to pass through—and the rules around limits on the number of bedrooms allowed per lot, in turn supporting the number of additional residential units that can be built.

I'll add that our policies are already delivering historic results in our beautiful province. Last year, Ontario achieved 99% of its province-wide housing target of 110,000 units. This number includes the number of additional residential units, which are an important type of housing that helps increase the density in existing neighbourhoods.

I know I've had an opportunity to tour a couple of these new residential units in my own riding in the city of Stratford and in the town of St. Marys, seeing even our rural communities jump on this opportunity. It is through our legislation that we have passed that they are able to do this, streamlined in a quicker manner, and to offer those rental apartments to young people or seniors who are looking to downsize in our communities.

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The Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act also includes proposed measures that prioritize infrastructure for ready-to-go housing projects, with new use-it-or-lose-it tools. We've heard from our municipal partners that one barrier to meeting the provincial housing targets can be unused service capacity such as water and sewer servicing. A large factor in this is stalled developments. In fact, we heard from seven municipalities that 70,000 housing units with planning approval had remained inactive for at least two years.

The new use-it-or-lose-it tools aim to prioritize infrastructure for housing projects that are ready to go. The tools will help address those stalled developments and support the allocation of housing-enabling infrastructure such as water and sewer servicing in a more efficient fashion.

If passed, our proposed changes to the Planning Act, the Municipal Act of 2001 and the City of Toronto Act would explicitly enable municipalities to adopt policies setting out how sewage and waste water servicing capacity can be allocated or reallocated to developments that are ready to proceed. The result would be fewer barriers in delays prior to construction.

I know we heard about the use-it-or-lose-it policy often at the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy in our consultations that we have had earlier this year and continue to have around regional governance and other hearings we've had. I know our municipal partners have asked for this, and we are happy to work with them again, Speaker—the partnerships that we are forming with our municipal partners to get more homes built.

We're not only prioritizing building infrastructure for housing; we're also prioritizing building more types of homes for more people. To get there, we need to look at what is working and what isn't. As we know, a new development may require many municipal planning approvals before construction begins. Under the Planning Act, municipalities can make decisions through their planning approval processes that determine the future of their communities. Municipalities make decisions around official plans, zoning bylaw changes and site plan control. This is one of the major reasons why we have listened to the needs and concerns of our municipal partners.

While navigating through the planning approvals process, some of Ontario's priority projects—projects that are essential to building communities—have encountered delays. To solve this, we'll be consulting on a new expedited approval process for community service facilities. We'll be starting with kindergarten-to-grade-12 public schools and potentially extending the consultation in phases to long-term-care facilities and hospitals.

I know I had the pleasure of hosting Minister Lecce this Friday in my riding of Perth–Wellington to announce over \$17 million for a brand new school in Mapleton township.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, colleagues.

This is a generational investment in rural Ontario, and it's because of this Minister of Education and our Premier that we're making these investments. What I was really pleased to hear and learn from our local school board, working—again, partnerships across our provincial, municipal and with our school boards in relation to getting schools built. This school is slated to be opened in September 2026. I know the municipality will work hard to open it even sooner, but it's working with our municipal partners to streamline these builds, ensure that we have complete communities, whether it's a hospital, long-term-care facility or a school. We're going to continue to listen with our municipal partners to look at more ways to speed up the municipal approvals process so that growing communities can benefit from the high quality of life that Ontario is known for.

Speaker, there are other ways we are responding to municipal feedback regarding stalled development. Our proposed changes eliminate the mandatory five-year phase-in of development charge rates. This would apply to development charge bylaws passed on or after January 1, 2022. The development charges are fees that municipalities can apply on a new development or redevelopment to help pay for the capital costs of infrastructure, such as water and waste water plants, and to support new homes and other development in their communities. And for municipalities that have to amend their development charge bylaws to remove the phase-in, we are proposing that they would be able to do so using a streamlined approach.

What's more, I am pleased to share with the Legislative Assembly that we brought into force the discounts and exemptions on municipal development-related charges for affordable residential units on June 1, so just last week. To

support this implementation, we have published a website with the data that sets out the market-based and income-based thresholds for affordable ownership and residential units listed by local municipality. We believe this will incentivize the construction of new affordable housing across this province.

Throughout my remarks today I've shown how our government has listened to our municipal and other partners and responded to their needs through the proposed bill. I also wanted to talk about how we plan to keep the conversation with our partners going by improving consultation tools and the way we communicate with the housing sector.

As part of this package, we consulted on land use planning approvals through an update to the proposed provincial planning statement, or PPS. At the close of consultations, on May 12 of this year, we received over 175 submissions outlining feedback to our proposals. While municipalities are the decision-makers through the planning approvals process and are best able to speak about how their communities are developed when it comes to housing and services, evolving from A Place to Grow and the provincial policy statement, the proposed provincial planning statement would set the overall rules for land use planning in Ontario. It would be the guide for protecting our environment and our public health and safety. It would lay out the policies for using and managing our province's natural resources and it would set out our government policies for managing growth.

We held consultations last year and received stakeholder feedback on our previous proposals for the PPS. After receiving this feedback, one of our key proposals is to make a change to the proposed provincial planning statement that includes increased housing intensification in existing urban areas that are near transit.

Our proposed changes also include promoting a range of housing options, including student housing and, importantly, seniors' housing; making it faster and easier to make land available for residential development; and supporting better coordination between municipalities and school boards.

Another key change we are proposing would support the redevelopment of shopping malls in underused plazas.

We are currently going through the feedback we received on these proposals right now in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Speaker, through these measures and proposals I've spoken to today, our government wants to ensure that our municipal and housing sectors have the tools they need to support more housing in communities across the province. By extension, we believe our proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act would give Ontarians more access to homes that meet their needs and budgets.

I know our government continues to work with our municipal partners to get more homes built across Ontario, as I mentioned, not just in downtown Toronto but in northern Ontario and rural Ontario. We'll continue to put forward targeted measures, working with our municipal partners, to get homes built and to get shovels in the

ground because we all know we want to ensure that Ontario remains a great place to live, work, play and raise a family.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's great to join in here. Thank you, PA Rae, Minister Calandra and Associate Minister Flack. I also want to say a shout-out to Minister Calandra for having me as his parliamentary assistant. This has been an amazing opportunity, and I've only just begun, so thank you for that.

I also want to mention that Etobicoke–Lakeshore families are also getting a new public school. I appreciate that investment from Minister Lecce. It's 825 new student spaces in the public school system, which also includes 88 child care spaces. Let's get shovels in the ground, let's hope those permits from the city get moving so we can have another new school in our growing community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

On this bill, I'd like to elaborate on some of the non-housing items in our spring red tape package and how these will make a real impact on the lives of people and businesses across Ontario.

First, I'd like to start with a quick reminder of why this work is so important. We know for a fact that red tape causes frustration, expenses, needless delays and complications for everyone, from individuals and businesses to not-for-profit organizations and, obviously, the broader public sector. These regulatory burdens are a barrier to the province's productivity, innovation, economic competitiveness and development. The costs are just high, too high for everybody. We want more businesses to grow here in Ontario.

That's why, for six years, it has been our government's mission to make life better for everyone by eliminating red tape to save them time, to save them money and to improve government services. We know that more common-sense changes are needed and that they are needed now. That's why we're focusing on reducing red tape and creating the conditions to help people and businesses in Ontario thrive. We're doing this while maintaining and strengthening the important rules and regulations that are keeping people safe and healthy and are also protecting our environment.

When we formed government in 2018, Ontario had long been known as the most heavily regulated province in this country. That's a shame. Businesses were closing or leaving the province because of 15 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and overregulation. While this has had an impact on everyone, this has had a disproportionate impact on small businesses, which make up the backbone of Ontario's economy.

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In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we have amazing small businesses. To hear how happy they are about some of the initiatives our ministers have brought in—that's why they're staying here in our province. We need to continue to attract more business to our communities.

According to a survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, nearly 40% of small business owners may not have gone into business if they knew about the burden of government regulation. Businesses felt like they were being attacked rather than supported. As a result, we lost good-paying jobs in communities right across this province. We knew that that had to change, and we're getting it done.

To date, this government has taken more than 500 actions to reduce unnecessary rules and regulations while protecting health and safety and the environment. These actions have reduced the number of regulatory compliance requirements affecting businesses and other regulated entities by approximately 6%, and they've eliminated more than 14,600 individual regulatory compliance requirements.

We've also pledged to introduce two high-impact red tape reduction packages every year, one each spring and the other in the fall, and we have delivered on that commitment. Since 2018, we have passed 11 high-impact pieces of red tape reduction legislation. Today, we're here debating the 12th.

Our work has not gone unnoticed. At the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we heard first-hand that our efforts are making a difference. Julie Kwiecinski, director of Ontario provincial affairs for the CFIB, said:

"The government has come a long way on red tape reduction since 2018, starting with the much-needed recount of the regulatory burden in legislation, regulations, policies and forms across government" to measure progress. This "and other measures, like bringing in two red tape reduction packages every year, publishing an annual burden reduction report and offsetting 125% of direct compliance costs within 24 months, have elevated Ontario's Red Tape Report Card grade to the current A-, one of the country's top scores." I just want to say that that is one of the country's top scores, so congratulations to the ministers and those who were before me who had this role.

It is clear that our government is getting things done. We are making remarkable progress in cutting bureaucratic red tape to save people and businesses money and time. With our latest red tape reduction package, we are taking action to ease regulatory burden and make life more affordable. This comprehensive bill aims to slash compliance costs to create more affordable homes, ensuring that the hard-working people of this province have more money in their pockets and a greater opportunity for a prosperous future. What else can you ask for?

Our red tape reduction measures have now saved them more than \$1.2 billion and 1.5 million hours in compliance costs every year. That's really important to a small business owner. Time is money, so saving that time is really impressive. That time and money can go back into their families, it can go back into their business, and it can go back to volunteering in their communities, where it should be.

This bill we're debating today, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, should save the businesses

and the people of Ontario even more time and money once fully implemented and focuses on red tape cutting where it is needed most: building our homes.

Speaker, we've come a long way, and we're proud of the work we've accomplished so far. We are grateful for the ideas shared by stakeholders, people across the province and our ministry partners who have worked diligently to streamline processes and modernized outdated practices across government.

In fact, my colleagues and I wouldn't be standing here today with this bill in our hands without the assistance of our partner ministries who work closely with us to put reducing red tape at the centre of everything we do. To everyone who has played an important part in making the latest red tape reduction package possible, thank you.

Our latest package, which includes the proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, has proposals for initiatives that improve all aspects of life and business. And I know that you've heard some today already this morning, but I'm going to share a little bit more.

We're providing Ontarians with better access to health care by making it faster and easier for internationally educated health professionals to start working in Ontario. This is great news. We're automatically validating vehicle permits for owners in good standing to save them time and money, and they should be spending that time with their families. We're reducing delays and costs for utility relocation projects to build roads and faster transit. We're reducing delays and costs for utility relocation projects, and we are attracting municipal investments by streamlining incentives to enable future investments by large-scale investors and create jobs. And we're setting service standards for permits and licence services delivery to businesses while creating a single window for businesses and entrepreneurs to track the status of their applications. Think how much time that will save each individual.

Today, businesses can track the status of sign permits, encroachment permits, entrance permits, and building and land use permits online at their convenience, with just a permit number and an access code. Many more permits will be added to the tracker soon so that businesses can focus on running their business rather than sitting on hold with a government official, which, we all know, is really annoying sometimes, when you're passed along from one to another to another when you just want to get your business done.

Speaker, when I talk about burden reduction, know that our government acknowledges the importance of having robust rules and regulations in place. They help protect public health, safety and the environment. They keep our children safe when they're at school. They protect workers so they can come home to their families every day. And they ensure our environmental protections remain strong—one of the best, strongest in the world.

Our goal with the burden reduction initiatives we're putting forward today is to ensure that we no longer rely on the rules and regulations that are burdensome, inefficient or outdated and that the ones we do rely on are current, enforced properly, predictable and consistent.

Speaker, we will never stop working to improve government services and reduce unnecessary burdens on people and businesses. That is why every time the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction considers a new idea for a red tape reduction package, we draw on the seven guiding principles that consistently direct our efforts to reduce red tape as enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act.

The first principle is aligning with national or international standards when possible because it reduces time and cost required to adhere to certain regulations.

The second principle is that small businesses would have less onerous compliance requirements when compared to larger businesses.

The third principle is that any entity subject to regulations should be provided accessible digital service wherever possible.

The fourth principle is that regulated entities, like businesses, services and the broader public sector organizations, that demonstrate excellent compliance should be recognized.

The fifth principle is that unnecessary reporting should be reduced and steps should be taken to avoid requiring regulated entities to provide the same information to government repeatedly.

The sixth principle is that instruments should focus on the user by using clear communication, setting reasonable response times and establishing a single point of contact.

And finally, the seventh principle, Speaker: This is that the instrument should specifically design results that regulated entities must meet rather than specific methods used to obtain the result.

Speaker, what I have spoken about today are just a few examples of the initiatives in the proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, and in our broader spring 2024 red tape reduction package. These proposed changes would help open doors to economic opportunities and reduce unnecessary burdens for individuals and small businesses.

I want to again thank everyone who has contributed to this latest red tape reduction package. To develop a package like this, we have to work collaboratively across government and with our ministry partners, and we also need to consult with a range of stakeholders and people across the province to build an inventory of ideas. And I thank them.

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The best ideas to reduce red tape come from those who experience it each and every day. We are grateful for their feedback, and we want to continue the engagement, which helps guide our work to create a modernized regulatory enforcement that works for everyone. The bill and package before us today are proof that feedback we receive from our stakeholders and general public is helping to streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government.

In addition to the direct engagement we do with people, businesses, not-for-profits and the broader public sector across Ontario, we also have a dedicated online portal at

ontario.ca/redtape. I'll just repeat that in case somebody wants to jot that down: It's a portal. It's at ontario.ca/redtape. So you can go online if you have some ideas on how we can cut red tape and make businesses and life more affordable and efficient for you and your family. We've so far received hundreds of submissions through that portal, and we look forward to hearing and seeing hundreds more.

Building on the previous red tape reduction bills and packages, the impact of these proposed measures would streamline processes and modernize outdated practices across multiple areas of government and multiple sectors of Ontario's economy.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to hearing further debate on this bill, and I urge the members opposite to vote in favour of these important changes, as we heard at committee over the last couple of weeks.

I also look forward to continuing our province's effort to reduce burden through further action around red tape reduction packages.

On this, I just want to say, it has been an absolute pleasure sitting at committee, listening to people. And if anybody, again, has any ideas they want to share with us, we're open all summer to hear your feedback—because life is short, so let's make it easier for us to run a business and have the opportunity to participate in our communities with our local members. If anybody wants to have a round table, please invite me to come along. I'm happy to listen to the concerns of our small business owners.

And on that note, I just want to thank the Speaker and everyone for their time this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now go to questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In committee, we heard time and time again from stakeholders—from the Ontario Home Builders' Association to environmental groups to farming associations—saying that we need a whole mix of homes in Ontario, and those homes should include the opportunity to build fourplexes as of right in towns and cities across Ontario.

Can this government move forward with permitting fourplexes as of right in towns and cities across Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I know the member has raised this often, and it is something that the opposition raise consistently when it comes to housing policy. Frankly, Madam Speaker, half the province, our most populated communities, already have as-of-right four, and it has not generated a significant amount of housing. That is why, in this bill, we have removed obstacles so that the as-of-right three can actually provide us the housing that we want.

We don't stand in the way of any community that wants to provide as-of-right four. In fact, we encourage them to do so. There is no law in the province of Ontario that forbids a community from mandating as-of-right four. The city of Toronto has done that. I think they had somewhat less than 80 applications for that. So there are obstacles that have to be removed out of the way. That's why this

bill takes a direct line of sight on as-of-right three, making sure that it works, and we'll move forward with that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member from Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the associate minister and the PA for the wonderful presentation.

I would say this bill, Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, is revolutionizing the zoning and rezoning process in Ontario. Thank you to the minister's leadership and his team. I was a former municipal councillor. I could see the process. The minister always talks about two things: Why are the housing prices so high and people couldn't afford it? Number one is infrastructure; number two is the process.

Cutting red tape is talking about the process. I've seen through my eyes study upon study and consultation after consultation to get zoning processes moving, to build the homes faster. This bill is expediting the process to build more apartments, more affordable housing for students, seniors and low-income families, and this is a wonderful bill.

My question to the minister, then: Could you explain more and share about how we are expecting more housing through this bill and changing the zoning process?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Markham–Thornhill for this very important question. One of those ways—as we mentioned, I believe, in all of our remarks today—was student housing. We're exempting that from the Planning Act for our universities.

I think of the University of Guelph, who have lots of students. It's a great university in Guelph there, but they need student housing. But as the minister mentioned, those students now are in the community, taking rentals out of that stock from the local community. If we build student housing, they can then move into student housing and there is more rental stock for many workers—and because of the investments we're attracting through our auto manufacturing, I know there are many in Guelph.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is back to the minister. Minister, people want this government to be a leader on approving missing middle housing. They don't want a bystander.

My question is about what I heard in committee when it came to the issue of building low-density housing on farmland and green space. We had organizations from the National Farmers Union to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture say very, very clearly that they're very concerned about this bill and how it will make it easier for municipalities to say yes to sprawl, with no real justification, and also make it easier for developers to contest a municipal decision to say no to sprawl, even though we know that there is more than enough land available to meet our housing targets.

Why continue down the path of unsustainable sprawl when we know we have better options?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The Associate Minister of Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for the question. I guess I'm not sure I agree with the premise of her question, but I would say that when I look across Ontario—and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will agree, I know, that we are feeding more Ontarians today than we ever have. We produce more food. We export more food than we consume. Yields and production continue to grow.

We've doubled the size of our population since I was in high school, a long time ago. So we are growing, yes, as a population but we're also looking at infill and density, and we're doing it well, and we can do even better. But people need roofs over their head. And all land isn't created equal; remember that: The classes of land are different. So we are focused, focused desperately, on making sure we continue to support our rural communities, our farmers, our agribusinesses, but most importantly, we have to get roofs over people's heads. It's a balance, and we're going to continue to make it work.

We've created thousands of new jobs. These people need homes, and I would suggest to the member opposite that they are not just going to be in big cities. They're coming to rural towns and villages. We're going to get homes. We're going to get roofs over people's heads.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Rick Byers: I really appreciate the representatives from the government talking about the red tape reduction bill. It's quite extraordinary: Since our government came to power in 2018, this is, as I understand, the 13th red tape reduction package. It's really an amazing achievement.

This stuff is, perhaps like me, not very glamorous—
Interjections.

Mr. Rick Byers: Okay; thank you for the feedback. Unlike me, it's very glamorous. Anyway, it's a really important element in so many different areas, be it infrastructure, comments on housing or other areas.

Maybe I could ask either the associate minister or the parliamentary assistant just to summarize the impact that this particular bill will have on getting housing built and our targets. Whether it's in infrastructure or otherwise, it's just very, very helpful to get a sense of how it will impact our housing goals.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The Associate Minister of Housing.

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Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Sorry to the associate minister there.

I have to say, the big part of this we have to remember is we're saving people, we're saving businesses \$1.2 billion and 1.5 million hours in red tape. That is huge.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the panel that I've been chairing over the last couple of weeks. We've had experts

from municipalities come in; people from northern Ontario, Peel, Hamilton, York; experts in the field; small developers; large developers; architects—people who are experts—and we've had such amazing discussions of how we can streamline some processes. And that's it: What need to do with municipalities is streamline the processes. It should not take seven years to build a school.

In my riding, we have a school. We want to get shovels in the ground. We want to get these kids in a new classroom. It should not take seven years. Why is it taking so long to get shovels in the ground? Why is it so long to get permits from the school? Why is a process of a functional building taking so long? So we're gathering experts around the table, and we've had numerous meetings to find out some solutions. How do we get municipalities and developers to work together? How do we get municipalities and community members to work together?

We're getting it done. We'll continue to work on this path because what we can do for people who want to build hospitals and schools and homes is make sure the process is straightforward and clear and understandable so we're not wasting all this time. It should not take seven years to build a school.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Just to point out and respond to the comments that the associate minister said: Unfortunately, in the provincial planning statement, now municipalities don't need to demonstrate that prime agricultural farmland is at risk before they approve a development, so we're very concerned about the potential loss of prime agricultural land and the government's decisions to do that.

I want to speak about third-party appeals. This government did some last-minute dealing where they've banned third-party appeals to the lands tribunal except for a few key players, including developers, major industry and companies near a site. Why bias the lands tribunal in that fashion?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): To answer, the MPP from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: My answer to my colleague across the way is, we continue to consult with our home builders to get homes built across Ontario.

It's telling, colleagues, that my colleague across the way does not trust our municipal colleagues to make sound planning decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF PINS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions on a point of order, I believe.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Point of order—thank you: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous

consent to allow members to wear pins in recognition of June being Italian Heritage Month.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has moved unanimous consent to allow members to wear pins in recognition of June being Italian Heritage Month. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORMAN MAKER

Mr. Dave Smith: On Friday, May 3, I had the honour of attending a ceremony at the Peterborough armouries to name a bridge on Highway 115 after an OPP officer. May 3 was chosen for the ceremony because on that date in 1928, Provincial Constable Norman F. Maker was called to attend a disturbance with a possible weapon at the Montgomery House Hotel in Peterborough. When the officers arrived, the suspect fled up a flight of stairs to his room. PC Maker and his partner pursued the suspect up the stairs, and the suspect emerged from his room with a handgun. The suspect proceeded to discharge his weapon, killing Norman and wounding his partner.

PC Norman Maker was the third OPP officer officially killed in the line of duty in Ontario's history.

Norman Maker was only 32 years old. He was survived by his wife, Muriel, and their two daughters, Norma, who was three, and Connie, who was only three months old.

All of this came to light when Norman's oldest daughter, Norma, passed away on December 4, 2021, and her obituary told the story of her father. From that obituary, the Peterborough detachment started the work to honour PC Maker. They found the newspaper reports and his official death certificate to validate the story, and on May 3 of this year, the 96th anniversary of the day that PC Maker was killed, he was finally honoured.

Norman F. Maker: a hero in life, not in death.

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Originally, workers' compensation was designed to make up for the loss of income, including retirement pension income, when a worker becomes permanently disabled because of their work; but this has not been the case for years. In 1998, the Mike Harris government cut WSIB retirement contributions from 10% to 5% and reduced the loss-of-income amount from 90% to 85%. The result? Poverty when an injured worker reaches retirement age.

In today's world, many people choose or are forced to work well past the age of 65, but the WSIB ceases compensation at age 65 regardless of circumstances. This is age discrimination.

Then, there is the lump sum payment at age 65 that skews an injured worker's income for a year, raises their taxes and makes them ineligible to apply for other supports. Legislating poverty for injured workers while

giving away \$1.5 billion of so-called surplus to employers is unconscionable.

If this government is truly working for workers, they will bring the WSIB back to its original purpose: compensation for as long as the disability lasts; security of benefits and retirement income; and no cost to the public. This is necessary, it's possible and it must be done.

EVENTS IN OAKVILLE NORTH-BURLINGTON

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: One of my favourite things this time of year is to get out and support all the worthwhile charity runs, hikes and walks that take place in Oakville North-Burlington and across our community. To highlight just a few, I recently participated in the Run4Lighthouse, which raised over \$250,000. Now in their 25th year, Lighthouse, in Oakville, offers grieving children, youth and their families a place to receive grief support and to connect with others following the death of a loved one.

Just this past weekend, I joined the Carpenter Hospice hike. Carpenter Hospice, located in the heart of Burlington, opened their doors over 20 years ago. Today, this 11-bedroom hospice has welcomed over 3,000 people as they go through their end-of-life journey.

Coming up on June 15, I will be joining hundreds of people for the Heartache2Hope 5K Walk2Remember, along Bronte Heritage Waterfront Park. Heartache2Hope provides healing support to children, teens and adults who've experienced a death of a loved one by suicide.

Speaker, these are just a few of the many charity runs that take place over the summer in our community. Each play a vital role, and the staff and volunteers deserve to be recognized for the compassionate care they provide. Thank you for fostering a spirit of community while raising valuable funds for these worthwhile causes.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Jeff Burch: I received a letter this month from Bart Coleman, pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran in Welland and First Lutheran in Port Colborne, highlighting the staggering number of people using food banks in Niagara. They wanted to know what the government was doing to address this crisis. I had no answer for them. Food banks receive very little government support. They depend on charity and are barely hanging on these days.

Jon Braithwaite, CEO of the Hope Centre in Welland, will tell you they continue to see a steady increase in clients. He also noted 2,364 Wellanders used their food bank for the very first time last year. They struggle to ensure they have enough food on the shelves and cannot keep up with the demand.

With social assistance rates remaining well below the poverty line, this government continues to legislate poverty in Niagara and across Ontario. Christine Clark Lafleur is the CEO of Port Cares in Port Colborne. She says that food banks like Port Cares are seeing families that used to donate food now have become clients.

While food banks are on the brink of collapse and cannot keep pace with the growing need in our communities, this government is handing over a billion dollars to corporations in order to put beer in corner stores one year earlier than it was already scheduled to happen. What a cruel and twisted sense of priorities. What a slap in the face to those who are on social assistance as well as those who work every day to help feed hungry families in our communities.

Let's hope this government rethinks its priorities. How can you trust a government that puts early access to beer in corner stores ahead of access to food and shelter for its poorest citizens?

1020

WIARTON CENOTAPH GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Rick Byers: Colleagues, I want to share two recent important events in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

On May 25, I was in Warton to attend a wonderful ceremony for the unveiling of the cenotaph restoration. The cenotaph in Warton is located right downtown on Berford Street, a few blocks south of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 208. The town of South Bruce Peninsula and the Legion worked together on the restoration project, and commissioned Silvia Pecota to create a beautiful tribute to our soldiers, including Indigenous soldiers, who fought to give us all the freedoms we enjoy today. There were many in Warton to see the unveiling first-hand, including local residents, veterans and representatives from Saugeen Ojibway Nation. Congratulations to all who helped us make this great event possible.

Then, this past Friday, it was my pleasure to be in Dundalk with representatives of the Bluewater District School Board, members of Southgate council and the Minister of Education to announce the construction of a new Dundalk elementary school. Dundalk has been growing very substantially over the past several years, with many new families and new homes. The new school will accommodate 735 students, include 54 licensed child care spaces and have great recreational facilities. This will be a \$28-million investment.

Thank you to the Dundalk community for being a vibrant and growing presence. Thank you to the school board and council. And thank you, Minister Lecce, for your incredible support of the great people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for London West on a point of order.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, I seek to unanimous consent to wear the kaffiyeh that was gifted to me by London's Muslim and Palestinian community during my member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West is seeking the unanimous consent of the

House to wear a kaffiyeh during her member's statement. Agreed? I heard some noes.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This morning, I met with representatives of the National Council of Canadian Muslims to discuss the urgent need for legislation to address rising Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism in Ontario. June 6 will mark three years since the heinous act of hate-motivated terrorism that took the lives of four members of London's Afzaal family in 2021, shaking our community to its core.

While the London terror attack was the most deadly incident of Islamophobia in Ontario, it was certainly not the first. And in the three years since, we have seen an alarming intensification of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism—especially in the wake of the violence in Gaza—in our schools, on our streets and in our communities.

In 2022, I was proud to co-sponsor Our London Family Act, legislation that sets out comprehensive measures to proactively combat Islamophobia and all forms of hate. Shockingly, the government refused to allow the bill to be debated, saying it would be studied instead and brought back. Two years later, there has been no study, no legislation, no opportunity for debate, and no increased protection from harassment, discrimination and hate.

Speaker, all Ontarians deserve to feel safe in their workplaces, schools and communities. If this government is not prepared to heed the urgent call of Ontario's Muslim community, the NDP is. The need for legislated action has never been greater, and we hope that this time the government will support our efforts and pass our bill.

ARTHUR HAMLIN

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to acknowledge a young man from the Carleton riding who has overcome the greatest of obstacles in pursuit of his dream. Arthur Hamlin is from the Ottawa suburb of Riverside South in the riding of Carleton. He grew up in a family where his father, grandfather, uncle and brother all played professional football. Arthur was on his way to adding his name to that list after accepting a scholarship to Colgate University.

In 2021, Arthur noticed a lump on his neck. Antibiotics prescribed by his trainers did not help. When he returned home to Ottawa, an ultrasound and biopsy confirmed his worst fears: He had cancer.

He stayed home from school for a year and underwent six months of aggressive chemotherapy treatments for Hodgkin's lymphoma. He got a job at a local gym and worked out at 6 a.m. on mornings when he was able to do so.

In 2022, he was cancer-free. He went back to school at Colgate and played for two more seasons while furthering his education.

On Friday of last week, Arthur Hamlin's dream finally came true. He played his first CFL game as a member of

the Montreal Alouettes for a game at TD Place in Ottawa, the stadium where he grew up dreaming of playing in the CFL. He played in front of his family, friends and everyone who supported him through his battle with cancer.

His attitude and perseverance have inspired everyone in the Carleton riding, especially me. Thank you for being an amazing and inspirational role model. Arthur, you have made us all proud.

STUDENT ISSUES

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: This month, I had the pleasure of visiting Laura McIntosh and Julia Bukala's grade 10 civics class. They were amazing. I had a great chat with staff and students about the concerns they shared and what they would like to see our government do.

First, they had concerns about staffing. Recently, the WRDSB announced it was laying off over 100 teachers because they faced massive budget shortfalls. Students shared concerns about bigger class sizes and less connections with adults. One ESL student described her need for support, saying, as someone new to Canada, learning English without support staff makes her feel lost.

OSSTF echoed her concerns in a recent announcement, sharing that only 2.2 support staff per 1,000 students exist in secondary schools; that EAs, CYWs and para-professionals are underpaid and overworked, leading to worsening issues of recruitment and retention.

But students are most united in their frustration about grocery gouging. They watch their families pick up items on the shelves, look at the price and put it back. They see their families struggling to put healthy meals on the table—all while big grocery giants report record high profits. They echoed industry observers' concerns that less competition is leading to higher food costs. Students urged our government to take action to address the rising grocery prices, like endorsing the grocery code of conduct, which both everyday Ontarians and the agricultural sector have lobbied for.

Thank you, students.

WORLD CROKINOLE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the village of Tavistock hosted the annual world crokinole tournament.

Since 1999, players have been coming from far and wide to participate in the crokinole fun. With both recreational and competitive sections, the players range from the age of seven to 90. It's truly an event for everyone.

It was great to see so many families taking part in the action, enjoying local food from vendors and cheering on the competitors. There was also \$6,500 in cash and prizes awarded, including a prize for the top female player. Congratulations to all this year's winners.

This event has been bringing my community of Oxford together with the international crokinole community since 1999. Though the roots of this great game can be traced to

rural Ontario—and I'm sure many of us have a board tucked away at the cottage or at grandma's house—its popularity is increasing around the world every year. This year, the tournament welcomed top-ranking players from as far away as Japan, Sweden and Australia. And 25 years in, the tournament hosted more than double the number of folks who played in the inaugural tournament in 1999.

I'd like to congratulate the organizers, who are dedicated to continuing this wonderful tradition, and everyone who came out to flex their crokinole muscles this weekend. We're happy to have you in Tavistock. I'm already looking forward to training for next year on my crokinole board in my basement.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour to rise in the Legislature today and inform members of another important investment by this government of Ontario in the riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our government's ongoing efforts to build and improve local schools, the Ontario government has provided the St. Clair Catholic District School Board with approval to issue tenders for a \$3.3-million retrofit and addition at the site of the original Gregory A. Hogan Catholic School on Hogan Drive in Sarnia.

Once completed, this project will deliver a new, spacious student gymnasium addition, while also modernizing existing elementary space to better accommodate the needs of incoming Sacred Heart Catholic School students who will be moving to the new site upon this project's completion.

1030

This investment is part of our government's ongoing commitment to provide nearly \$16 billion to support school construction, repair and renewal over the next 10 years. Since 2018, the Ford government has approved or supported the development of over 300 school-related projects, including more than \$24 million for a new, larger Gregory A. Hogan Catholic School on the Rapids Parkway in Sarnia.

Mr. Speaker, these two projects I mentioned today are just a few of the many important investments our government is making in the future of Sarnia-Lambton. I look forward to sharing more great news again soon.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a very special guest: Mr. Kadri Dakaj, the consul general of the Republic of Kosovo in Toronto. Please join me in warmly welcoming him to the Legislature today.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm very proud to welcome to Queen's Park my incredible constituency assistant, Alida

Troini and her dear mother, Febronia Troini, today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I don't believe that he's here yet, but I would like to introduce a very special guest from Etobicoke Centre: Jack Boeki, who turned 100 years old this past Friday. Jack is a Holocaust survivor but also a World War II veteran. He was born in 1924 in the Netherlands, and of course the Second World War changed everything.

Jack had a series of miraculous escapes and eventually escaped to France, where he joined the underground resistance. With fake documents, Jack was able to go to the UK, from where he went to the United States for military training. In early 1944 he returned to Europe, now as an agent of the counter-intelligence corps.

On June 8, just two days after the initial D-Day landings, Jack's team of agents landed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France. Jack's unit followed the US advance fighting forces, liberating camps and arresting spies, collaborators and anyone who posed a threat to the Allies. When the war ended, Jack and his unit were assigned to the security force at the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

Dear Jack and his loving family: Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for spending your birthday with us today.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'd like to welcome community leaders from the National Council of Canadian Muslims: Uthman Quick, Hooriya Zafar, Wisam Osman, Ghazala Fauzia, Khalid Rashid, Nafisa Ahmad, Sheneeza Kanji, Mohammad Ijaz Tahir, Nehal Al Tarhuni. Welcome to your House. I'm looking forward to meeting with you later today.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce my guest, Paul Marchildon, who is here from Simcoe North. I'm glad we were finally able to schedule time for you to be here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Rob Flack: I'd like to welcome Owen Bachert, our intern for Elgin–Middlesex–London this summer, a political science student at the King's University College.

Hon. Michael D. Ford: Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the government, I too would like to welcome the National Council of Canadian Muslims and leaders from Ontario Muslim communities who are here at Queen's Park today.

I'd also like to let everyone know and invite you all to room 228-230 this evening at 6 p.m. for a reception.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House today six members of my extended family:

—from Hamilton, my cousin Colleen Meyer and her husband, Fred Meyer, both dedicated Hamiltonians and big Ticats fans—Fred, an engineer with Stelco, and Colleen, a banker with Scotiabank;

—my young uncle Frank Switzer, a former Queen's Park staffer, now with the CPP Investments board, and his lovely wife, my aunt Gwen, a long-time educator of our children; and

—my great-uncle Ray Switzer from Ottawa, a former justice of the peace and a great public servant, and his

lovely wife, Mary-Patricia, my aunt Pat, from Ottawa, a great educator who welcomed the Honourable Bill Davis as education minister to her school in the 1960s.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm very pleased to be able to welcome today, from my constituency office in Ottawa, my executive assistant, Darren Tyrrell, and from my Queen's Park office, my legislative assistant, Samantha Webber–Gallagher.

Thanks for all the work you do on behalf of Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome Shahzada Benazir from World Trade Developers, who is hosting the Lifestyle Expo Business and Investors Conference in Brampton on September 26 and September 27. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With the agreement of the House, I'd like to continue with the introduction of visitors.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm so pleased today that we're being joined by the National Council of Canadian Muslims for their lobby day. I want to welcome everyone to their House here at the Legislature and encourage everyone among my colleagues to join us for the reception this evening at 5 o'clock in rooms 228 and 230. I'm very honoured to be able to speak at that time. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. June is Italian Heritage Month and today, at 12 o'clock, I hope everyone will come out and join us in raising the Italian flag to celebrate la Festa della Repubblica, the independence of Italy.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I just wanted to echo the words of the minister and welcome all those that are here for the raising of the Italian flag at lunch today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'd like to take this opportunity to wish our member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry a very happy birthday.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I just wanted to introduce a powerful page from beautiful Beaches–East York, Hosanna Ledetu. His mother works here as well in our precinct properties. So welcome to the chamber and thanks for all you do, Kalkidan.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for entertaining me one more time. The Holocaust survivor and World War II veteran Jack Boeki and his family have finally arrived in the gallery. So I would just ask that we stand up and welcome them to Queen's Park. I wish them a—

Applause.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order. The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I seek unanimous consent of the House to wear these purple and green ribbons in honor of Our London Family.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear purple and green ribbons in honour of Our London Family. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have one more introduction of visitors. In the Legislature today is a former member of the Legislature, representing the riding of Davenport in the 40th Parliament, Jonah Schein, and he's joined in the gallery by his children, Hope and Ori. Welcome back to Queen's Park. We're glad to see you.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the Leader of the Opposition has something.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Just another introduction, Speaker, with your permission?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm really pleased today to be joined in the Speaker's gallery here by a number of important people—in addition to, of course, a former MPP for Davenport, Jonah Schein, and his children, Hope and Ori, as you mentioned.

I also want to welcome my principal secretary, Stephanie Nakitsas; her father, George Nakitsas, who is a former principal secretary to Ed Broadbent and a senior adviser to Jack Layton for many, many years; as well as my daughter Lila Berger-Stiles, who is back from university.

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

I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who gathered here and continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Meegwetch.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I want to ask everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem, led this morning by the member for Niagara West.

Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.

Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members will please take their seats.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. Speaker, 2.4 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor right now. People in small and rural communities are travelling just enormous distances to find their emergency rooms closed. More and more patients are being forced to turn to for-profit clinics

where they're being asked to pay up for extra charges and fees.

Speaker, with this in mind, my question is to the Premier: Why is the government choosing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to get out of the Beer Store contract that would have expired in a year anyway?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Oakville and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: That's typical Liberal-NDP math. I might add, with that as well, I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for bringing financial literacy to our high schools, because clearly the members opposite could take some lessons from there.

Speaker, the government of Ontario is ending a 97-year monopoly by a 10-year horrible deal that was signed by the previous Liberal government. Our government is bringing in convenience and competition. That's what we ran on. That's what the people have elected, Speaker, and that's what the people of Ontario want.

And do you know what, Speaker? I'm willing to bet, when the cameras are off, the cameras are away, the members opposite will be in a convenience store on a Friday night picking up a bottle of wine after a rough week at Queen's Park.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I mean, this is what we're talking about here, are facts. In fact, it's the government's own numbers.

The government themselves have admitted that it's going to cost at least \$225 million to break this contract early. But we all know on this side that the true cost could be so much higher. When you factor in the lost revenue to the LCBO or other associated costs of this deal, we're hearing it could reach as much as a billion dollars—a billion dollars just to get out of a contract that would have expired anyway.

People are shaking their heads at this terrible deal, Speaker. Is this costly contract exit just another one of the Premier's vanity projects that everybody else in this province is going to be left paying for?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Again, Speaker, I don't know where this math is coming from, but it's probably the same people that signed the green energy deal, which was one of the worst deals ever recorded in the history of Ontario, and the same people that brought that 10-year deal. That was a horrible deal, which rose taxes and obviously did away with convenience.

So, Speaker, our government is providing choice and convenience, and we're doing it and we're helping smooth the transition for workers through a difficult period.

Clearly, we understand, here on this side, why workers en masse are coming over to support the Progressive Conservatives. We are bringing legislation that is supportive of workers. The members opposite are clearly not supportive of workers, because they don't want to help workers through this transition.

Why are we proceeding with this? Number one, economic growth: This is going to create 7,500 jobs right here in the province of Ontario, \$200 million in GDP. Second, it's helping convenience and competition, something the opposition is against. And third, we are supporting small businesses, the backbone of our province here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the government wants to talk bad deals? Let's talk about a 99-year deal with the 407, or how about a 95-year deal for a luxury spa? I mean, come on, give me a break.

People in Ontario are putting off all kinds of things right now because their bank accounts are being stretched to the limit. They're making very careful choices every day, and do you know what? They expect their government to do the same with the public purse.

But with this Premier, it's one vanity project after another—licence plates you can't read, partisan promo ads—and it is the people of Ontario who always pay the price.

So, to the Premier: People in this province are facing real issues. Will the Premier start focusing on them instead of his own personal projects?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Mr. Speaker, this goes back to—you were mentioning about the beer and wine in the corner stores, ready to drink. I agree with my colleagues: Each and every one of you, why don't you give us your word you'll never show up to a convenience store, you'll never show up to a retail store—never going to happen, never, ever going to happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is in comparison to—the NDP and Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals want to increase taxes. They're all right with a monopoly. They're all right with three international companies controlling the market for 97 years. This is about convenience for the people. This is about creating another \$800 million to a billion dollars of economic development, 7,500 jobs just in the convenience, not mentioning the retail. Isn't it amazing everyone from the wine growers to the wine producers, the beer producers, they're all for it? The only people who aren't for it are the NDP and the—

Interjections.

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

The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: A billion dollars to get out of a deal that was going to expire in a year? Something doesn't smell right about this. We know it. The people of Ontario

know it. We're not going to stop fighting to find out more. This smells just like the greenbelt.

And I want to tell you, Speaker, this is why it matters: Every few days we hear of yet another unplanned closure of an emergency room or a critical hospital department.

1050

Last year, there were more than 1,000 emergency room and urgent care closures in the province of Ontario. That means families facing emergencies drove to their local hospital and found the doors were closed.

Huron–Bruce declared a state of emergency. While they are experiencing ongoing and simultaneous closures, they're being told they will lose even more beds.

What does this government have to say to Ontarians scared about losing their emergency rooms?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, these are not issues that started overnight, and these are not issues that are going to be solved overnight.

Having said that, I am very proud of the investments that our government has made, whether it is in 50 hospital capital builds—new, expanded, renovated hospitals that are happening now under the Premier's watch.

When we see the Canadian residency matching service, which matches residents, new medical students who want to practise in their specialty—for the second year in a row, historically, we have matched 100% in the province of Ontario. It never before happened until the last two years.

We're expanding medical school seats.

We want to make sure that communities have access to primary care, which is why we have expanded 78 new primary care multidisciplinary teams.

We're getting the work done after, frankly, decades of neglect from the previous governments.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Over 1,000 emergency rooms closed last year. That is nothing to be proud of. Six years in, this is this government's record.

While local hospitals are begging this government for funding to keep their doors open and help them retain staff, the government is far more focused on cutting deals for this Premier's vanity projects that are going to cost Ontarians a billion dollars. Instead of dedicating funding to keep emergency rooms open, the government is spending millions and millions to break a contract with LCBO and the Beer Store just one year early.

So my question to the Premier again is, why is this government more focused on cutting a deal than getting health care for Ontarians?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I have to compare and contrast. We've talked about the expansions that we are doing in our health care system. I look at what the Liberal government did, where they actually cut 50 residency spaces in the province of Ontario. What does that mean?

That means for every year that they were in power, there were 50 fewer medical students who were able to practise and train in the province of Ontario, and yes, that does have an impact now. When I think of the unfortunate Bob Rae days, when we had nurses literally graduating in Ontario and going to the States—and many of those nurse didn't come back.

We need to have a system that ensures that as we train, as we give opportunities, we are going to make sure that those opportunities are happening here in Ontario.

Speaker, 2,400 new physicians who were given a licence to practise in the province of Ontario last year, and almost half of those were internationally educated and trained physicians who want to be in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't really know what this Premier doesn't get about the question.

People in the province of Ontario are struggling right now. They are making choices every day to put off spending decisions because they are in so much pain, because they can't keep up with their bills, because they're worried they're going to lose the roof over their heads. That's where people are in the province of Ontario six years after this government was elected—hospital rooms closed, emergency rooms closed, 2.4 million Ontarians without a family physician.

How many times does a parent have to show up at a closed emergency room with a sick kid before this government starts to put their needs ahead of this government's and this Premier's vanity projects?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: The gall. The gall—the Leader of the Opposition saying about affordability.

They voted against the 10.7-cent reduction in gas. They voted against getting rid of the tolls on the 412 and 418. They voted about getting rid of the sticker that costs people hundreds of dollars every single month. They voted against the One Fare, making sure people could have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier, please take your seat.

There's too much noise. Most of it is coming from the government side at the moment. The Premier has the floor. I want to hear him.

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: They voted against any tax cuts. They voted against the reduction of hydro rates here.

But let's remember, when they were in power, along with the Liberals, they destroyed this province, chased 300,000 jobs out of the province. Well, there's 700,000 more people working today—

Interjections.

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

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. On May 14, a tragedy which no parent should ever have to face happened at a Trenton public high school. A 16-year-old student with special needs, who was vulnerable and had Dravet syndrome, was left unattended in a sensory room, unsupervised for hours—an amazing young person filled with love, light and kindness. Dravet syndrome is a rare genetic form of epilepsy, which meant he was prone to seizures, typically while asleep.

Landyn Ferris fell asleep, later to be found unresponsive, exactly the reason why he was not supposed to be left alone. This is a heartbreaking story that many families fear of underfunding and understaffing in our public education institutions.

Premier, what steps will your government take so that what happened to Landyn never happens again?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The loss of a child is an unspeakable tragedy. I think I speak for all parliamentarians in expressing our deepest condolences to the family and friends at Trenton High School, to this young man who passed away and to the entire Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board community.

I know that the coroner of Ontario and the school board have launched an investigation into this incident, into this tragedy. I know all parties will work together to ensure this tragedy does not happen again.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Landyn's parents are living every parent's worst nightmare. Every child should come home safely at the end of a school day. We don't need to wait for the results of an investigation into Landyn's death to make sure that all children are safe at school. Parents of kids with special needs have been warning for years that underfunding and shortage of resources were putting their kids at risk. This year, nearly two thirds of principals in Ontario have had to ask parents to keep their children with special needs home because they can't keep them safe at school.

Will the Premier commit today to the necessary investments in special education and to ensure that we have enough caring, qualified adults necessary to keep kids safe in Ontario schools?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I recognize that the coroner of Ontario has launched an investigation. I'd encourage all members to respect that process.

Having said that, more broadly, I can affirm to the House that this government has increased supports in mental health and special education. In mental health, our funding is now up over 550% from 2018. We've annualized services for children who need them through the

summers. We've increased special education funding; this year, funding is up roughly \$117 million more than last year, with 3,500 additional EAs hired.

I know there's more work to do, and I look forward to doing it together.

TAXATION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The inflation and affordability concerns Ontarians are facing right now are a direct result of the federal carbon tax. Individuals and families are paying higher taxes and higher costs for the necessities of life, like food, gas and housing. The carbon tax is not working. It's adding more financial pressure for Ontarians, and there is no environmental gain. But the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberal caucus are supporting their federal buddies and a failed tax policy that has been proven not to work.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how our government is keeping costs down for the people as we all suffer from the Liberals' incompetence and insensitive economic management?

1100

Hon. Todd Smith: We are keeping cost down in spite of the costly federal carbon tax supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie—the price of gasoline, the price of groceries, the price of home heating all going up thanks to Justin Trudeau and Bonnie Crombie's tax supported by the NDP as well.

Now, we've taken a different pathway here in Ontario. We've reduced costs, like the 10.7 cents a litre at the pumps; One Fare for transit riders in Ontario, saving them \$1,600 a year; making sure we've eliminated the licence plate sticker fees and other taxes and fees to drive down the cost of living and ensure that we're seeing the type of growth that we're seeing in Ontario, at the same time ensuring that we have the power that we need, with a plan called Powering Ontario's Growth to ensure that we continue to see the multi-billion-dollar investments that we have been seeing right across our province.

You can do this, and it doesn't require a punitive carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the minister for his response and the great work he does within his ministry.

The people in my riding of Thornhill and across this province want an end to the Liberal carbon tax. They feel the impact every time they're at the gas pumps, buying groceries or paying their heating bill.

Ontarians are looking for relief, not more tax hikes. While our government, under the leadership of our Premier, has spoken out against the tax since day one, the NDP and the Liberals have not done the same. We know that the carbon tax makes life more difficult and is unfair to all Ontarians. That's why we won't give up our fight until this tax is abolished.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax unfairly impacts the people of Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, it's pretty clear, because it's impacting everything that we purchase day in, day out. At the grocery store, at the pumps, on our home heating bills, it's costing the people of Ontario more. Yet we have done everything we can to ensure we're combatting that increased carbon tax and ensuring that we have the low-cost power that we need so continue to see these multi-billion-dollar investments in our province.

Our economy is humming in Ontario. As the late Bob Cole would say, "Oh, baby." We are seeing investments right across Ontario. In the electric vehicle and the EV battery sector, we're looking like Connor McDavid, busting down the wing and breaking toward the goal, moving the Edmonton Oilers on to the Stanley Cup final for the first time in many, many years.

Let's all get together, let's support a Canadian team in the Stanley Cup finals and let's support getting rid of this carbon tax in Ottawa.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Dryden paper mill continues to harm the waters and the rivers in Grassy Narrows First Nation. Since the release of their report on high mercury levels in the English and Wabigoon Rivers last week, no one from this government, including the minister, has been in touch with Chief Turtle about the study.

Speaker, how many more studies should Grassy Narrows release before Ontario does anything about cleaning up the river?

Interjections.

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

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Our government will continue to take action to correct a historic wrong, and we'll continue to work with the Indigenous community toward remediation of this historic site when it comes to remediating the mercury contamination.

As the member knows—and I spoke about it last week—ministry technical experts met with Dr. Branfireun and the Indigenous communities to review the reports as part of their work on the panel's technical subcommittee. This was along with ministry representatives from Grassy Narrows as well as First Nations. Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, Eagle Lake First Nation, Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation are participants in these discussions.

Dr. Branfireun also confirmed additional work is still needed to finalize a report, including field sampling.

Speaker, let me be clear: Remediation efforts for the English and Wabigoon Rivers will be guided by science and by the best technical expertise. Contamination of the English and Wabigoon Rivers is a complex issue, but let me be clear: We remain to be committed to solve this, and our government takes this very seriously. Our first order of business has always been to correct a historic wrong, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That was a disappointing answer. The minister's answer should have been to order the immediate cleanup of the Wabigoon River and stop the ongoing mercury poisoning of Grassy Narrows First Nation.

A recent study confirmed that the mercury poisoning is worse than was thought—twice as bad, in fact. This a human and ecological disaster, and it has been going on for generations. For heaven's sake, Speaker, the time for studies has well passed.

Last week, you, the minister, committed to immediate action. So my question: Why didn't that immediate action include you, Minister, visiting directly Grassy Narrows First Nation so that you could see the devastating impact that this ongoing tragedy is having on the people that live there?

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

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: The report that the member is referring to in part was funded and commissioned by this government, in partnership with the First Nations communities, because, again, this government takes this matter very seriously. Our first order of business, when we first got elected in 2018—not today, but back in 2018—was to correct this historic wrong and take the immediate actions necessary.

As I already spoke about, the scientific and expertise work that is being done at the table is not the only thing we've just done. There is always additional work that is under way to really understand the extent and location of contamination in this river and system. This is something that was asked for. That is why the study is in place, to know the extent of the 250 kilometres downstream and what the impacts are on the historic contamination in Dryden.

This panel, as I mentioned, is funded in part with our government. It's a project—there's a project team that is doing the proper science. We're taking the politics out of this and referring to the science because this government remains committed to correcting this historic wrong.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Mines. In my riding of Brantford–Brant and across the province, families are feeling significant financial pressures due to the federal carbon tax. It is clear that the Liberal and NDP members in this House do not care how this costly tax impacts everyone in Ontario, especially in the north. They are shamefully choosing to ignore the concerns of people in their own ridings.

In contrast, our government is leaving no stone unturned to make life more affordable and to help keep costs down. But, Speaker, we cannot do it alone. The federal Liberals need to step up and do the right thing: abolish the tax.

Can the minister please tell this House why all members of the Legislature must push back against the federal carbon tax?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question from our great parliamentary colleague here from Brantford–Brant. He is doing a tremendous job.

This tax proves that they do not care about the people of the north who heat their homes with oil or propane while they make a living mining minerals to keep this province flourishing.

It's time to learn from our colleagues in north Nova Scotia, who, across all parties, passed a unanimous motion in the Legislature calling on their federal counterparts to vote against the carbon tax hike. It's disgraceful that the opposition and Liberals in this House do not have the same priorities as their Atlantic colleagues.

Make no mistake, Speaker: This Justin Trudeau tax on everything, supported by the Liberals and NDP members in this House, make it tougher for mining companies to operate. Mining companies in Ontario have had enough. Tell your friends in Ottawa to scrap this tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It is shameful that the Liberals and the NDP continue to disregard Ontarians' concerns over the carbon tax. They are not here for the people. Instead, they are supporting a future of more punitive taxes.

Life is already expensive for the hard-working individuals and families across our entire province. The very last thing they need to worry about is paying an ever-increasing Liberal carbon tax. Our government will continue to call for an end to this regressive vanity tax, attract more investments for our businesses and keep costs down for Ontarians, because we know that a better future is not created by hiking taxes.

1110

Since the opposition is unable to understand this simple concept, can the minister please explain why the carbon tax hinders Ontario's ability to grow? Thank you.

Hon. George Pirie: Speaker, thank you again to the member for the question. The mining industry is driving a major economic shift to EVs, the likes of which we have not seen since the oil boom at the turn of the last century.

BNN reported that the world is going to need to mine five times more copper than we have ever mined in history in the next 30 years, and 20 times more nickel. This will be a monumental effort, but it is also a generational opportunity to reshape our economy and create thousands of new jobs for the next generation.

Yet, the Liberals and NDP seem to be actively chasing away companies and major investments with the terrible taxes and tone-deaf statements like, "We don't need more roads." Well, Speaker, I've got news for them: Continue down this road and you will destroy not only the jobs and opportunities today, but also the hopes and dreams of the next generation.

It's long past for the NDP and Liberals in this House to stand with us and tell their buddies in Ottawa to stop taxing

the people into poverty and chasing away life-changing business opportunities—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Next question? The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Today, the Algonquin College board of governors is considering a motion to suspend the hairstyling and aesthetics programs for financial reasons. These programs graduate skilled trade workers, mostly women. The hairstyling program is so successful that it has a wait-list of 57 people, enough to open a second class. It is an affordable program that gives students a path to a stable career with a good income. That includes Indigenous students who choose Algonquin College because it welcomes their culture.

Speaker, this program is a success story that is in jeopardy today because of the lack of financial support for post-secondary institutions in Ontario. The member for Ottawa Centre and I wrote to the Minister of Colleges and Universities last Friday asking for more funding to save this program. Will she deliver that today?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. I want to remind the member that post-secondary institutions are autonomous institutions and make the decisions on programs for their own schools themselves. But I think what the member and I do both agree on is the importance of women in trades. Whether you are in hairstyling or you're a construction worker, you're a valued member of skilled trades.

I want to say I was recently in Indiana with the minister of small business and the Minister of Agriculture. I had the opportunity to be part of a round table on workforce development where I spoke about the importance of women in trades and some of the great programs that are happening here at Ontario's colleges. Thank you to Conestoga College for creating the Jill of All Trades program, which works directly with high school and elementary students to ensure that we're getting more women into the trades. So we'll continue to work with the students. But I think I agree we value the importance of skilled trade workers. I will be continuing to work with the school.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the minister: I appreciate the agreement in this House on women in the trades, but we need a little less money to end bad contracts for beer and we need a little bit more money in the college system to make sure that a program as successful as this one continues.

This program, the hairstyling and aesthetics program, is so popular that in the last two weeks, when the program found out abruptly that their program would be suspended, they have a petition of over 5,000 signatures. There are students in this program, in businesses affiliated to this program, that literally—I tell this House sincerely—cut the Prime Minister of Canada's hair; cut the federal Leader

of the Opposition's hair; that are active in our community. This is a success story. If we forward more money from Queen's Park, we can save this program.

Again, plaintive appeal to the minister, because I know she cares about skilled trades and women in the trades: Can we commit today to Algonquin College that money will flow to save this program, yes or no?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to both members for your questions and your concern about the college in your area. I want to assure the members that conversations are still ongoing, and I commit to updating you on any further conversations or further information that we have on the program and our conversations with Algonquin College.

But, as I spoke about the importance of trades and filling the gaps across this province in all areas of trades, I want to thank the Minister of Education for his work. Starting this fall, every student coming to grade 9 will complete two mandatory tech ed programs.

This will ensure that young women are having the opportunity to use their hands in school to look at the trades, and the work is continuing to be done through my ministry, and the Ministry of Labour as well. We want to ensure that there are more opportunities for young women to enter the trades because, we can admit, we need trades workers in every area of this province, in all different areas.

We will continue to work with our amazing Colleges Ontario to ensure that we have the skilled trade workers for the future.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, the provincial debt is higher than it has ever been, almost \$100 billion in five years. We have historic deficits. Government spending? By all accounts, it's out of control. Even the Premier's office budget has more than doubled in five years. That gravy train? Well, it just keeps on rolling.

Meanwhile, the services that Ontario families depend on? Well, they're failing, yet it's this Premier's newest priority to spend \$1 billion to get beer and wine in corner stores a little more than a year earlier than planned.

I'm not exactly sure what planet the Premier thinks that this would all be okay on, so maybe the Premier could explain to us—Speaker, through you—who exactly benefits from his billion-dollar boozedoggle.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's put this into context. When we came down here, we walked into a bankrupt company—that's what I call it. Three hundred thousand jobs were lost. Taxes went up through the roof. They increased the debt by \$100 billion alone.

What we've done is something that no other government has ever done that I could ever remember—federally, provincially, municipally. We increased revenues by \$64 billion, but we've never raised a tax. We've never raised a tax on the backs of people. We've reduced the burden of tax on the backs of people.

We reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion each and every single year. We've created the en-

vironment for 700,000 new people to be employed. We've seen \$43 billion of investment in the EV sector, \$20 billion in the tech sector and \$3 billion in the life science sector. We created more jobs than all 50 US states combined last year. That's what we've done.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm trying to figure out why the Premier is so hot and heavy to get booze at the quickie a year early. The only thing I can figure out is that it's going to make his billion-dollar buddies so much happier.

Meanwhile, 2.3 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor and that number keeps going up. Emergency rooms are closing. Rural hospitals are closing down. Seniors are waiting and not getting the care they need to live in their own home. And every day—every day, Speaker—more and more Ontario families are having to use their credit card instead of their OHIP card to access basic care that they need.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I know the other side doesn't like it, but maybe the Premier can explain why booze is such a high priority for him, and not the health care that Ontario families need.

Hon. Doug Ford: You know, Mr. Speaker, I ran a business for over 30 years. I get it. I've never seen a worse contract against the people of Ontario than what the Liberals signed with the big-three Beer Stores. It was a monopoly. They took advantage.

But you're okay with raising taxes. They're okay with raising taxes. They don't mind that. I've never seen a Liberal government, ever since I've been alive, that doesn't believe in one thing: Tax the people to death. Tax businesses to death until they leave the province.

We don't believe in taxation. We believe in growth through new revenues, new opportunities and more jobs. That's what we believe in. We will never raise a tax on the backs of the people, unlike you.

TAXATION

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Energy. At a time when affordability is already top of mind for many Ontarians, the Liberal carbon tax is continuing to drive costs up and up and up. And it's not just energy costs, Speaker. The cost of food, housing and much more are all being pushed up higher by this terrible tax. That's why it should be a given that all members in this Legislature oppose this tax. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Rather than joining our government in calling for an end to the carbon tax, the NDP and the Liberals want to see this tax tripled by 2030.

1120

Speaker, could the minister please explain what steps our government is taking to support our clean energy future without resorting to a carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Markham–Unionville for the question this morning.

There's no question about it; the carbon tax is impacting the cost of anything that gets delivered. Anything that comes from our farmers is going up in price. Groceries; household goods; the price at the pumps, obviously; home heating—it's all going up. It's all making life more expensive. So it's unreal to hear this phony outrage that comes from the opposition parties, or phony concern, when it comes to the cost-of-living crisis, when they support this punitive carbon tax that's coming from Justin Trudeau and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie.

Madam Speaker, we have a plan called Powering Ontario's Growth. It's a plan that's ensuring we continue to grow the economy, like the Premier was just talking about. Multi-billion-dollar investments from Windsor all the way to Ottawa and north into Sault Ste. Marie and far beyond, as we develop the Ring of Fire—there's so much happening in Ontario.

We don't need this punitive carbon tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for that response.

We hear it time and time again: The Liberal carbon tax only hurts Ontario families. As people in our province continue to struggle with high interest rates and rising cost of living, all governments should be putting forward measures that provide financial relief for individuals and families. Instead, the federal Liberals, supported by their provincial counterparts, are choosing to drive up the prices of day-to-day essentials like gas in the tank and groceries.

Speaker, Ontarians have had enough. They want to see this tax scrapped. Could the minister please explain to the House why this federal government must end the carbon tax today?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, the Markham–Unionville member is right again; the cost of this tax is already making life more unaffordable for the people of Ontario and unaffordable for the people right across our country.

That's why we've taken a different route, bringing in One Fare so transit riders can save up to \$1,600 a year, cutting the price at the pumps by 10.7 cents a litre on the Ontario gas tax, making sure we're eliminating the licence plate sticker fees, and so much more.

We also have this plan called Powering Ontario's Growth, which is ensuring that we're getting competitive investment in new generation in our province, unlike what the Liberals did previously with the very costly, punitive Green Energy Act. It drove up the price of energy in our province, making 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave for other jurisdictions. We're not doing that. We're lowering taxes. As a result, we've seen jobs roar back into Ontario—700,000 new jobs.

Let's scrap this tax today.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The Eglinton Crosstown was supposed to be completed by 2021. It's now 2024. This

project has no end date in sight and is costing Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars in cost overruns.

Will the government tell us when the Eglinton Crosstown will finally be open for service, or just admit that they have no idea when and how much more we have to pay?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much to the member for that question. We're embarking upon the largest expansion in public transit in all of North America, and we'll continue to do so. The Eglinton Crosstown project—we're all frustrated by it, but we know that construction is complete on it and we are now in testing mode.

If it was up to the NDP, they wouldn't want any of these projects to be built. They actually voted against the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. They voted against the Ontario Line. They don't support our investments in public transit, where we've brought forward measures on affordability—\$1,600 saved by transit users each year in the GTA and across.

We're going to continue to invest in public transit. We're going to continue to build and get shovels in the ground, like the Ontario Line and the Scarborough subway extension.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: Speaker, through you, I'd like to remind the minister that budget bills are confidence votes, and there's one thing we don't have confidence in: this government.

It's impossible to get real answers on the Eglinton Crosstown. That's because this government and its transit agency are actually spending thousands and thousands of dollars on lawyers to hide information from the public. Will the government finally come clean and tell us just what they are hiding and how much the costs have ballooned under their mismanagement?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let's talk about the confidence the people of this province have in this government. Throw back to the by-elections: two by-election victories, in Milton and in London, because the people of this province believe in the vision that the Premier has, including two-way, all-day GO and over \$6 billion that we're going to invest into Milton to provide that community with more transit and public transit.

Let's talk about those opportunities that the NDP have had to support important projects, like the Eglinton Crosstown West extension that's going to put over 26,000 people within walking distance of public transit; the Ontario Line—40,000 people every single day. And these members, the NDP, are voting against that, not supporting that. The Liberals as well: For 15 years, they did absolutely nothing to build transit in this province. They voted against every one of our measures as we support public transit in this province.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're embarking upon the largest expansion of public transit in all of North America.

TAXATION

Mr. Nolan Quinn: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. The Liberal carbon tax is exacerbating the financial pressures many people in Ontario are currently facing, and I hear it every day in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

During a time of a rising cost of living and high interest rates, the federal Liberals decided to hike the carbon tax by another 23%. This punitive tax is making everything more expensive for everyone in Ontario, especially in the north, in cities like Thunder Bay.

While carbon tax queen Bonnie Crombie and her minivan caucus continue to work against us, we will not let that deter us from getting it done for the people of Ontario. It is time to scrap the carbon tax now.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why the people of Ontario cannot afford this Liberal tax grab?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He's an outstanding member of provincial Parliament. He's doing a great job as the parliamentary assistant to the health, and it's his birthday today.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I don't have the present that he's looking for, and that's a pause on the carbon tax. The official opposition in Ottawa have finally caught on to the concept, since that's what we've been doing now for a year or two: giving people relief at the pumps, giving northerners relief as we ship expensive cargo into isolated and remote communities.

I was in Sault Ste. Marie up to Wawa last week, and all I heard were people talking about how much more expensive it is to live. As people try to build new buildings in various communities along that beautiful stretch of highway, it was one thing: It was the cost and the impact the tax is having on it. The message—

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

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's not fair that families and businesses in northern communities are disproportionately impacted by the federal carbon tax. It's also not fair that, instead of supporting northern Ontario, the opposition are choosing to sit in their seats and do absolutely nothing.

Speaker, ignoring the detrimental effects the carbon tax has on northern Ontario is disrespectful to every person living in the north. The NDP and Liberals need to do better. They should join our government in calling on the federal government to eliminate this tax and put more money back in the people's pockets.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what the people of Ontario have to say about this regressive and unnecessary tax?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'm a good reporter. I've tried my best to chronicle the carbon tax times here. I've noticed, Mr. Speaker, that in an effort to ennoble the carbon tax, the king of the carbon tax and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, have been trying desperately

to make this cogent argument that a consumer carbon tax is the single, only environmental tax that you could have out there.

1130

As time has worn on, it seems like there might be a different way to do it. Now we're seeing a complete ablation from all of the folks that used to support the carbon tax—so the Mark Carneys, the Jagmeet Singhs: gone. They've washed their hands of this expensive tax because they know consumers are paying more. They can't afford it, and neither can northerners. They're no exception, Mr. Speaker. They have one message: Scrap the tax.

HOME CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Just a few weeks ago, this government turned their backs on 3.3 million Ontario caregivers by saying no to a benefit for unpaid caregivers in the province of Ontario.

Over the last few weeks, thousands of people in Niagara have contacted me and come to our office to sign a petition and say we need a caregiver benefit. At the ALS and the Crohn's fundraising walks this weekend, I heard loud and clear that we need a caregiver benefit.

My question is to the Premier. Will you listen to the 3.3 million caregivers in Ontario and the people of Niagara and support a caregiver benefit today?

Interjections.

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

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There is absolutely no doubt that we rely on and we include caregivers in all of our decisions when we are enhancing and improving the health care system here in Ontario.

I think of my own family, where we had people who were prepared to be part of a health care solution, working with clinicians, working with primary care physicians, working with PSWs to make sure that the care was being provided in community. It is exactly, frankly, why we have enhanced PSW and community care in our last provincial government, because we know how important it is to ensure the people who are able to stay in their own homes have that surrounding care that is so important, whether it comes from professionals like PSWs or, indeed, family and community members. We'll continue to do that job.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is back to the Premier. I hope—because I know he's had caregivers in his own family—he listens to this part of the question.

Long-term care in Ontario is failing. Home care in Ontario is failing. And those failings fall on the backs of our loved ones: our moms, our dads, our aunts, our uncles, our sons, our daughters. They make real sacrifices every day to take care of their family members who they love.

Nova Scotia has a caregiver benefit in place right now, Prince Edward Island is creating a caregivers benefit as we speak, and federal parties in Canada support a benefit as well.

Premier, will you admit you were wrong? Make the right decision today and create a direct caregiver benefit here in Ontario to help those 3.3 million people who need one today.

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

I recognize the member for Mississauga Centre and the parliamentary—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank that member for the question.

That member cannot be farther remote from the truth. The long-term-care sector in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on her choice of words and allow her—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you, Speaker.

One can look no further than to our recent budget to show how much we are building long-term care in the province of Ontario, with our ambitious goal of 58,000 new and redeveloped beds and our \$155-million commitment to the construction funding subsidy.

We are listening to the operators across the province of Ontario. We are getting shovels in the ground in nearly every community in the province of Ontario. After 15 years of building next to zero long-term-care beds, we are getting it done.

TAXATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business.

The Liberal carbon tax is one of the most harmful taxes this country has ever seen. It burdens families and small businesses and hinders economic growth and progress in our province.

Speaker, we know the people of Ontario deserve better. This is why our government has been fighting the carbon tax tooth and nail since day one, but it seems the Liberal members, under the leadership of the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, want to see this tax increased over time.

They are propping up their federal buddies' tax-grab agenda at the expense of Ontarians. We are not going to let that happen, Speaker.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain why Ontario small business owners want to see this tax abolished?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member for raising this important issue. Speaker, just over a week ago, I joined my colleagues the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister of Colleges and Universities in Indiana for the Global Economic Summit.

It was a great opportunity to once again meet with Governor Holcomb and many of the world's top economic and business minds. Each of us had an opportunity to highlight the measures our government has made to ensure Ontario is the jurisdiction to train, to invest and to grow.

From the UK to Australia, the EU to Peru, Premier Doug Ford and our government were being praised for creating the environment to attract and graduate the best talent needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The biggest hindrance for investment was the increased cost due to the federal carbon tax. Just imagine how much more attractive Ontario would be if the opposition NDP and Liberals did what's right for their entrepreneurs and called on Ottawa to scrap the tax—

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the associate minister for the response. The carbon tax doesn't work for our partners to the south and it's certainly not working for the people of Ontario. It is raising the price of everything and making life more difficult for hard-working Ontarian entrepreneurs.

Under the previous Liberal government, businesses in my riding of Richmond Hill saw their electricity prices skyrocket and people couldn't afford to power their homes. Now, the independent Liberals are supporting their friends in Ottawa as they carry on the mantle of costing Ontarians more.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell the House how the government delivers and supports entrepreneurs' needs as they continue to fight the job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Nina Tangri: My colleague from the riding of Richmond Hill is right to point out the devastating impacts we saw under the previous Liberal government, with skyrocketing electricity prices and reduced consumer spending as people struggle to afford their basic needs. And now it is troubling to see the federal Liberals and their opposition allies, like tax-a-lot Crombie, continue to push this job-killing regressive tax.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been unwavering in our commitment to fighting this carbon tax and delivering the support our small businesses need. That's why we've taken concrete steps to provide relief and assistance to small business owners across Ontario.

We've reduced red tape, lowered taxes, invested in programs that help entrepreneurs grow and thrive. Mr. Speaker, our message to the federal government and the opposition is clear: Scrap the damaging carbon tax. Let Ontario small businesses focus in on what they do best—

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

Interjection.

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. When a doctor tells you that you have to have surgery, you expect to have surgery, heal and not worry about the bill. That's the health care that Ontarians deserve and expect, but that's not what happened for Teresa in

Oshawa. She went to her doctor, got a referral and had necessary surgery a few days ago at a cost of \$3,600.

This surgery should have been covered with her OHIP card, but she paid with her credit card. Minister, what is happening in Ontario that seniors are being asked to pay for doctor-ordered necessary surgery?

1140

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to look into the individual case to make sure that all the facts are on the table.

I will say that as we expand access in Ontario, the NDP and the Liberal members continue to say they are happy and satisfied with the status quo. We're not. We need to ensure that people have access in their community, in their hospitals, for diagnostic services, for surgeries. We are making those investments because we know, as our population ages, as our population numbers continue to rise, we need to also make the investment in our health care system, and we're doing that with \$50 billion in capital for hospital rebuilds, expansions and new builds.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Teresa is 85 years old, and she's trying to stay healthy. She followed her doctor's advice. Surgery is stressful enough on its own; it should not cause financial stress too. Teresa is on a fixed income. Her pension doesn't leave room for \$3,600 surprises.

She told us, "I've got a money tree here and it hasn't got any money on it.

"I would like this to be covered. If not for me, then I hope this gets fixed for the next person who needs it."

Minister, can you reassure Teresa and other Ontarians facing necessary OHIP-covered surgery that they won't have to pay out of pocket for their health care?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I said, I'm happy to look into the specific case to ensure that all the facts are on the table.

I will also remind the member opposite that we have a system in the province of Ontario that ensures when patients believe they have been improperly charged, they can initiate an investigation—that the Ministry of Health initiates, starts, and ultimately, if appropriate, refunds the patient.

This member talks about the status quo and how they're satisfied with what we have right now. We are not satisfied with the status quo. We need to ensure that we continue to expand access, and yes, that includes 50 new capital builds. It also includes expanding access to surgeries in community so that people don't have to travel hundreds of miles to get to the surgeries that they so desperately need.

We'll continue to expand MRIs, we'll continue to ensure and fund CT scanners, because we know those are the pathways to ensure the people of Ontario get access to health care in their communities.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Just like every other Ontarian across the province, rural residents are feeling the

financial pressures created by the federal carbon tax. They experience unique challenges as they have to travel farther and for longer to go anywhere. They face higher costs across the board compared to urban regions.

Speaker, in my riding alone, in Apsley, when Sayers Foods burned, people had to travel 40, 50 kilometres to get groceries in Lakefield, Buckhorn or Bancroft because there was no other option in Apsley. Unfortunately, these are the challenges that Bonnie Crombie's Liberals and their federal buddies can't and won't understand.

Our government understands that scrapping the carbon tax is the right thing to do for Ontarians who are struggling, and we'll continue to call on the federal government to end this tax. Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax disproportionately affects rural Ontarians and their quality of life?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question from the member from Peterborough, because he lives it every day, as do I in my rural riding.

It doesn't matter whether it's from fuel to food—the cost for rural life is going through the roof because unfortunately Bonnie Crombie and Justin Trudeau have never met a tax they didn't like. It's affecting everything in rural Ontario, from getting to work to getting our students to school on our rural school bus transitways, and even down to driving seniors to their daycare programs, through to Meals on Wheels. This horrible Liberal carbon tax is causing the cost of everything to go through the roof, and therefore it's jeopardizing the pillars of community that we need in rural Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all need to stand together and implore all Liberals, backed up by the NDP, to scrap the tax.

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

RECEPTION

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to invite everyone, later this afternoon, to the dining room to participate in a reception hosted by McDonald's Canada.

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

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TURN DOWN THE HEAT ACT
(EXTREME HEAT AWARENESS), 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION
AUX RISQUES POSÉS
PAR LES CHALEURS EXTRÊMES

Ms. McMahon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 205, An Act to proclaim Extreme Heat Awareness Week and to promote public awareness of extreme heat issues / Projet de loi 205, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux risques posés par les chaleurs extrêmes et visant à sensibiliser le public aux enjeux qui leur sont liés.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member to briefly explain her bill, if she wishes to do so.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The bill enacts several measures related to the public awareness of extreme heat.

The bill proclaims the first week in June in each year as Extreme Heat Awareness Week. It also requires the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to publish information on a government website about extreme heat issues.

Finally, the bill requires information on extreme heat issues to be sent to taxpayers along with their municipal tax bill. The minister is required to mail that information to households in territories without municipal organization.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRIDE MONTH

Hon. Michael D. Ford: It is an honour and a privilege to rise in the House today in recognition of Pride Month, which started this past Saturday, on June 1.

Ontario is incredibly proud to be home to a strong and vibrant 2SLGBTQIA+ community. During Pride Month, we come together to celebrate the community's strength and resilience, and to recognize the countless ways in which they have shaped our province, strengthened our cultural fabric and contributed to our shared prosperity.

For many, we have come to view Pride Month as a time of celebration, with the colourful parades, parties and community festivities, inviting people from all walks of life to partake in a joyful expression of love, acceptance and inclusivity.

With that said, Pride Month is so much more than a celebration. It is a time to reflect on the past, and to remember the struggles and the challenges faced by the community.

Pride Month takes place globally in June to commemorate the Stonewall riots, which took place 55 years ago in New York City and are widely regarded as the pivotal moment that ignited the 2SLGBTQ+ rights movement.

During Pride Month, we remember the bravery of activists, advocates and pioneers who pushed for progress in jurisdictions right around the world, as well as those who continue these efforts today. Their commitment and dedication have helped drive positive change and had a lasting impact in the fight for equality and acceptance.

While we celebrate this undeniable progress, there is still so much work that remains. For all the progress we have made, there is no denying the rise in hate that has affected and continues to negatively affect 2SLGBTQIA+ Ontarians and a number of Ontario's diverse communities. Unfortunately, we are not immune to the rise in hate that we've also seen around the world, from the vandalism of Pride murals to the burning of Pride flags, harassment and, in some instances, outright violence. Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: These acts are vile and completely unacceptable and have no place here in the province of Ontario. Hate of any kind has no place here in Ontario. Our government will continue to do everything we can to protect communities and hold those responsible to account.

Ontario is a place for all people, where it doesn't matter where you're from, how you worship or who you love. Our province is built on a foundation of mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance.

As a government, we are proud to be an ally for the community and to do our part to advance the cause of inclusivity and acceptance for Ontario's 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We remain committed, not just during Pride Month, but every month, to ensuring that every Ontarian, regardless of their faith, their background, sexual orientation or gender identity feels safe to express themselves and live their most authentic life, with dignity and without fear. That is why our government has taken action and made considerable investments to that end.

In 2023, we invested over \$30 million into the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. This grant has provided Pride and other organizations serving the 2SLGBTQIA+ community with the funding needed to enhance safety and security for community spaces, as well as events like Pride parades and festivals from across the province of Ontario.

In August 2023, my ministry released the Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Ontario action plan, which outlined 49 unique initiatives from 14 partner ministries and millions of dollars in investments by the government to combat racism and hate, dismantle barriers, empower communities and help all Ontarians succeed and reach their full potential.

Nevertheless, we know that we cannot rest on our previous action and that there is still so much more work to do.

In my capacity as minister, I've been proud to work closely with many of Ontario's Pride and community organizations. These discussions have been vital in helping to inform decision-making and investments, and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with them on an ongoing basis much into the future.

This June, I want to wish all celebrating a wonderful Pride Month. As we enjoy the festivities and celebrate Ontario's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, let us not lose sight that this is a time to reflect on where we came from, the progress we have made and the continued effort we share to build a stronger, more accepting and inclusive Ontario for all.

Happy Pride Month.

1310

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: On behalf of the official opposition Ontario NDP, I'm proud to rise with the 2SLGBTQI communities in solidarity for June's Pride Month. Pride Month is a chance for the two-spirited, queer and trans communities to reflect, to celebrate, and to continue the fight for justice.

The overall story of Pride in our province and nation is one of advocacy, progress and unrelenting resilience.

The first official Pride parade in Canada occurred in Toronto in 1981. Instead of a parade, it was more of a gay picnic on Toronto Island. It was then known as "Toronto gay pride day." It started as a modest gathering of 1,500 brave individuals who showed up to demand respect and human dignity.

Over the years, this tiny, small Pride-based organization grew in size and significance.

Today, Pride is now one month long, and Pride Toronto's marquee Sunday march is now the largest one in the world, outranking the heavyweights of São Paulo, Madrid and New York City.

Speaker, I would be remiss in my remarks today if I did not mention that my son celebrates his fifth birthday today. As a queer and non-binary parent, my family personally benefits from the hard work of those who came before me in this House, including the Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo, former New Democratic MPP from Parkdale-High Park. It was under her leadership that the Ontario NDP passed into law more 2SLGBTQI-positive legislation than any other party in Canadian history. This record of accomplishment includes Toby's Act, which added trans rights to the Ontario Human Rights Code in 2012; the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act, which banned conversion therapy for 2SLGBTQI youth in 2015; Cy and Ruby's Act, which established parent equality for parents in 2015, which meant that I did not have to adopt my own son when my wife gave birth to our baby, which would have been a very expensive, demeaning and laborious act; and of course, the Trans Day of Remembrance Act in 2017.

So many gains have been made, but progress, unfortunately, is slipping away, both here and around the world. It's disheartening to see the rise of hate, religious fundamentalism and alt-right movements here in Canada and abroad.

Every Pride is different. This Pride is happening during a year when threats to the 2SLGBTQI communities continue to be on the rise.

Yesterday, I marked my second anniversary as MPP for Toronto Centre, and it was also roughly at that time that I was named the chair of the Ontario NDP queer caucus. During this time, with the steadfast support of our leader and our caucus, I have tabled 10 private member's bills, including three that specifically address the direct health, well-being and safety needs of our community. These bills include the Keeping 2SLGBTQI+ Communities Safe Act, the Chosen Family Day Act, and the gender-affirming

health care act, which, unfortunately, was wrong-headedly voted down this February.

Despite this setback, Pride reminds us that we have much more accomplishments ahead of us, because we have done this before. Pride reminds us that the Black, Indigenous, racialized, trans and two-spirited communities who have trail-blazed and who are a constant source of inspiration will continue to do that work, alongside everyone else in this House.

From the Stonewall riots to the very first Pride marches that rolled out, to the anti-viral drugs that we continue to fight for, progress has never been assured. It has always been hard-won. And we know that the fight is far from over.

All members of this House should be advocating for housing as a human right so everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, will have a safe home to call their own.

We must all stand with every student and educator in Ontario so that they know that they're not alone when flying the rainbow flag or creating positive spaces in schools and libraries, even when others are trying to shut them down. We will stand with every resident in Ontario so that they know that they can be their true and authentic selves in their workplaces, in their schools and their place of worship. Only by working together can we truly create a province that embraces diversity, where we are all champions of human rights—and that we can celebrate every single family member, including my son.

I invite all members of this House and all members of the public to join us on the front lawn tomorrow at Queen's Park. The Ontario Public Service Pride Network has been working hard to host a flag-raising. It will be their 10th Pride flag-raising at Queen's Park. They will be hosting this event, with a 30-person choir as well as a lunch. I hope all members can join us.

Let's show everyone in small towns and big cities across Ontario what this place stands for: that the Ontario Legislature is united in our advancement of 2SLGBTQI equality and human rights.

Happy Pride.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I am pleased to speak today to celebrate Pride Month. Pride Month brings people together to celebrate the history, courage and diversity of two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning communities. While progress has been made historically, 2SLGBTQ+ people still face heartbreaking inequities and exclusion today in Canada and around the world.

This past weekend, I had the opportunity to kick off Pride Month in beautiful Beaches–East York with East End Kids Pride at Dentonia Park. Thank you to 8-year-old Hazel for initiating this fun-packed rainbow day that embraced the power of love for all.

“Ally” is not a name we can call ourselves; it is about our actions and how we relay messages of inclusivity. It is our responsibility, as elected officials, to set a meaningful example of support for the future we want to build in Ontario and globally.

This month is about sharing love, boasting and boosting up 2SLGBTQ+ community members and spreading joy.

I encourage you all to attend an event that you normally might not and consider how you can show up for 2SLGBTQ folks in your life.

Happy Pride Month, everyone.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Today, as we celebrate Pride Month, I want to thank community groups across Waterloo region and Ontario who work every day to make life better for those facing barriers due to their gender and sexual orientation, and to create opportunities for allyship. Thank you to Spectrum; ACCKWA; tri-Pride; OK2BME; GSAs across the province; Sanguen, working for equitable health access; and so many others. Your work really matters.

Happy birthday, Kamil.

I'm inspired by the many trailblazers who began Pride gatherings after one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history during a bathhouse raid. Pride is still a protest, and this protest is necessary, because in a world where the majority are heterosexual and cisgender, many assume everyone around them is also, to the detriment of queer folks.

Let's remind everyone, today and every day, that queer people exist and deserve equal rights, because love is love.

I'm inspired by Spectrum's calls to action, and I echo those calls. I commit to continuing my journey of allyship by seeking out queer media, by combatting systemic barriers at Queen's Park and beyond, by looking at intersectionalities of queer and other oppressed identities, and by being open about my support of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

So, on behalf of—

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

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Transform Ontario's Energy Sector.” I want to thank Cathy Orlando for collecting these and sending them to me. It discusses the heat we've seen in the past, 2023 being the hottest year on record, and those big wildfire seasons that we saw here at Queen's Park and across the province, and that natural gas is a very potent greenhouse gas.

1320

They also talk about the Ontario Energy Board response to Enbridge's plan for a multi-billion dollar methane gas grid expansion—about not being responsive to the energy transition and increases the risk of stranded or underutilized assets. Their ask basically is to pause its expansion, wind down the use of these plants to just peaker plants, and accelerate the procurement of electricity from renewable sources.

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

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

ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I have a petition with over a hundred signatures from residents in my riding of Don Valley West who are against the government's plan to undermine, downsize and relocate the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place. The petitioners indicate that this plan, initiated without public consultation, environmental assessment or a sound business rationale, will cause irreparable harm to our community. They're concerned about the \$500 million of public funds the government will spend on the parking lot. They are worried about our priority neighbourhoods that the OSC serves, and that this move risks the livelihoods of local residents.

They are asking the government to reconsider this decision and to reconsider moving the OSC from its current location—to leave it where it is; respect its cultural, educational and architectural value.

I fully support this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Victoria.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have to read today is entitled "Health Care: Not for Sale." This petition outlines the very dangerous trend that this government is going on, in terms of the privatization of our public health care system in Ontario. It's very concerning, because it is going to not only bankrupt our system, but it will take nurses, doctors and PSWs out of public hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the member to summarize the petition without adding editorial comment.

The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker.

It makes recommendations, such as licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses. It talks about respecting doctors, nurses, PSWs with better working conditions, and making sure that there are incentives for nurses and doctors to live and work in northern Ontario, and making sure that there are enough nurses on every shift on every ward.

I fully support this petition. I fully support publicly delivered as well as publicly funded health care. I'll send it with page Hosanna to the Clerks.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition asking for an increase to OW and ODSP. We know that so many Ontarians are struggling. It's an affordability crisis—there are a million crises out there—and people are living below the poverty line.

We know that when the CERB program was in place, it provided a basic income of \$2,000 per month, and that seemed to go a long way.

We could do much more.

I am submitting this petition today with page Paige—how do you like that; I love it—with my name attached.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors (Bill 189: Lydia's Law)." Essentially, this petition is calling on the government to call Lydia's Law to justice committee so that we can actually find out why 1,326 sexual assault cases were thrown out of court in 2022. If the government does call the bill to justice committee, it would compel the Attorney General to table a report to all of us indicating why these cases are being thrown out.

It's a good bill. It's a good first step to finding justice for survivors of sexual assault. I fully support it, because it's my bill. It should be called. And we should fix the justice system.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to summarize their petitions without entering into debate.

Petitions?

ONTARIO PLACE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to summarize this petition. The petition essentially calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt any further development for Ontario Place, to engage in meaningful and transparent public consultation, to develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for the revitalization of Ontario Place—one that prioritizes sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity—and to ensure that any future development of Ontario Place is carried out in a transparent and accountable manner with proper oversight, public input and adherence to the democratic process.

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and send it back to the centre table with page Farhan.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the thousands of people from Durham who have signed this petition called "Save Durham Hospital." The petition is quite clear: The good people of Durham need their hospital. They go through a number of reasons why this particular hospital is very important to them. They talk about the emergency department, the diagnostics, the in-patient health care, the beds being moved out, the emergency room going from 24 hours a day to 10 hours a day, and they basically ask for the Durham hospital to stay open.

I fully support the good people of Durham. I will affix my name to it and ask page Ishan to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled “A Future for Child Care in Ontario.” This petition calls on the government to establish a committee to address the staffing shortages that child care centres are experiencing across Ontario and to establish a salary scale, increase compensation and improve working conditions.

I support this petition, and I’ll be giving it to page Jasnoor.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I’ve got this petition to raise social assistance rates. It talks about how the rates for Ontario Works have been frozen since 2018 and the small increases to the Ontario Disability Support Program have left recipients struggling well below the poverty line. So it advocates for the doubling of the rates for both OW and also ODSP.

Meegwetch. I will pass it on to Sophia.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joanne Mann from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions called “Coverage for Take-Home Cancer Drugs.” Basically, the petition talks about how if you have cancer and need treatment in the hospital, everything is free, but more and more treatment for cancer can now be delivered at home, but if you take the same cancer drugs at home, you have to pay for them. Most other provinces have added to their formulary cancer drugs, so take-home cancer drugs are covered by the formulary so that everybody has access to them. They are covered by the government. So people who signed this petition are asking for Ontario to do the same so that if they get a prescription for cancer drugs, the government will help cover the cost.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Again, I have this petition to raise social assistance rates. As you know, the rates for Ontario Works have been frozen since 2018, and small increases to the Ontario Disability Support Program have left recipients struggling and well below the poverty line.

Again, this petition advocates for the doubling of rates for both OW and ODSP.

Meegwetch. I’ll pass it on to Farah.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Claire Gauvin, who’s from Hanmer in my riding, for these petitions. The title of the petition is “Protect Kids From Vaping.”

Basically, what the petition is about is that there is a growing body of evidence that shows that vaping has some serious health effects, especially on children, and there is a lot of marketing being done by the vaping companies to get children addicted to vaping. With some of the products—one time, and the child is addicted to nicotine.

They would like to change the age that vaping products can be sold—like it is in other provinces—to 21 or even 25 years of age. And they want to make sure that vaping products do not have flavouring, which is one of the ways that the marketing companies get to children, by making vaping very tasty.

1330

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’m proud to submit this petition on behalf of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto. Their petition, as summarized, is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

- immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;
- fix the inadequate education funding formula;
- provide schools with the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students; and
- make the needed investments to provide smaller class sizes; increased levels of staffing to support our students’ special education, mental health, English-language learner and wraparound supports; and make sure that buildings are safe and healthy.

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and send it back to the table with page Sophia.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Ashleigh Minaker and Brady McKay, both from Worthington in my riding, for this petition. The petition is called “911 Everywhere in Ontario.”

As you know, Speaker, if something goes wrong—I don’t wish any harm upon you—you dial 911, and the police, the fire service or the ambulance will come and help you. Those services are available in northern Ontario, but 911 is not. You have to memorize a 1-800 number. That 1-800 number changes regularly. I have three of them just for my riding, and northern Ontario has many more.

Ontario is the only province that doesn’t have 911 everywhere. Every other province has made arrangements with Bell so that 911 is available everywhere.

Everybody who has signed the petition—and there are quite a few people from Worthington who have done so—would like to have 911, and so would I. I will affix my name to the petition and ask Jasnoor to bring it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC SAFETY

MPP Jamie West: I think with the statements made this morning about it being Pride Month, it’s important to

read a petition called “Protect 2SLGBTQI+ Communities and Drag Artists.”

The petition basically speaks about hate crimes increasing across Ontario, and that drag artists have been specifically targeted by these demonstrations. It’s about supporting these artists and the small businesses supporting them, as well, by ensuring they feel safe where they are.

What they’re asking for is that they pass the protecting 2SLGBTQI+ communities act so that safety zones can deter bigoted harassment, and also form an advisory community to protect 2SLGBTQI+ communities from hate crimes.

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Ishan for the table.

FRAIS DE SCOLARITÉ

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Nawfal Mercier de l’Université Laurentienne pour ces pétitions. La pétition parle vraiment d’un besoin de rendre l’éducation universitaire plus abordable. Donc, ils demandent, dans un premier temps, la gratuité et l’accessibilité de l’éducation pour tous; demandent que les étudiants et étudiantes reçoivent des bourses, pas des prêts; et demandent également un changement de loi pour protéger les droits d’association de tous les étudiants et étudiantes.

Il y a des centaines et des centaines d’étudiants qui ont signé la pétition. Je les appuie, et je vais demander à Sophia de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Lily Clarke from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. The petition is called “Health Care: Not for Sale.”

Basically, the thousands and thousands of people who have signed this petition have seen a privatization of our health care system. They want health care to be based on your needs, not on your ability to pay. They also saw that through nursing agencies, a lot of hospital staff are leaving the hospitals to go into agencies that are making hundreds of millions of dollars in profit off the backs of those nurses who are burnt out in the existing system. They basically want the government to bring forward innovation, but not privatization.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 3, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’m very pleased to be standing here today to debate Bill 185 at third reading.

I’d like to just give a little bit of a summary of how I’m going to use my hour today. I’m going to talk a little bit about what came up in committee. I’m going to go through the amendments that were introduced and discuss why we introduced them. I’m going to go through sections of the bill to identify some of the positive things in this bill, because there are some things in this bill that are positive. I’m going to read out some of the very strong submissions that we received from so many stakeholders across Ontario. And then I’m going to conclude with some of the solutions that we have been calling for that are not in this bill.

Whenever I look at a government bill, I look at it from a certain lens. I ask myself, is this bill and are these measures going to make housing more affordable for people to rent and own in Ontario? That’s the first way I look at this bill. The second way I look at it is, I ask myself, is this bill going to ensure that we have the good-quality public services we need in towns and cities across Ontario, so we can have a good quality of life? The third way I look at this bill is, I ask myself, is this bill going to build the wide mix and range of housing we need to address our housing supply and our housing affordability shortages, and is it being done in a sustainable and responsible way? Are we needlessly building on farmland and green space, or are we building in parts of Ontario where we can increase density, so that we can balance the many needs that we have and the many issues that we have in Ontario?

This is a popular bill. We got a lot of submissions. We had a lot of people who wanted to speak in committee. Unfortunately, we had to turn some people away. I think it is always unfortunate when not everyone who wants to speak to a bill is given the opportunity to do that—because especially when it comes to housing, these bills affect everyone in Ontario. If it takes us an extra day or two or a week to hear what people and organizations have to say, I think we should give them the time to do it.

Thank you to the many stakeholders who spoke and gave written submissions. I want to name a few: AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; BILD; Bonnefield; the Canadian Environmental Law Association; Canadians for Properly Built Homes; the city of Mississauga; the city of Toronto; CUPE Ontario; the Escarpment Corridor Alliance; the Federation of Citizens’ Associations of Ottawa; the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario; the Georgian Bay Association; Gravel Watch Ontario; the Greater Ottawa Home Builders’ Association; the Greenbelt Foundation; the Green Space Alliance; No Demovictions, which is a new group that is being started up in Ontario; the Ontario Association of Architects; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Ontario Long Term Care Home Association; the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition; and many more.

People care about what is in this bill—many people did. I was very impressed by the intelligence and the thought and the care that were given to us in committee, as well as the written submissions that were given to us. I read many of them, and they were very thoughtful. So thank you for that. Much of the feedback that stakeholders gave us informed the amendments that we introduced in committee in order to fix this bill.

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Like I said, there are some things in this bill that we like. It is clear that the government heard from municipalities that were pretty angry that their ability to raise revenue to pay for infrastructure was curtailed with Bill 23 and Bill 109—and that there were some improvements in this bill.

But then there are a whole lot of things that we would have liked to have seen in this bill that weren't there, and then there are a whole bunch of things in this bill that I wish weren't there at all.

I'm going to start off by going through some of the amendments. Our goal was to improve this bill. We had a few. We can't help ourselves. We start off by saying we'll just do a few, and then as time goes on we realize we have 20 or 30. So be patient with me.

The first amendment that we introduced was to the City of Toronto Act. It was a bill that would enshrine the right for municipalities to protect and compensate tenants and preserve the stock of available residential units in cases where a purpose-built rental is demolished and replaced with—almost always—a condo. You would think that this is a one-off issue, but unfortunately, it is concerningly becoming very common. We expect that the number of purpose-built rentals that are demolished will increase as we move to increased density in towns and cities. The reason why this is a problem is because when you're looking at purpose-built rentals in our city, it's the kind of housing stock that we need to preserve. We need to preserve it, and the reason is that we know we have a shortage of purpose-built rentals and almost overwhelmingly the number of affordable purpose-built rentals that exist in our city are in these big purpose-built rental buildings. These are rent-controlled buildings where the rent—if it's a long-term tenant, they might be paying anything from \$1,100 to \$1,600, which is much more affordable than what you get in a new purpose-built rental that isn't protected by rent control.

Unfortunately, with Bill 23, the Ontario government gave themselves the power—they must have listened to some people and not others—to step in and eliminate or reduce the power that municipalities have to protect tenants. People were terrified that that was going to happen.

The reason why we introduced this amendment is to say, "Municipalities need to have the power to protect the affordable rental housing stock we've got so that we can build and not gentrify at the same time, so that we can build and also help the tenants who already live in towns and cities in Ontario, including Toronto"—because we can do both.

It is a shame that the government chose to not move forward with this amendment, and I urge this government to seriously consider this issue. It is a big issue. Thousands of tenants are affected by this.

The second amendment that we introduced was to make changes to the Development Charges Act. The government has rolled back some of the worst elements of Bill 23 and Bill 109. They've turned around and said, "Municipalities do need the power to require developers to pay their fair share for new infrastructure that is needed when people move into an area."

We asked the government to listen to what AMO was saying and many advocates were saying and to require developers, when they're building new units, to also pay for the necessary affordable housing and shelter that is needed in towns and cities, as well. It's called housing services. The reason this is so important is that, with Bill 23, municipalities were banned from collecting development fees to be used for affordable housing and homelessness at a time when we have, I would say, the worst homelessness crisis that we've had in Ontario for decades.

The city of Toronto outlined this in their submission, and AMO also recommended that this right be reinstated. They did some calculations for us, and they calculated that municipalities are on track to be out of pocket \$2 billion—\$2 billion of money that should be going to maintain affordable housing and for shelters, both temporary and permanent. That affects 47,000 units. So why on earth would the government want to make it even harder for municipalities to address the homelessness problem and the affordable housing problem we have in municipalities? I don't know. We introduced this amendment to restore the right that municipalities have to collect that fee, and the government voted that down, which I think is a problem.

We also introduced these amendments to a section of the act that dealt with the decision to reverse one of the most politically motivated and most unusual bills I've seen in a while, which is to, without any notice or consultation at all, get rid of the Peel regional government, which is really quite draconian. In this bill, they've made a decision to reverse that, so they're going with the Peel dissolution act—dissolution of the Hazel McCallion Act, 2023, schedule 7. Overall, the decision to repeal the Hazel McCallion Act makes a lot of sense. No one asked for the region of Peel to be eliminated, and it was projected to have a significant impact on the quality of services that the residents of Caledon and Peel and Mississauga would be provided with. We had a lot of concerns about that, and we are pleased to see a reversal—a partial reversal. We did introduce some amendments to shine some light and bring some transparency to that process, and the reason why is because the transition committee that is responsible for looking at how the services were going to be divvied up in these three regions gave Peel region a bill of \$4 million. This is work that the Ontario government directed them to do, and then this transition committee turned around and said, "Actually, it's not the Ontario government that is going to pay this bill. It's going to be Peel region and Peel taxpayers who are going to pay this bill." Obviously, that's

just downright crazy. So, in our amendment, we said that what we want to see is some transparency. We want to see this government provide an assessment of the financial impact of its recommendations and to make the financial impact public so people knew how much this transition and this reversal of this transition and then this partial movement forward is actually going to cost. The government rejected that, which I think is unfortunate.

The second amendment we introduced is to say that the province is asking for this work to be done—this transition. They're appointing the board. They're controlling the process. That means the provincial government should actually pay for the costs of this transition board, and not the taxpayers of Peel. We introduced that amendment, as well, and the government voted that down.

This was an interesting one. The government, in a last-minute flurry, made some additional changes to the lands tribunal. The lands tribunal, the Ontario Municipal Board, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal—it's a beast that has known many different names, but now it's called the lands tribunal. The lands tribunal is one of the most powerful tribunals Ontario has ever seen, and it has been changed and altered and manipulated more times than I can remember. Every time there is a bill, there are some changes to the lands tribunal.

I thought the changes that were in Bill 185 that affect the lands tribunal were particularly concerning. In the bill, the government said, "From now on, we're no longer going to allow third-party appeals to the lands tribunal," which means that if a citizens' group has some concerns about a quarry or a dump and the decision has been made by the municipality, that individual is no longer able to go to the lands tribunal to say, "We need a sober second thought. We need an adjudicator to look at this decision carefully." It is an issue that I think has become very politicized.

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Many organizations wrote to us about the need to continue to allow third-party appeals at the lands tribunal, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association. The reason why they recommended that third-party appeals be allowed is because they've represented many citizens who have been concerned about the environmental impact of developments, quarries, dumps in the area. They've taken it to the land tribunal to say, "We also need to factor in how this is going to affect water quality, soil health, planning." So they were very clear. They wanted to make sure that third-party appeals were retained. They also brought an interesting point forward in their submission. They said this is also important because it's about access to justice: "Land use planning decisions often disproportionately impact low-income, underserved and under-resourced communities, and have direct adverse impacts on the environment and the health and safety of the public." So in order to ensure that we are making equitable planning decisions, there is a benefit in allowing third-party appeals.

We hear a lot from this government that the lands tribunal is becoming politicized, and people are saying no

to developments and they're taking it to the lands tribunal. That does happen, but the lands tribunal, as it's currently structured right now—adjudicators already have the authority to throw out frivolous appeals. They already have the authority to throw out appeals that have limited chance of success. So when we're talking about slowing necessary development down, the lands tribunal already has the powers it needs to have to make sure that process is not abused.

What I found concerning about the government's amendment in committee is—they must have been lobbied real hard by some folks, because the government said, "We're going to keep the third-party appeal ban, but we're going to allow some groups to appeal"—not everyone else, but some groups. Airports—that's legit. Big industry are allowed to appeal. Big manufacturing facilities are allowed to appeal. And developers are allowed to appeal. I have some concerns with this because it seems like the lands tribunal is being manipulated to suit the government's own agenda. There are over 14 million people in Ontario today. The vast majority of them are no longer allowed to appeal to the lands tribunal. But some select entities that must have lobbied you really hard in the last few weeks—at the last minute, you introduced an amendment to allow them to appeal. I think that's very concerning, and I don't think that's how the lands tribunal should operate. I don't think the appeals process should be open to some but not open to everybody else. I've got a lot of concerns about that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's kind of undemocratic, don't you think?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. I have some concerns about that.

It's true that we do need lands tribunal reform. But if we are talking about lands tribunal reform, the big thing that we're hearing from stakeholders is, "Let's make it the tribunal of last resort and not the default tribunal"—so appeals can be made or issues can be raised at the lands tribunal if there's a clear violation of municipal and provincial law. That seems like one of the most effective ways that we can deal with the backlog.

We introduced an amendment to allow fourplexes as-of-right, and to also allow six- and 11-storey apartment buildings along transit corridors where sufficient sewage and water capacity exists in towns and cities across Ontario. We introduced that as an amendment. The reason why we introduced that as an amendment is because the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force was very clear—they made it clear that Ontario can meet its housing targets of 1.5 million homes by 2031 by building in areas that are already zoned for development. They were very clear about that.

We don't need to needlessly open up farmland or green space or the greenbelt in order to build the homes that we know we need to build for the people who are living in their parents' basement; for the people who are looking at moving here, who want to call Ontario home; for young people; for seniors who want to downsize; for families who live in a too-small apartment and want to move into a starter home or a bigger apartment. We know we can

already meet those needs by building in areas already zoned for development, and we're already seeing cities move forward down this path. Hamilton has developed a very strong, pro-density official plan to meet its housing targets. The city of Toronto has very much surpassed its housing targets. They're moving forward with fourplexes and increased density. It's a debate at city council every month.

The reason why we introduced this policy is because I believe that the provincial government shouldn't just stand by and hope for the best, but that they should take a leadership role. Taking a leadership role means allowing fourplexes and higher density along transit corridors as-of-right. It also means reducing some of the barriers that municipalities put up to say no to fourplexes—and we know they do it, and you know they do it.

One of the positive things that I like about this bill is that you reduced the opportunity municipalities can have to put up barriers for triplexes, because you recognize that issue as well. We are calling on this government to go a step further and allow fourplexes and higher density along transit corridors.

Nearly every stakeholder who came into committee expressed their support for increased density and for the provincial government to show a leadership role on this issue. We're talking about BILD, ResCon, the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association, OREA, environmental groups, tenants' groups, CELA, Environmental Defence, the National Farmers Union, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—all of them. Time and time and time again, they said, "Yes, it is necessary. Let's do it."

This government would get a lot of support if they took that extra step and allowed for increased density. Unfortunately, what we are seeing with this government is a move to not mandate density, but to relax density requirements in towns and cities. I was very concerned to see, in the provincial policy statement, a decision to get rid of density minimums and to establish density "maybes"—cities and towns can have a density, but it's recommended; it's not required as it was in the previous PPS. I think we can do better than that, and I know that there are some members on your side, from all parties, who see that this approach to responsible planning is the best way forward. The government voted that down.

We introduced an amendment to give municipalities the right to bring in inclusionary zoning not just near transit stations, but wherever they see fit. Inclusionary zoning, I think, is very important. It's one of many measures that we need to take to address the housing affordability crisis that we have and to make sure that we have everybody, including developers, taking responsibility and doing their part to address the housing shortage and the housing affordability issues that we're seeing right now.

I'd like to explain what inclusionary zoning is. Inclusionary zoning is a policy that municipalities can pass that mandates that developers build a certain percentage of affordable homes in big, new developments. In Toronto, it was extensively studied. You wouldn't believe how much study went into this. They brought in experts, they brought

in economists, and the reason why is that they wanted to come up with an affordable housing number that would ensure that developers would continue to build, that developers would continue to meet their profit margin that they needed, but that they also contributed to building some affordable housing units. So they studied it extensively and they came up with a figure, which is that in new condos of buildings that are a hundred units or more, 10% of those units should be affordable—very modest, but practical. This is a measure that everyone got behind at the city of Toronto.

Unfortunately, we've been waiting two years for the Ontario government to allow the city of Toronto to move ahead with inclusionary zoning. Because we've waited two years, we have lost the opportunity to build 6,000 affordable homes, because developers have moved in really fast. They knew this was coming, and they put in their application to build near transit stations—big buildings near transit stations, things we support. But they are not required to build any affordable housing, because the city of Toronto is not allowed to move forward with its inclusionary zoning bill. That is a massive, 6,000-home lost opportunity, and I think that's a shame.

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We introduced an amendment to allow inclusionary zoning to proceed and to be expanded, and the government voted that down.

There are some things in this bill that we had some concerns with, and that was around the government's decision with the PPS and also this bill to make it easier for low-density housing to be built on farmland and green space. It's a little complicated, but I'm going to do my best to explain it. There are a few ways they've done this. Number one, they now allow, if this bill passes, municipalities to redraw their settlement boundaries wherever they want. Within a settlement boundary, that's where development can happen. Outside a settlement boundary, there are limitations on what you can build. It's primarily farmland, green space, wetlands etc.

Previously, this process of redrawing a settlement boundary was something that was done every five years, and municipalities needed to justify why a settlement boundary needed to be changed. They'd have to explain why prime agricultural farmland might need to be built on and to justify that. They also needed to justify why they needed to expand—mainly because they couldn't meet their housing needs within their existing settlement boundary. It was a carefully decided process that was done every five years. The official plan was presented to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and then it was approved. Now that has all gone out the window. There's this new planning regime which is in place which makes it much easier to have low-density housing approved. This is how it works now—if this bill is approved: Municipalities can redraw their boundaries whenever they want. They don't have to do it once every five years. They can do it whenever they want. That is a concern. They also don't need to provide a good justification for why it's necessary. Before, they'd have to say, "We need employment lands. We're not able to meet

it. We need more housing. We've balanced the pros and cons, and this is our argument for why it should be allowed." Now they don't need to provide that argument anymore. That's a concern.

Then, the lands tribunal has been meddled with so that developers can also influence this process. This is how it works: If a municipality redraws their settlement boundary to allow low-density housing, then no one can appeal it; it just proceeds. But if a municipality—like Hamilton, for instance—says, "No, we want to have a firm settlement boundary because we know we can meet our housing targets," then developers are allowed to appeal that to the lands tribunal. The only way you're allowed to go to the lands tribunal is if you want to say yes to sprawl. I think that's very problematic, and I think there's a better way of doing it. There's a better way of meeting our housing supply needs than low-density sprawl.

We have heard many organizations in committee talk to us about the concerns they have with low-density housing. The big one we hear about is that it is incredibly expensive to service. If you have a new development, it costs more per person to provide the sewage and the roads and the electrical and the daycare and the schools and the transit than it does compared to putting that same amount of housing in an area that's already zoned for development. It's expensive. At a time when individuals are looking at their property tax bills and they're seeing them go up by 6% to 12%, they expect the Ontario government to be cost-effective and efficient with how they're spending our money. Sprawl—low-density housing—is very, very expensive.

The other thing that's very concerning about low-density housing is that it sets Ontario up to have transportation patterns which are really unsustainable. It's very hard to provide bus service, train service, streetcar service in an area where there's low-density housing because the numbers don't justify the bus routes. It means that people are much more likely to choose their car to get to work, to get to school, to go to their doctor, to go to faith—because that's the only way that you can get around. There's very little alternative. We know we have a responsibility to meet our climate change reduction targets, to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets, and locking us in to a very unsustainable, car-dependent transportation pattern is going to take us in exactly the opposite direction.

So we voted against the changes to Bill 185 that would lock us in to low-density housing, and unfortunately, the government proceeded with them. We're going to be dealing with the long-term consequences of these changes for a very long time.

I want to draw attention to some of the issues that came up in committee around sprawl—not just in terms of its cost to municipalities—as well as its impact on transportation patterns, but also its impact on farmland. This is an issue this government has had to deal with extensively over the last few years because of the greenbelt scandal, and it's an issue that continues to this day.

I want to read some statements that came in from the National Farmers Union of Ontario. They're very concerned about the changes to settlement boundaries, and

I want to draw attention to that. They talked about how "without strong regulatory mechanisms that are complementary to agriculture and development, the future of Ontario's precious farmland and food security are at risk." They're sending a very clear warning to you that farmland in Ontario is at risk if we continue to build low-density housing when we don't need to on farmland and green space.

Farming in Ontario is one of our biggest exporters. It is one of our most lucrative sectors. It employs thousands and thousands and thousands of people. It is essential that we preserve it and help it grow. In order to do that, we need to preserve our prime agricultural land. We have to preserve it, especially since we know we have alternatives. We know we can build in towns and cities where the land has already been zoned for development. I urge this government to carefully look at the National Farmers Union of Ontario's submission—as well as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, OFA.

In the latest section of committee, we also dealt with the issue of the lands tribunal again, and, in this case, we attempted to reinstate the power of all third parties to appeal decisions. I've already talked about this a little bit, so I'm not going to go into too much detail about it, but we introduced in committee a move to reinstate that power so third parties can appeal decisions. Unfortunately, the government voted that down.

I would like to draw your attention to some of the examples that organizations gave that highlight the value of having a third-party appeal process. These are some examples that were raised by the Canadian Environmental Law Association. They talked about how appeals were done with the Stop Richmond Dump Expansion, where the citizens' committee in the county of Hastings appealed an official plan amendment on waste disposal assessment policies. If people are going to have a dump near their home, you would think it's reasonable that they should have the right to have a sober-second-thought look at that decision. That seems reasonable to me.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association also represented Friends Addressing Concerns Together, a group of community members living near a quarry. The tribunal heard that appeal because the community members were very concerned about the noise and odour impacts of a portable asphalt plant that had been operating close to their homes—and their opposition to the installation of a permanent asphalt plant at that location. It seems reasonable that if an asphalt plant is going to be located in an area that's near residential homes, the citizens should have options available to them to speak and debate that at a municipal level, and then to also go to the lands tribunal. That seems pretty reasonable to me.

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I'm pleased that CELA gave these examples, because it highlights how third-party appeals are necessary and valuable. We had some concerns about that, as well.

These were the amendments that we introduced. Unfortunately, the government voted them down, which we have a lot of concerns about.

I'm going to go through the bill itself and identify some of the things that we like about the bill and also identify some of the things that we had some concerns about that we didn't introduce amendments on. I'm going to give you credit where it's due, so I hope you'll listen to the compliments carefully.

The first thing that we were pleased to see in this bill was the decision to allow municipalities to bring in use-it-or-lose-it policies. I'd like to explain what they are. It's when a developer is given all the approvals to move forward with building a project, but then instead of building that project, they sit on that land and they don't do anything. The reason why that's a concern is because we've got a housing crisis, and it's essential, if we're using municipalities' time to approve developments, that those developments proceed in a timely manner and that we discourage developers from sitting on land that is vacant or left unused because they want to find or identify a better time, a profitable time to build.

I'd like to thank the member for Niagara Centre for advocating for use-it-or-lose-it policies. He has been advocating on this policy for a long time. I'd also like to thank the municipalities that have been raising this issue, from AMO to the Big City Mayors' Caucus—there were many people who had been coming into committee and asking for this.

It's good to see, after consulting with municipalities, that these changes are in this bill. It's not the only thing that is needed, but it is a practical step that municipalities had been asking for. So that was a good thing.

I mentioned this already, but I think it's important to raise it again: In Bill 23, the government moved forward with allowing three homes, as-of-right, on residential lots in towns and cities all across Ontario. It's a move that we supported in committee, and it was good to see in this bill that they've introduced additional amendments to limit the roadblocks that municipalities can sometimes put up, maybe by requiring parking minimums for this—residential lot, triplex—by removing some of those roadblocks so that we can increase the number of triplexes that are built on residential lots. So that was a good thing as well.

We were pleased to see some of the changes to schedule 6, which is the Development Charges Act. We were very concerned with Bill 109 and Bill 23, where there was a decision to seriously hamper the ability for municipalities to charge developers for the partial cost—just the partial cost—of providing infrastructure for new developments. We've seen a significant reversal on some of these changes. Municipalities can now charge developers for studies that need to be taken. We have seen that the five-year phase-in for development charge fees has been repealed and that there is a move to repeal the mandatory refund requirement, where municipalities had to automatically refund the developer fee application if they were not able to get a developer's application through in the necessary time frame. The government shouldn't have introduced these changes anyway; they did. We wasted nearly two years, where municipalities have been screaming from the rooftops that they don't have enough

money to pay for infrastructure. But it's good to see that some of the worst of these development fee cuts have been reinstated. We see that as a positive step forward.

In the Planning Act, schedule 12, there was a decision by this government to eliminate parking minimums for developments near transit stations. This is something that environmental groups as well as the building industry have been calling for for some time. We supported this amendment in committee.

I do want to raise some of the concerns that came up in committee.

Some organizations, including No Demovictions, raised the concern around, "What about accessibility?" In some buildings, people need a car to get to their health care appointments, to have their personal support worker come to them. There was some concern that parking minimums would need to be looked at from the lens of if it violates AODA legislation, and I think that's something the government should look into. How can we build new buildings, if they do have parking minimums, and also ensure that people who live in these buildings who have accessibility challenges, who have mobility challenges, can still get access to the services that they need and can also continue to get to where we need to go? How are we going to address that transportation issue and that service issue? I think that's a valid concern.

The second thing that came up—and this came up with No Demovictions—was that in situations where a purpose-built rental is being demolished and then replaced with a condo, the tenants who live in that purpose-built rental want to make sure that when they move back into that home once construction is complete, they get to move back into their new home paying the same rent and also receiving the same services. That might apply to parking minimums, because in some buildings they had parking before, and they want to make sure that they have parking afterwards. That is a concern I would like to raise in the committee as well. Renters are the victims of our housing supply and our housing affordability crisis, and if someone is forced to move out because their building is being demolished, they should not have to financially pay the price. So I'd like to raise those issues in committee today.

So there are the main things that I wanted to raise in Bill 185 that identify some of the more positive things that I see in this bill. It's not the worst bill this government has ever introduced.

Now I would like to focus on some of the submissions that we received that identify some of the issues that I haven't raised yet.

One of the issues that I would like to talk about is the concern by this government to eliminate the ability for regional levels of government to take a leadership role on planning. It's significant. We heard a lot of concerns about that, and I want to address some of those concerns. Numerous groups that came to committee—and I want to identify a few: AMO; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Waterloo; the National Farmers Union of Ontario, the federation of urban naturalists—expressed concern about this issue, and I want to read some of the statements

that they made. To summarize, their concern was, “Do not eliminate planning responsibilities from upper-tier municipalities, which would break the logical link between planning and servicing. The lack of coordination for planning approvals in infrastructure creates a significant risk of either underservicing or overbuilding, and an overburdening of the property tax base.”

There was a lot of focus in committee on Waterloo in particular. The reason why groups really focused on Waterloo is because Waterloo is seen as this example of exemplary planning, where they’ve done a very good job of increasing density, of bringing in new light rail, but also of protecting their groundwater and protecting their countryside line. There are many organizations, citizens, environmental groups, farming groups, who want to ensure that Waterloo’s model of planning is maintained. They came into committee to express their concern. I want to summarize some of their concerns.

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This government is aware of how worried many members of the Waterloo community are around the Ontario government’s move to come in and meddle with a planning system that is working very well. Why meddle with something that should be shown up as a leader? I don’t get it. These groups are calling for the restoration of regional planning authority and to retain regional governments. “Because of regional planning, Waterloo region was able to keep its agricultural land, contain sprawl by intensification, and establishing a regional water quality program that the region is heavily reliant on.”

There are a lot of concerns. I’d like to thank one of the organizers of these groups, Kevin Thomason, for the continued advocacy that you are doing, as well as the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario for the submissions that you have given me around the issue. It’s very concerning. I don’t understand.

There are a lot of good things happening in Ontario right now; planning in Waterloo region is one of them. Why meddle? Who is asking you to meddle? Who is benefiting? These are some of the questions that many people have.

The other thing that came up that I want to read came from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. The reason I want to emphasize what the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is saying is because this is your base, and they’re very concerned about some of the activities and measures and laws that you’re passing. My hope is that if you don’t always want to listen to some of my constituents, you’ll listen to some of your constituents, because they are members of the OFA.

The OFA was very clear that there are some things they like about this bill. They like some of the changes to the Development Charges Act, to reinstate municipalities’ ability to partially pay—just partially pay—for infrastructure.

They have a lot of concerns about changes to the Planning Act. They are very concerned about the government’s decision to eliminate third-party appeals to the lands tribunal. They recommend enabling any affected

party the right to appeal a decision to the OLT. These are some strong words. They’ve got some concerns about that.

They want to emphasize that OFA believes that farming is the best use for farmland, and the reason why they want to emphasize that is because they don’t want to see situations where settlement boundaries are altered unnecessarily to build homes that really could and should be built somewhere else.

I think these are some important points to highlight, and I urge the government to read this submission, to look at it carefully, because they’ve got some very useful things to say.

I also want to highlight some of the measures that No Demovictions raised. No Demovictions, as I’ve mentioned, are a fairly new group in Toronto. They’re made up of everyday people who live in a big purpose-built rental that’s slated to be demolished. When your home that you’ve been living in for 15 years—and you get a notice saying it’s going to be demolished so that a condo can be put up in its place, that can motivate you to take action. Many of these people have never been involved in advocacy or activism before; they’ve just lived their lives. They’re getting involved for the very first time because they are directly impacted by our housing affordability crisis.

I think of Pat. Pat is in her eighties. She lives at 145 St. George, and she is so upset that her home is slated to be demolished, and she has no idea where she is going to go.

How do you find a home in Toronto if you are on a fixed income, you are in your eighties, and the vacancy rate in your city is at 1.3% or 1.4%?

There’s nowhere to go, and it is motivating these people to get involved to write submissions, to organize rallies, to protest. They know there’s nowhere else to go. When their back is against a wall, they’re choosing to say, “We’re going to fight, and we’re not going anywhere. We don’t want to leave. And if we do have to leave, then we’re going to be fairly compensated, and we want the right to return to our home once construction is complete.”

In their very-well-thought-out submission, they also called for the reinstatement of third-party appeals to the lands tribunal. They called for a moratorium on demovictions across the province. They called for the Ontario government to immediately implement rent control on all rental units and to bring in vacancy control, so that rent—which is most people’s single biggest expense. If we’re talking about the affordability crisis, we’re talking about mortgages and rent. That’s what we’re talking about. That’s why they’re in support of vacancy control, so there’s a cap on how much rent can be raised between tenancies. They’re calling for a moratorium on above-guideline rent increases and an investment in non-market housing. I support a lot of these measures. I think they’re very good. It’s a pity that those measures are not in this bill.

Once again, the city of Toronto is opposed to the limiting of third-party appeals. It’s very concerning.

I want to conclude by talking a little bit about what’s not in this bill.

There are many reasons why we have a housing affordability and a housing supply crisis. It has been decades in the making. It wasn't the Conservative government alone that created this problem; the Liberal government and previous governments before that had a role to play, as well. But what we do know is that over the last six years, it has never been more expensive to rent a home in Ontario, and it has never been more expensive to own a home in Ontario. Even though housing prices have dropped a little bit, interest rates are so high, the carrying costs are so considerable, that many people are just completely priced out of the housing market. We can see that this is having ramifications politically. People feel that governments don't have their best interests at heart, that the dream of home ownership and stability is something that their generation of people is no longer entitled to. People feel anger. They feel resentment. They feel frustration. They feel apathetic. They don't understand why we're creating this two-tier system between people who have a home and people who don't. It's having significant ramifications.

What I would hope is that when this government introduces bills, it introduces bills with the goals of addressing the housing affordability crisis and the housing supply crisis. We see some measures here that address the housing supply crisis—but what we never see from this government is issues around housing affordability.

This is what I would like to see from this government: I would like to see this government present a real, meaningful, properly funded plan to end homelessness in Ontario as soon as possible. That's what I would like to see, because what we are seeing in towns and cities across Ontario is encampments being set up, because people are being evicted into homelessness. Even if they've got a job, they can't find a place they can afford to rent. In a time when we live in one of the most prosperous provinces in the world, we have thousands and thousands of people who have nowhere to live. I think that is a real shame.

The Auditor General was very clear. They asked this government to come up with a plan to end homelessness. They gave you some recommendations on what you can do; the first one was just tracking it.

What I have seen over the last few years is no serious effort to end homelessness. While you've brought in additional money to the homelessness prevention fund, you've taken away more money from municipalities, by cutting their ability to raise development fees. It's very concerning.

We continue to get calls from the city of Toronto, from the city of Peel, from housing shelters, who say, "We don't know what to do. We have people living in these shelters for months, and we don't have any additional funding to assist them to move into the private rental market." They're very worried, and the problem is just getting worse and worse and worse.

1430

I would like this government to come up with a real, fully funded and effective plan to end homelessness.

I would like to see, in the next bill this government introduces, a real plan to help renters. We have over 1.7

million rental households in Ontario now—it has gone up to 300,000 people in the last few years, because people have been completely priced out of the housing market. They're renting for longer and longer and longer.

I would like this government to have a real plan to help renters. In this plan, we would like to see measures that stabilize the price of rent so that people know how much they're going to pay. We would like to see those measures—and that includes real rent control on all homes, including those built after 2018. It should also include vacancy control, so there is a cap on how much the rent is raised between tenancies.

I would like to see this government get serious about fixing the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit. If you are a renter and you call the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit today, you basically get a busy signal. I don't know how many staff they've got—seven for the entirety of Ontario? When we call them, they say, "I'm sorry; we just don't have the resources to deal with this issue." We call them in situations of blatant violations of the law, where someone is physically attacked by a landlord and forced to move out of their home and they move into a shelter; or a family who goes out for a morning walk with his kids and comes back and finds out that the locks of his rental home have been changed—situations like that. We call the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit, and there is no serious response. That's a shame.

Oh, my goodness, there was one recently in our riding, where in winter, there was no heating. I called the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit—meh. I don't think that should happen.

The Rental Housing Enforcement Unit should be staffed and have the jurisdictional power it needs so if a renter calls and has a valid concern, the rental housing enforcement steps in and intervenes and makes sure that renter lives in a safe and well-maintained home. That's the minimum we should expect. I urge this government to address that.

What I would like to see in the next budget bill is a commitment from this government to build affordable and non-market housing. That's what I would like to see from this government. The reason I would like to see this is because when other cities have moved forward with building non-market and affordable housing, they have seen considerable success. We recently had a town hall with the Minister of Housing in BC, Minister Kahlon, and he talked about the work that they're doing to invest in non-market housing. They are building rental housing for middle-income families on public land to house people who are BC's workforce. We're talking about entry-level teachers, construction workers, supermarket workers, nurses. They're taking advantage of the resources that they have. They're providing grants and financing and low-cost loans and access to public land in order to build non-market housing. It makes a lot of sense. It has worked across Europe. It's working here. Even the federal government is starting to see the light—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Even.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Even, at the last minute, with their poll numbers tanking, they're saying, "Whoa, we need some good ideas." People have seen through the—

MPP Jamie West: The sunny ways.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The sunny ways, whatever.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not so sunny.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, not so sunny.

My point is this: There are a lot of good ideas around there, and building non-market housing is one of them. I urge this government to get serious about that.

I also think it is essential that we move forward with increasing density in towns and cities. We have presented very practical solutions that are supported by—honestly, I cannot think of a single stakeholder that didn't support allowing fourplexes as of right in towns or cities, not a single stakeholder. It's such a winner. It's such a winner. You can pat yourself on the back for that. I'd really like to see this government move forward on that and work with municipalities to ensure that they can meet their housing targets, not just in terms of numbers, but also in terms of affordability, size and needs, so we're not just building a whole lot of 600-square-foot condos and 3,000-square-foot homes on farmland, but we're building homes for the seniors and students, young families and people who have accessibility challenges.

Then, finally, what I would really like to see this government do in their multipronged approach—certainly something we would do—is to clamp down on the rise of investor-led speculation in Ontario. The reason why that is so important is because when we make it easier for Bay Street and Wall Street or Core Development to come in and snap up homes, we're making it a whole lot harder for people who just want one home. They just want one home. We're making it a lot more expensive and a lot harder for them to buy that home.

The whole purpose of the housing market is to provide homes for people first, not investors. That's what housing is all about: It's about providing homes to people. When I'm looking at these government bills, I look at it with that lens in mind, and I urge this government to do that as well.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to go to questions for the member. I recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the speaker for her remarks—very comprehensive, and she covered many issues in her remarks today, which is a lot like the housing market itself: It's complex. There are many elements to it and it's not straightforward. That's why we're bringing forth this bill—in fact, our 13th red tape bill, which is quite extraordinary in and of itself. There's got to be some record there. Red tape bills are not glamorous—as I said earlier, much like myself.

But I heard her say many times that there are a number of areas in this bill that she would support, and I appreciated that. Reflecting on the complexity of the subject and the measures required, would these positive elements of the bill allow you to support the legislation?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Owen Sound. There are some measures in this bill that are a long

time coming. We're pleased that there are some reversals of some of the worst decisions that the government has made. We're pleased to see use-it-or-lose-it. We're pleased to see a reinstatement of development fee charges that municipalities can ask developers to pay.

But there are some things in this bill that make this bill really, really problematic. Making it easier for municipalities to say yes to low-density housing when we know we have alternatives is very concerning. Eliminating the planning responsibility from entire regional levels of government without any serious consultation is very concerning. Limiting third-party appeals to the lands tribunal, including valid third-party appeals, we have got a lot of concerns about as well.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to our critic for housing for her lead debate on this bill. I've been thinking a lot about how housing is affecting other industries. I had a conversation about large industrial projects and the need for tradespeople. When you need boilermakers, for example, and everyone's competing over them—10 or 15 years ago, you had to preschedule; now you're having a hard time even finding these workers at all. Compounded to this is, with the housing crisis, we have a really difficult time in Ontario now attracting tradespeople—or in the medical crisis, health care workers—to come work and live in Ontario, because the affordability is so high.

For the member: I'm just wondering, you listed many things, but if you had a magic wand and there were some simple things the government can do in the short term that would start to turn the curve toward making housing more affordable for people, I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Sudbury for that question. Like you, we also hear from employers who have a lot of difficulty finding workers. I recently talked to St. Alban's child care, who said they have gone through more staff in the last few years than they did in the previous 20 years, because their staff can't afford to live in Toronto anymore and they're moving. They're moving to Oshawa. They're moving beyond. It's a huge concern. We see it also in the health care sector. We see it with policing. We see it in the trades.

The single most effective thing the government could do right now to make housing affordable is to bring in stronger rent control, immediately stabilize housing prices for over 1.7 million renter households and provide relief. With that, we can then move forward with building more housing, including non-market housing and affordable housing. I urge this government to look at this issue very seriously.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a question about appeals. As the law presently stands—I'm going to frame this in terms of the municipality of Sudbury, which at 3,100 square kilometres is the largest municipality in the province of Ontario. And if somebody wants to build a

subdivision in Sudbury, somebody living literally 30, 40 or 50 kilometres away could appeal that decision, even though they are utterly unaffected by the building of that subdivision, because Sudbury is so large.

1440

That seems to me to be a type of thing which ought to be corrected, and I'm wondering if the member would agree on the possibility that it might make sense to place limitations on rights of appeal when you live so far away from a proposal that you are utterly unaffected by it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Essex. A concern with the government's changes to the lands tribunal, again, about third-party appeals is that citizens and environmental groups just don't have the right to appeal at all, yet the government has carved out the right for major industry, developers and airports to appeal. So you've got this small group of people that must have lobbied you real hard in the last few weeks, and they can appeal, but everybody else can't appeal.

I do want to emphasize, the lands tribunal, the adjudicators already have the authority to throw out appeals that are frivolous or that have limited chance of success. So they already have the option to say, "Look, we're only going to be hearing concerns that are valid." Those are my concerns about this bill.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: To the wonderful member from University–Rosedale, thank you for your brilliant one-hour lead. I always enjoy listening to you speak around many issues, but especially housing.

After six years of the government being in power, owning a house and obtaining real estate or obtaining a home has never been more expensive in Ontario. And we know that the challenges that Ontarians are facing are really the cost-of-living crisis, and at the apex of the problem is the cost of housing. Is there anything in this bill that will make getting a house, getting an apartment, buying or renting that much easier, and is there anything in the bill that will protect you from illegal evictions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre. There are some measures in this bill that would spur the construction of new housing. What I'm concerned about is that there's nothing in this bill that is going to address renters and the predicament that they're facing today. We know we have a rise in illegal eviction activity. We know that renters, increasingly, are paying far too much to rent homes that don't meet their needs—they're too small; they're poorly maintained. That's a concern.

I hope that in the next bill the government introduces, there is a commitment to improve the situation facing renters in Ontario today. Strong rent control is needed, vacancy control is needed and strong enforcement of rental protection laws, including clamping down on illegal eviction activity.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from University–Rosedale for her thorough debate on housing. One thing that is certainly getting a lot of

attention in the media these days is that housing starts are down under this government. They're actually back to the same level as 2018.

The government talks about the number of housing bills and red tape reduction bills that it has introduced, and it seems to me that that's just adding to the paper and the collection of documents that say they're doing something when, in fact, nothing is getting done. Really, we've got a man with no plan in charge here. So could you talk a little bit about what you would do if you were in government to get housing starts actually back up?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that excellent question. I have also been concerned by the steady drop in the number of housing starts that are taking place in Ontario. I also look to what is happening in BC, where the BC NDP government is moving ahead with addressing the housing supply shortages—they have very real housing supply shortages—but also looking at the housing affordability issues that we're facing as well. So at the same time, they're moving forward with increasing density, working with municipalities to ensure that they meet their housing targets not just in terms of number but in terms of what is needed, but they're also investing in non-market housing and land trusts as well. I think we need a more holistic approach, so I look to what the BC NDP government is doing and use that as an example of what we would like to do here.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don't have time for another question and answer; it's one minute each.

So we're going to move to further debate.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I wish to thank all members who are in the chamber this afternoon for their participation in what has been a very interesting afternoon and opportunity to discuss a subject that I know is important to so many of us and to our constituents and those we have the opportunity to serve, and that, of course, is cutting red tape to build more homes.

I don't think it's a secret to anyone in the province of Ontario that we are still in the midst of a housing crisis. I know when I first came to this chamber in 2016, it was an issue that was coming onto the horizon. We had seen the federal Liberals actually talk a fair bit about it in the 2015 federal election that I was involved with. I remember Justin Trudeau coming in to Parliament with his commitment to make housing affordable for everybody. I think eight years later, we can see how that has turned out for the people of Canada.

So it was in 2016 that I really, really started to see, in my area of Niagara West, a changing demography. What I mean by that is we had a lot of people who were selling bungalows and mid-1970s detached homes in the Richmond Hills and the Scarboroughs of the world for \$1 million, \$1.5 million, and moving to Grimsby, to Beamsville, purchasing homes for \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000 and retiring a little bit earlier than they had previously planned. What that led to was, of course, a really challenging situation for local people who were my age. Many of my friends, and I would say many of the young

people I grew up with across Niagara, started to move farther south, outside of the GTHA corridor. They moved to places like Port Colborne; they moved to the Burfords of the world; they moved down south even farther, perhaps out to Dunnville, perhaps even out toward Oxford county—I see the member from Oxford listening intently—and this was a result of escalating prices that were growing much faster than their income was able to keep up with.

I see we have a number of young people who are today in the gallery. I'm sure that that is something that they've seen as well in speaking with those perhaps who have siblings who are looking for their first home and who are looking to ensure that they're able to get into that housing market, something that was not just a dream for so many years but a reality. It was something that just happened.

I spoke with my in-laws the other day about the housing challenges in Ontario. They said it's still hard for them to wrap their heads around the fact that the home that they built now is easily over \$1 million, and they built it in the early 2000s for just around \$200,000. When they got married in the 1990s, all of a sudden, they realized, "Oh, we're going to need a place to live," so they figured out a way to scrounge together \$5,000. Their first home was \$95,000; they needed 5% down. This is in Wainfleet, just off of Highway 3. So they found \$5,000 through a stag and doe, and they were able to put their down payment on their first home. Those days are long gone for the people who are sitting in the galleries today, and they're long gone for most of the people of Ontario.

Why is that? There are a lot of different reasons that we can get into. Obviously, the interest rate hikes that we've seen from the federal government and the Bank of Canada over the last few years have had a massive impact. We've seen, of course, a rapid population growth that creates housing pressures. But at its core, it's a question of supply and demand. When you have hundreds of thousands of people coming to our province because they see the opportunities that exist in Canada, in Ontario—they see the amazing opportunities whether it's in the new EV plants, whether it's in the quality of life, whether it's in the safety of our streets, and they know that they want to live here. They want to be residents of Ontario. When they come here and the province of Ontario and specifically local-tier municipalities don't build enough homes, that creates a supply-and-demand imbalance. It's economics 101. I don't claim to be an economist by any stretch of the imagination, but when you have 600,000 or 700,000 people entering into a region, and you're building not enough homes, the math doesn't add up. You have a lot of people bidding on not enough units.

1450

I do want to acknowledge that there's going to be a number of contributions to the topic that we have today and I want to acknowledge that the member for Essex and I are going to be sharing time this afternoon. The member for Essex is also going to be speaking to this question. And really the question is, what is the solution? What is the fix?

We've heard the ideology from the NDP and the Liberals. They say we should ban private construction of

homes. We should just have everyone in a subsidized home. We should have everyone in nationalized housing. We should have the government run housing across this province and across this nation. There is a really important place for social housing in the province of Ontario and I recognize the investments that have been made by the Ministry of Housing in so many corners of this province. I had the opportunity to tour many of those sites in Niagara, as well, and see the incredible importance of affordable housing and ensuring that we're building these homes for future generations.

But at its core, the people who build homes are home builders. They are people like the ones I grew up with who swing hammers, who pour concrete, who ensure that the work actually gets done to build homes. But when you show up for your first day on the job—as, perhaps, someone like myself, who as a teen operated a skid-steer and helped to clear out land and ensure that the ramshackle shack in the back was able to be taken down and you were able to create the opportunity for clean, new concrete footings and you were able to build a dream of home ownership on that site. Before that happens, there are a lot of steps that go into site plan approvals, that go into servicing those lands, that go into ensuring that the home that is approved that's going to be built on that land is safe, is stable, is not going to fall down and that it meets the requirements of local municipalities.

But what we saw in the province of Ontario until our government came to office in 2018 was a cloying, growing, absolutely exhausting mass of red tape that was killing the opportunity for home builders and for those who had dreams of home ownership to ever get into that market. And again, it wasn't that we weren't building any homes. That's something that I often hear the Liberals stand in this chamber saying: "Oh, well, we did build some homes in the province of Ontario when we were there. It's not like all home building stopped." And they're not completely wrong. Despite their best efforts to extinguish the spark of entrepreneurialism and in spite of their attempts to ensure that home builders would not be able to build the homes that people needed here in the province, there were still homes that were being constructed in the province of Ontario.

But, at its core, that supply-and-demand vector—the difference between the amount of homes that we needed with the population growth we experienced as people saw the potential in Ontario and the amount of homes that were actually coming online was absolutely disproportionate. And I remember when it really hit home: It was the spring of 2017.

The spring of 2017 saw a massive price increase that was directly linked to the undersupply of homes that were being built in the province of Ontario. I went to a home builders' of Niagara association meeting; it was an AGM in, I'm going to say, late April of 2017. I hadn't been elected that long; just since 2016. And I said to them, "So your frustration here seems to be not with the financing of these sites or not even finding the workers to build these sites"—which has now become more of a challenge, of

course, with the labour concerns; as we have a population that's aging and as we have baby boomers retiring from the trades. I just want to give a shout-out to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development for the work that they're doing to address that challenge.

But really, their big concern came down to red tape, and I remember sitting down with a fellow who has built hundreds of homes across Niagara—not personally, but with the organization that he's involved with, including a beautiful subdivision in a small town not too far from where I live called Smithville. And if you've had a chance to go down Highway 20 on your way to Niagara Falls—perhaps you took the scenic route and you said, “Well, I'm going to go see a little bit of the interior in Niagara. I love the QEW; I love being stuck in traffic, but I also want to, of course, see a little bit of what's on top of the mountain”—as we affectionately the escarpment—“and what that looks like.”

And so, there were some abandoned lands; it was called the Dunnville Spur. The Dunnville Spur was a part of a rail line that connected, obviously, Dunnville to some other parts of the CNR rail network. But they took that Dunnville Spur—it had been vacant for a long time—and they put it on the open market. It had run straight through town and it was no longer in use for decades and decades. They put it on the market and it was purchased in order to turn it into homes. Again, this was scrubland; it had been essentially an access point for a rail line going through town.

And now there are gorgeous homes there, I have to say. There are townhomes, mostly; a few detached homes, as well. Hundreds of families have moved into Smithville, really created a vibrant diversity that hadn't existed traditionally, to a certain extent, in that community. These are people often who are commuters, first-time homebuyers, people who are excited. When I spoke with them when I was door-knocking, many of them came from the GTHA and were actually moving into their first home. I spoke with a family who had had five families living in one home in the GTHA, and they were moving into this area.

I spoke with the person who helped put together this particular parcel, and I said to him—because they actually only just completed filling those just prior to the 2022 election. I had gone in there a number of times between the 2018 and 2022 elections, and every time there would be a few dozen more homes. I would speak with them and ask them what their concerns were, introduce myself as their local member. But when I met with the people who had actually put together those new home opportunities, I said, “So tell me, when did this start? Because I know it's been under way since I was first elected in 2016.” And they said, “Sam, we started putting this parcel of land together in 2004.” That's 2004, and they finalized the last occupants 18 years later.

I wish that that story of delay and red tape—it wasn't that they couldn't build the homes. It wasn't that they couldn't get the financing. It wasn't that there wasn't the

demand for those homes. It was the fact that the onerous burden of red tape that was preventing those homes from being built created a barrier that they hardly could overcome. They did, with perseverance and with a lot of hard work. But I'll tell you, we should not, as a province and as individual legislators, be creating that level of frustration when the people who are seeking to build those homes are seeking to provide an opportunity, an avenue into that dream of home ownership.

I knew at that time, when I spoke with that man, that his frustration wasn't even for the business development side of things. It wasn't about whether or not they were able to have their crews out there. They had a number of sites that they had under way. But his frustration was for those poor families who were having to wait 18 years in order to get into a home that they had been saving for for many, many years. That was because of red tape at so many different levels of government.

That's why the legislation that we're debating today, as another part in a long saga of our government taking the bull by the horns, turning that ship of state, and saying no, we're not going to allow a culture of bureaucracy, of continuous growth in regulation, of what, again, we've spoken about in this House as the enervating network of small, minute rules, minutiae that buries your average citizen under that blanket of red tape. We're not going to allow that to continue to grow and creep into every aspect of building here in Ontario.

We have taken bold steps under the leadership of this Premier and of those who spoke this morning—the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and red tape; the parliamentary assistant to the minister of red tape; the Associate Minister of Housing; the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs—demonstrating that this is an all-hands-on-deck effort to cut back that red tape.

Why? Not because we're bean-counters, not because we like to meet our regulatory reduction requirements in some burden report that we send out once a year—ultimately, those are just numbers. Those are just metrics and measurements that few people beyond this chamber will read. Why do we care so much about cutting red tape? Why has the Premier said that we are going to keep bringing forward bills?

It's because it's not just about cutting red tape; it's about the result of that tape. The why is as important as the how, and our why is to ensure that that dream of home ownership in every corner of this province is made a reality, as it was for my parents' generation, for my parents-in-law's generation, so that young families who are thinking about getting married, who are thinking about having kids—as my wife and I are very blessed to have a couple of kids—and they look at where they live—perhaps it's a corner basement apartment—and they think, “We need to upsize. We have a one-bedroom, perhaps a studio right now. We're going to need to look for somewhere a little bigger to build.”

If we had the policies in place that the opposition wanted, it would be essentially no more homes anywhere, it would be no opportunities for those people to keep into

that market, because they fundamentally don't understand that supply-and-demand mechanism in place. They don't understand that, if you artificially restrict the ability for more supply to come onto the market and you artificially restrict the ability of the people who build these homes—the construction workers who during Skilled Trades Week we all acknowledge as heroes—if we restrict their ability to get on that job site because of all the red tape we've created to get to that point, it will not work.

1500

But I'm proud to say that this Premier, this government, this legislation is continuing the legacy to ensure that that reality is there for each and every young family, new Canadian and even those who might be older but are looking to downsize, those who might have had their home in the GTHA and are now looking to come to rural Niagara and celebrate a smaller, slower way of life. Those people will now have options because of this legislation as part of, again, a continuing saga to cut red tape and get more homes built faster.

I know that my colleague the member for Essex will have much more to add to that.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

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

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll continue debate with the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to continue on the theme that my colleague raised, about contrasting this government's approach to addressing housing with the approach that is being suggested by the official opposition. In preparation of my remarks today I did have an opportunity to take a look at the proposal from the official opposition and I'll be quoting directly from it.

It starts with an acknowledgement that says, "There is little to no profit in building homes that are affordable for low-income people." Then it proposes to ensure that 30% of the 1.5 million homes that they propose to build would be non-market homes. That's 450,000 non-market homes. I am suggesting that each unit would cost \$500,000. In order to build 450,000 non-market homes at \$500,000 each, that would be \$225 billion—\$225 billion. How does the official opposition propose to raise this money? This is

how they propose to do it: They propose to start with \$15 billion "to finance the construction of new, non-market rental homes, to be operated by public, non-profit and co-op housing providers." Then they say the capital costs of building the new homes would "be recovered from the rental income, which would be reinvested to finance more homes."

That is the proposition put forward by the official opposition. They want to start with building homes that do not generate a profit and then take that absence of profit and build more homes with no profit. In other words, they want to build homes that don't generate money and then have no money to build no more homes. That's what that means.

You see, in order to build more homes, you need more money. In order to have more money, you have to generate the money, and not-for-profit doesn't generate money by its very definition. That is the approach of the opposition. In other words, they propose to raise \$225 billion in dreamland. Because right off the bat they acknowledge that such housing does not generate income. If you don't have the generation of income, you cannot build any more homes period, end of analysis. That's how it works.

I therefore contrast that approach with the approach of this government, which is, of course, to lower barriers to construction and by lowering those barriers, I mean lowering costs, such as lowering the red tape compliance, which stands in the way of practically every single development that is started in the province of Ontario.

One of those compliance measures is one which we spoke about earlier, which is the incessant intervention into the planning process of people who have no stake in the planning process. As I mentioned earlier, and gave an example of the municipality of Sudbury—which is 3,100 square kilometres—a person living literally 50 kilometres from a proposed subdivision could file an appeal blocking that subdivision, even though they have literally nothing to do with it, and that is one of the issues that the legislation proposed in front of us today seeks to resolve.

But one thing is for sure—one thing is absolutely for sure—no one is going to build houses in the province of Ontario by theoretically collecting rent from rental housing that makes no profit. You cannot build new homes on the backs of not-for-profit housing. It cannot work by its very inherent definition. It will not work, and that is why the plan proposed by this government is so much better than the unrealistic plan being proposed by the official opposition.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the members from Niagara West and Essex for their presentation. As I'm sure they both know, representing rural ridings, Ontario is losing 319 acres of prime farmland per day, which represents 5% of the province's entire farmland that will be lost in just five years. Bill 185 will make that loss even quicker. It will happen even faster.

Now, developers, airports, big manufacturers and cities are being provided the opportunity to appeal the Ontario

Land Tribunal rulings that restrict building on farmland, wetland and environmentally sensitive areas, but this bill also takes away the ability for third parties. It takes away the ability of third parties to appeal these decisions. Is this yet another example of this Conservative government disrespecting rural Ontario and farmers?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to rebut something that the member has raised and I've heard—inaccurately, unfortunately—in this chamber a few times now. The overall acreage of arable farmland in Ontario is growing each and every single day. If you look at the great northern clay belt—and this is from the Grain Farmers of Ontario—they look at 16 million acres that are coming online up in the Timiskaming–Cochrane region. If you look, since 2008, we've seen that the acreage in northern Ontario has increased from 53,000 acres to over 102,000 acres.

There are obviously downfalls and challenges to the rise of climate change across this land, but one of the impacts of climate change in the north is actually that there is more arable land coming online today than there ever has been. There is more farmland available to farm in the province of Ontario than there ever has been at any point in our history. Because if you look at the amount of acreage in places like eastern Ontario and northern Ontario, there is now land that, before, they were not able to grow on; the heat units have increased to such an extent that they're actually able to grow beans and corns. I was even just reading this morning, they're looking at growing potatoes in some of these places—

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

Next question?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the members very much for their remarks. Both of them touched on the practical elements of this bill. In fact, I'm also glad that the member from Niagara West touched on the acreage issue because this is one where numbers are thrown out. I think that they're—yes, let's get some updated numbers. I thank the member for doing that.

I also appreciate the member's perspective on the length of time it has taken housing to be developed in our province. I can only imagine how young this young member would have been when some of these projects first started, but I think it's all the more relevant for, as he noted, the young folks in the gallery. This bill is intended to support young homeowners—again, unlike myself. But I want to understand the member's perspective and what the key drivers are to enhancing home building that are contained in this bill.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate it. Really, the biggest thing within this legislation is the number of changes to some of the more subtle aspects of planning law. When you look at changes that are made here in the Development Charges Act, you look at some of the changes that are made under the OEB, the Line Fences Act, the Municipal Act—there are a number of different pieces that, really, are seeking to streamline the process that people have to go through.

Again, I think one of the pieces that I spoke about in my debate as well was that is an iterative process, right? It

builds on the 13 previous red tape—sorry, 11; 11 or 13—reduction packages that have come forward, and each of those have sought to make, perhaps, individually, not enormously consequential changes, but when taken as a whole, a really positive step forward to streamlining that process for home builders and also for providing certainty to municipalities. One of the pieces that was a challenge for some municipalities was uncertainty, and this is about providing that certainty and good governance.

1510

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Niagara West started off by referencing some of the young people that had been in the chamber earlier today. In a recent round table—and some of those voices actually came to the committee—they actually were just begging the government to stabilize the rental sector. This is all that they have at their disposal right now. So my question to you, the member from Niagara West, is what does your government have against renters? And why do you not recognize that stabilizing the housing sector is one of the key pieces to actually ensuring that we address the housing crisis in this province?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Well, I have some good news for the young people who are looking to rent. I was a renter myself. There were historic number of starts last year in new rental starts here in the province of Ontario, in 2023. That's great news, because again it comes down to that fundamental supply-and-demand imbalance.

If you don't have the opportunity to have a large amount of supply, in this case, of rental housing coming onto the market, guess what? You're going to have a lot of people bidding on a limited number of spots. What does that lead to? Price inflation and ultimately high rents. Bringing more supply onto the market is the way of ensuring that we bring those rents down. You can see this in jurisdictions across the world. When you have an oversupply or an increased supply of rental housing, as we're doing with the policies that this government has brought in place, those solutions will come forward.

Unfortunately, there's still the consequences of years of Liberal inaction on building rental housing that we're all paying for.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I really enjoy this debate on Bill 185. I'd like to ask the member from Essex a question. I know that we've had lots of support from across the province from different sectors, different municipalities. AMO is a big supporter. Could you quote some of the other supporters that you know of, please?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm happy to oblige. The member would be probably unsurprised to know that this is supported by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who says the following: "We support the introduction of use-it-or-lose-it provisions, which would allow a municipality to establish a deadline for lapsing of planning approvals and provide an incentive for developers to build their approved projects."

This is from the city of Mississauga. On giving planning authority to local municipalities, they say this: “We welcome this change, which will give lower-tier municipalities full planning responsibility on July 1, 2024, if the legislation passes.”

Here’s some thing from McMaster University: “We support exempting universities from Planning Act approvals. It will allow universities to build student housing more quickly and at lower cost, while reducing pressure on area market housing for students.”

And the list goes on, Madam Speaker. It’s quite a list of supportive quotes, and I thank the member for the question.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am sure that the members on that side of the House are hearing the same stories from their constituents as we are hearing on this side of the House. I just want to—just last week, a single mom came to my office, working full-time but struggling to pay her bills. She got an eviction notice after 18 years in her apartment and doesn’t know where she’s going to live. A 75-year-old man told us he works a minimum-wage job at Walmart, because he has to, to pay the bills. He’s lived at the same address for 30 years—the unit is now up for sale; he’s desperate about where he is going to live.

So my question to the government members is, why is there nothing in this bill or any of the previous housing bills that this government has introduced that is going to deal with stabilizing rents and keeping tenants housed in this province?

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): To respond, the member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to assure that individual who would have come into your office—and I have individuals similarly come in to my office who face uncertainty about their housing situation. First of all, my heart goes out to those individuals. I believe that we’ve made a number of changes to the Residential Tenancies Act to also ensure that there’s support for those tenants and that their rights are being protected, and bad landlords are being held accountable. At its core, the message that I share with them is that governments have let you down when they have artificially restricted the access to the supply of housing stock that’s available, because if you don’t have the opportunity to have a fulsome housing stock of rental opportunities before you, that is the situation you end up in, where there aren’t a lot of homes, where there isn’t a lot of rental capacity. We’re seeking to do everything we can to bring hundreds of thousands of rental units onto the market so that if that ever happens, if that situation ever occurs, you have opportunities across this province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We don’t have time for another question.

We’re going to move to further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Happy Monday. There’s obviously a lot of energy in the House today on this Monday morning.

It is a pleasure, of course, to bring some of the concerns of the people from Waterloo region to Bill 185. We were in committee for a few days. We did clause-by-clause. It was a painful, painful exercise, I will tell you, because even when the ideas are good, the government is not interested in listening. In fact, the government isn’t even interested in listening to their own Housing Affordability Task Force, which actually had a few good ideas as well.

I do want to thank our critic on Bill 185. She brought forward, with the help of our research team, which always punches above their weight, some really thoughtful amendments to this bill. Because we came into the process quite earnestly in thinking that the government might embrace the idea that what they’ve been doing, which has not been working because our housing starts are down—and so there was room for improvement, right?

So here we are. I think this is the 12th or 13th red tape bill that the government has brought forward, ironically, in some cases, creating more red tape in the entire process. And it’s becoming really frustrating because the government is clearly spinning their wheels on housing. They’ve created some chaos, particularly with Bill 23, which preceded these bills, which really destabilized the relationship that this government has with municipalities and, of course, broke trust with the people of this province with the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal which the RCMP is currently still investigating—the criminal investigation into this government.

So it was with that mindset that we went into this process and quite honestly said, “Well, maybe they’re at a point right now that they’re ready to work collaboratively.”

The housing crisis is a serious issue. Everybody understands that housing is an economic stabilizer for people. It’s hard to go to school, it’s hard to raise a family, it’s hard to get a job without housing. Housing is pretty much it, right?

We also learned at pre-budget committee that housing is also health care. This is why the university hospital just down the way is actually entering a new capital campaign to attach housing to their hospital because, otherwise, people just continue to cycle through the emergency room at great cost—way greater cost than providing a roof and warmth, or cooling in the summer. So, really, innovation down University Avenue—I commend that hospital and those doctors for leading the way. I would like to see the same leadership from the government, quite honestly.

And people are starting to take notice. I’ll just tell you before I get into the substance of the bill that I had my Leading Women, Building Communities awards on the constituency week. I did give this award to the Mount Zion church for their Black history advocacy—just really strong women. It was so refreshing to be in a room filled with good people who really care about their community and are looking for solutions to help and to fill the gap.

A lady came up to me, and she said, “Catherine, I want to give you a Band-Aid.” I was like, “Oh, well, that’s nice. Why are you giving me a Band-Aid?” She goes, “I think you should put it on your forehead.” Quite honestly, I didn’t know where this was going to go, because these

conversations, as we all know, can go in very different direction. She says, “No, I think you should put this Band-Aid on your forehead because you must be in so much pain from banging your head against the wall.”

This is what it felt like at committee, quite honestly, because the committee members on finance, they don't really have the ability to move away from the government's agenda, which is unfortunate because the government's agenda is not working on housing. Even some of the very, very good ideas that have come from home builders in Ontario, for instance—who are not against building fourplexes, right? Fourplexes are actually embedded in the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force. They are part of the solution. Are they the everything? Of course not, Madam Speaker, not at all. But for the government to draw the line in the sand—triplexes are okay; fourplexes, not so much—is ridiculous.

1520

It is also ridiculous to hear the Premier of Ontario stand in his place and talk about eight-storey fourplexes. It is absolutely ridiculous. Or that fourplexes compromise the integrity of the neighbourhood—you know what the Premier is actually defining? It is the very definition of NIMBYism.

After all of those days and months and it feels like years of the whole greenbelt thing, where they were calling us NIMBYists for actually advocating for greater transparency and intensification in the very neighbourhoods that are already established—because the infrastructure is there; the schools are there; the hospitals are there; the community is there. We were advocating for that intensification because it makes sense and because, unlike the very strange sentiments from the member from Niagara West that we aren't really losing 319 acres a day of farmland in Ontario—I have never heard this story before, I have to say. It was a head-shaker, wasn't it? But the member from Niagara West basically said, essentially, that climate change is making the north warmer, so now we can have more farmland up there. So he's no longer a climate change denier; he's a climate change promoter.

Oh, the north. I don't know if you've spent some time up there. Hydroponics? Absolutely. There's some innovation happening on farming. It's beautiful; it's great to see. But this is a common theme that a lot of Conservatives espouse, that there's this land exchange: “We'll pave over those wetlands over there, but we'll create another one over here.” It is a ridiculous concept.

I have to say, the member from Niagara West, that is astounding. I think it's worth noting because it's the first time that this new narrative around climate change has actually been introduced in the House. It's something to be watched because I think that if we've learned anything after six painful years of this government—they can spin anything, and then they can use your tax dollars at home to actually promote their agenda.

The Auditor General has already confirmed 75% of those “It's All Happening Here” would be deemed partisan advertising under the original rules that the Liberals agreed to bring in and then changed for their own political interest.

Who can forget that one commercial? Do you remember the commercial when the Liberals were really on the ropes? I want to say 2015 and 2016, whatever. It's this lady who's jumping over this valley to get to her pension. We paid for those commercials, and of course, there was a fictional pension plan, quite honestly—the concept. I remember knocking on a door—and this is why it's so important. This is why truthful advertising, particularly from a government to the citizens we are elected to serve—that trust can be broken very quickly. When I knocked on the door, this elderly lady who had never worked says, “No, I want my pension.” Yes, she believed the commercial is what I'm saying to you. To add insult to injury, her tax dollars went to pay for that commercial.

We got to some of that through the public accounts committee. Public accounts wasn't as frustrating, I think, as SCOFEA was because the government could not provide really any rationale for what they were doing, especially when they brought in this new, suddenly urgent amendment on Bill 185 to allow airports, large manufacturers and cities now to have exclusive—they're going to be able to go to the land tribunal's planning committee, but citizens and people who care about the environment are not. Now, you're not even hiding it anymore, that the environment is not your priority, right? When you're intentionally excluding these voices about their own community—this is a fundamental undemocratic move that the government is making, to exclude the voices of Ontarians in their own communities.

So, to put it mildly, it was a tough sort of week in SCOFEA, because we care deeply about our communities. Environmental change and climate change is real, and it is having an impact on how we should be planning more sustainable communities and housing within those communities, full stop.

There was some good news, though, last week—just to mix it up a little bit here—Donald Trump was found guilty on 34 charges. It was a beautiful, beautiful moment, quite honestly. It kind of restored hope a little bit more in the justice system—not in Ontario's justice system, of course, because we have some long-standing issues in that regard, but that was a good moment.

Now, our critic talked about some of the amendments that were brought forward. One was to the City of Toronto Act to protect and compensate tenants who are being renovicted or demovicted. Is this government concerned about those people? Not at all. They totally shut that conversation down, not interested in displaced seniors from their precarious housing. The fact that the government introduced this amendment near the end there—which was very concerning, actually, because we have seen how this government establishes legislation: It's who has access, who's got the money, who goes to the fundraiser, who goes to the party. This is a direct ask of these communities.

Now, I understand that the government has looked at airports a little bit differently, because they did award an MZO to a skyscraper close to an airport, which we can all agree is not a good idea, right?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It was a flight path.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was a flight path; I'm sorry. It was a flight path, yes.

Sometimes “MZOs R Us” doesn't really work for the community or for the sector, but this is definitely—somebody got lobbied real hard, Madam Speaker, real hard, and they got what they wanted. They got their direct ask into Bill 185. And I'm going to tell you, this does not instill trust in how the government is looking at the housing crisis or trying to address some of the proposals.

I'm going to read from Bonnefield Financial, Tom Eisenhauer. This pretty much sums up how I feel about Bill 185—tried to give it a good show at SCOFEA, but that didn't happen.

He says, “Ontario's ... government introduced Bill 185—patronizingly named the ‘Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act.’ Buried within the bill are some legislative changes that will accelerate the loss of wetlands, environmentally sensitive areas and especially farmland in Ontario.”

I guess unless you're in the Far North and you now find yourself in a warmer climate and therefore start pulling those stones out of the stone.

“Of all the threats to our future food security, the loss of our prime farmland is the most severe. And of all the causes of farmland loss (soil degradation, unsustainable farming practices, climate change, erosion, decertification), irresponsible urban sprawl is by far the leading cause. Based on StatsCan data, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture calculates that between 2016 and 2021 Ontario lost 319 acres of farmland a day ... a day! That equates to the loss of almost 5% of the province's entire farmland area in just five years. The vast majority of this loss was to urban development.”

So, this is on your watch, right? And it does have a cost. It does.

“Bill 185 will effectively neuter settlement area boundaries which limit urban sprawl by restricting the size of municipalities. Developer landowners will now be able to appeal any development rulings that restrict their ability to build on farmland, wetland or environmentally sensitive areas.”

This is an acceleration of sprawl. It is intentional, it is happening in real time and it has been made worse since this government has come into power in Ontario.

1530

The bill will also remove the Ontario Land Tribunal's ability to review some decisions around municipal decisions, but then, you know what? This got changed, further limiting the guardrails that prevent urban sprawl.

“The provisions of Bill 185 run counter to the advice the ... government commissioned from former federal Conservative ... leader Lisa Raitt”—I like Lisa Raitt—“who recommended that stronger protections for farmland and natural areas be an essential component of any measures that encourage more and better housing.” This is a smart recommendation by a former federal Conservative who knows the file very well, Madam Speaker.

“Ontario needs more housing urgently, but not at the expense of future generations' food security and the environment.” It's like we didn't even experience the pandemic together. I mean, we did have different experiences, make no doubt about it, but one of the recommendations from the Senate of Canada is that we become more food-secure. We should not be so dependent on other jurisdictions. We have some of the best farmland in Ontario. We have some of the best farmers. And the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been very clear in their opposition to Bill 185. This is a genuine concern that they have around future generations of farms.

“The focus of new housing should be intensification of the ‘missing middle’ in existing urban areas as recommended by a long list of experts and task forces and as requested by municipalities like Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa.” It's interesting that Bill 185 is silent on that, actually.

“Bill 185 will be a disaster for farmland in Ontario—a far greater threat than the proposed development of parts of the greenbelt,” and so that is why Bill 185 matters so much. I think a lot of us—our eyes were opened on how vulnerable those arable greenbelt lands were, Madam Speaker. But Bill 185 accelerates that proposed sprawl in an incredibly irresponsible manner.

He goes on to say, “To paraphrase the great Chrissie Hynde's ‘Ohio’ lyric”—this is good—“Ontario farmland is being paved down the middle by a government that has no pride.”

So you're willing to risk everything with Bill 185. And also, it's not going to solve the housing crisis. I mean, sometimes, you work backwards from a problem, right? You have to acknowledge the problem.

You refuse to acknowledge that renters in this province have almost been attacked by this government with the removal of rent control in 2018. The issue of affordability is something that this government refuses to address. I mean, you can say that there are this many purpose-built rentals, but if you can't afford them, they don't really exist, Madam Speaker, right? They don't. And right now, the financialization of some of those condos should be under review of your government. We know how money is laundered in Ontario and this happens through these condo developments as well.

Waterloo region has had an open letter against Bill 185 now for a number of weeks. It has partly been connected to, of course, the expropriation of 770 acres of prime farmland in Wilmot, a planning practice that is surprising. But the provincial government, to be clear, has asked these municipalities to find large, industrial land banking, and I know the region of Waterloo doesn't have the money to buy out these farmers, so the money is going to come from somewhere. It looks like it's going to be coming from the Ontario government, Madam Speaker.

So, at the end of the day, we have a piece of legislation which, once again, should never be called “building new homes.” It's really just “here's an open door for developers” and you've formalized it. You basically hung the little sign outside the Legislature and said, “Yes—open

for business for developers and land speculators,” and you’ve committed to building property and housing that doubles down on a very unsustainable housing plan, which will actually end up costing all of us down the road.

I’ll leave it at this, from the open letter from Waterloo region:

“Environmental protections are not just ‘red tape.’ We depend on our farmland, our fresh water, and on the other ecological services provided by our unbuilt landscapes. Furthermore, the regional planning processes that have been carefully designed over decades should not be seen as barriers to building much-needed homes. Instead, our regional government plays a vital role,” and they should not be undermined in this process.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We’re going to go to questions for the member.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for her remarks this afternoon. She mentioned six painful years, Speaker. Well, if I had their poll numbers, it would be six painful years, colleagues.

As we heard at committee, the Ontario home builders came to committee and presented, and so did OREA and other builders in the province of Ontario. I asked around, obviously, increasing costs of interest rates, costs of labour, construction materials, but obviously also as well, Speaker, the carbon tax. So I asked the home builders if the federal Liberal carbon tax and its increasing year over year is increasing the cost of housing in Ontario. And, Speaker, they said yes. They confirmed that it is causing costs—costs of building materials and labour—to go up.

Does the member from Waterloo agree that the federal Liberal carbon tax is increasing the cost of housing? And will the member from Waterloo call her federal member and ask her to scrap this tax?

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, the member from Perth–Wellington—I’m not sure if he understands how insulting it is, when people ask serious questions that are impacting the people of this province, around child care, around autism or around special education, and then the government comes back with “carbon tax.” It levels a new level of disrespect, I think, to the bigger problems.

What I will say to the member from Perth–Wellington is the reason we have a federal carbon tax is because your government dismissed the cap-and-trade program, and this is the backstop. The Supreme Court of Canada, as you all know, has said that the federal government has the right to address climate change in this manner. But we would not have that carbon tax if your Premier—because he’s not my Premier—hadn’t cut the cap-and-trade. That’s right.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We’re going to go to the next question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is infuriating, I will say to the member from Waterloo, that this government hides their shortcomings with the carbon tax. It’s not just us that’s saying it; OREA said this at SCOFEA. OREA said: “We are disappointed that two key recommendations by the province’s own Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF)—strongly supported by Ontario Realtors—have not been included in” this “bill. We need to build more

homes on existing properties and allow upzoning along major ... corridors....” And they asked for the elimination of “exclusionary zoning and allowing four units, as-of-right.”

We know that BC is killing it when it comes to the housing starts. They’ve got 52% as many starts as this House. In fact, Ontario’s housing starts are tumbling. So my question to you is, rather than being arrogant and hiding behind the carbon tax, this government should roll up their sleeves and see what BC is doing to have a real bill that addresses the real challenges in the housing crisis in Ontario.

Interjection: Can you remind them of their carbon tax?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. It does beg the question: You have a made-in-Ontario—what is it?—industrial compliance fee, which essentially is a carbon tax. It is generating \$2.2 billion over the next five years. I’d like to know what you’re going to do with that money. Because, you know what? You could partner with businesses to help them green themselves, or you could actually have some dedicated housing attached to that. And you know what? That would be a good use of that money.

This is the frustration, Madam Speaker. We have a carbon tax in Ontario because of this government, because they failed around the cap-and-trade piece. But they have their own made-in-Ontario industrial compliance fee, which is a carbon tax, which you don’t talk about in this House. But we are going to talk about it, because it needs transparency. That’s what we want from that.

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

1540

Mr. Aris Babikian: The current mayor of Vaughan and the former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, Steven Del Duca, admitted this year that the housing crisis started or began when he was around the provincial cabinet table. Under the previous Ontario Liberal government, this province witnessed 15 years of inaction on housing, which was also supported by the NDP.

Can the member please tell us why her party didn’t feel the need to act on housing sooner to prevent the affordability crisis we are witnessing today?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is actually why history matters, because the former member from Parkdale–High Park worked on stabilizing rentals. The reason we have any sort of inclusionary zoning is because of the former member, who fought for that. We, of course, always supported the co-op and not-for-profit sector. We could not get the Liberals to move on these things because they had a majority. It would be like us trying to get you guys to actually care about child care, for instance, right?

So history matters in this place. And for what it’s worth, though, the Liberal leader has talked very positively about the carbon tax, but this government refuses to own their own carbon tax that they have created in this province with the industrial compliance fee and the fact that you cancelled cap-and-trade. You guys want to keep talking about this? That’s fine. It doesn’t help with the housing crisis—nor does Bill 185, for that matter.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for her presentation. I'm just wondering—I remember the Premier saying earlier today in debate, and I've heard him say it before, that he's never increased the cost of living for anyone. But I remember, as I listened to your remarks and as I did my research for today, I note that the average rent in my city of Ottawa for a two-bedroom apartment in 2018 was \$1,301, and in 2024, the average is \$2,488. I also note that this government removed rent controls on buildings built after 2018.

So the Premier can call it whatever he wants; I call that jacking the rent. I'm wondering if the member from Waterloo has any comments about how this government has jacked the rent on people in Ontario.

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is actually happening in real time. The government talks about ideology all the time, but if you cannot stabilize renters—70% of the people in this province are renters. So the first thing you can do in a housing crisis is make sure people don't get kicked out of their housing; that they're not demovicted without a reason or they're not renovicted without reason. This is the first step to stabilizing the housing crisis. But it's not of interest to this government, Madam Speaker.

Also, it's interesting to talk about the high costs. This is the government that froze the minimum wage in 2018. They actually put their hands in the pockets of minimum-wage workers and took out \$7,000 over the course of the pandemic for full-time workers and \$3,200 for part-time workers during a health care crisis. If that doesn't speak privilege and elitism, I don't know what does.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Let's talk a little about why history matters, and let's talk about how there's only been one NDP government ever in the history of Ontario because people remember what happened under the Rae government. Let's talk about respect for voters.

The member for Waterloo wants to say that the carbon tax doesn't matter. It is the number one issue in my riding when I talk to people, and quite frankly, the federal Liberal government is going to lose the next election because of the carbon tax. And I don't understand why this member will stand up in her place and she will say that it's irrelevant to the cost of a home when we know for a fact—and we've heard it from home builders, we've heard it from OREA and we've heard it from other organizations—that it adds thousands of dollars to the cost of home sales that, ultimately, get passed along to the people who are buying those homes.

So I want to hear it from the member directly: Will you stand up against the carbon tax and help make life more affordable for Ontarians?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The only reason we have a carbon tax in Ontario is because this Premier cancelled cap-and-trade—100%. So every time you guys get up and talk about the carbon tax, you're actually critiquing yourself. You're criticizing yourself.

Let's talk about affordability around housing. This is something that you refuse to acknowledge—that renters have rights too. Renters are families; renters are grandparents; renters are students—but no, not to you. This is the party that puts their developer friends first—anybody who can buy access to you. You actually got legislation written because of a price. So everything is for sale in Ontario, except for a little dignity on the housing file.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to debate the issues that matter most to Ontarians.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the issue that matters most to Ontarians is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Can I have some order, please? I can't hear the member.

Mr. Adil Shamji: —accelerating the delivery of beer in convenience stores to the tune of a billion dollars. But in fact—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Stop the clock.

The member will take his seat.

I would request some order in the House so I can hear the member speak. He has the floor.

I'll go back to the member for Don Valley East.

Start the clock.

Mr. Adil Shamji: As I was saying, the issue that matters most to Ontarians currently is not getting beer into stores one year earlier to the tune of a billion dollars, but it is, in fact, housing.

The scale of the suffering across our housing sector is enormous. We have people living on the street; leaving the province, with out-migration to the tune of 70,000 young people per year; others living under precarious and unsafe conditions; and more people delaying major milestones in their life—things like families having kids, young people moving out from their parents' basements, or seniors downsizing into smaller homes. This catastrophe is happening in the midst of an out-of-control housing crisis. Home prices are at never-before-seen levels, rent is out of control, and the Landlord and Tenant Board has become virtually inaccessible—all of this within the backdrop of a government that cancelled rent control, that tried to pave over the greenbelt, that can't make a single decision without subsequently walking it back because they never do their homework. Amidst that, one might expect that we would have a government that would try to finally take action, that would try to do something. But their record over the last six years has been abysmal.

Construction began on only 5,589 homes in Ontario last month—the lowest that it has been in over six years. Anthony Passarelli, CMHC's lead economist for southern Ontario, said, "Over the rest of the year, we expect [housing starts] to continue to trend down in the province and particularly in the GTA." So, of course, cue the excuses, right? Number one: It's someone else's fault—probably the federal government, because of high interest

rates. But British Columbia is building two and a half times more homes per capita than we are and yet are subject to the same interest rates.

The government will say that they're making progress despite the fact that they are falling well behind their target of 1.5 million homes per year and subsequently are being forced to change the goalposts to have a hope of being able to save face. They will try to argue that the government is on track, but they would have to build 38,000 homes per quarter to meet their annual housing target, and last quarter, which just ended a few months ago, they only built around 15,000—not even 50% of what they need.

This is the kind of bill that could have been forgiven if it was introduced in year one of their mandate, not year six. For all their talk about housing supply action plans, this bill is big on talk and so small on action. Two years after their own Housing Affordability Task Force report came out, they're still consulting, essentially kicking the can down the road so they can say they're doing something without actually doing literally anything. And when the Premier tweets about his government's accomplishments, it's telling that addressing the housing affordability crisis usually doesn't make it on the list.

So let's talk about this bill. I want to begin by explaining what has been neglected in this legislation.

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There is nothing beyond a line in the preamble in Bill 185 that directs municipalities to actually plan for 1.5 million homes. I'll say it again: This government is talking about but not planning for 1.5 million homes. It's hoping for 1.5 million; it's praying for 1.5 million, but there is absolutely nothing in this bill that requires municipalities to actually plan or build 1.5 million homes. That's a bold goal—1.5 million homes by 2031. Mike Moffatt would say that number is already out of date and should be higher. Anyway, 1.5 million—that is a target that this government set, and that is a target that this bill abandons. It does not direct municipalities to plan for that. It does not fix zoning laws to make those homes possible. It does not legislate the necessary infrastructure to support those homes. For this reason alone, this legislation is unworthy to be presented before this House. But it's worse: Bill 185 neglects the power, the responsibilities and the duty this government has when it comes to building homes.

The Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing are keen to blame their lack of progress on everyone and everything else, but they won't make the major policy changes needed to drive real change. Their neglect amounts to an abdication of duty, and here's how:

The government convened the Housing Affordability Task Force; they have since completely ignored it. Bill 185 does nothing different. The government benefited from mountains of consultation, but they are now killing time by doing more consultation instead of enacting the recommended policies.

Bill 185 overlooks the opportunity to end exclusionary zoning. It refuses to legalize fourplexes as-of-right province-wide. It does not directly strive for greater density around major transit areas. It does not make

converting commercial real estate into residential real estate easier—something many stakeholders are begging this government to do. It does nothing to address the myriad of problems bogging down the Landlord and Tenant Board. It does nothing to address the many roadblocks standing in the way of getting more housing built, like angular planes, setbacks and minimum lot sizes. Does the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing even know what an angular plane is, or has he neglected to learn that too?

Bill 185 neglects those who have used the appeal system in good faith by entirely banning third-party appeals in one fell swoop, as opposed to reforming the system to proactively prevent abuses.

Furthermore, all the developers and home builders who have spent years working on housing projects and finding ways to make those projects pencil—Bill 185 neglects them all, by flip-flopping over and over again, going back and forth to no end on whether or not there will or will not be a five-year phase-in period on development charges.

The Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing have neglected to secure an environment of predictability and long-term stability in the housing sector. That is very clearly resulting in fewer housing starts.

Lastly, we are now seeing this government's wilful neglect of our health care system—particularly rural hospitals like Durham hospital, resulting in developers cancelling their housing projects.

The extent of this government's action has really been limited to simply printing novelty-sized cheques to give to municipalities, but this is not a substitute for real planning backed by actual laws and regulations, and the Minister of Housing knows it.

Also missing from the bill is a commitment to make municipalities whole after Bill 23 pulled the rug out from under them, particularly for infrastructure. Sure, the provincial budget has offered a paltry \$1.6 billion as an olive branch, when the projected shortfall is significantly closer to \$5 billion. Municipalities are now left on the hook while the Premier's gravy train instead spends just over a billion dollars for the sole purposes of delivering beer in convenience stores just about one year early—priorities, right?

The final thing that's missing from this bill and, frankly, from this government is common sense. They could have committed billions in infrastructure funding. This government could have committed a billion dollars for securing primary care, keeping hospitals open, expanding home care, or even building homes. Instead, they prioritized beer—\$1 billion.

Anyway, to touch very concretely on the details of this bill—I'm going to touch on the four major areas, titled euphemistically as follows:

- (1) Building homes at lower cost;
- (2) Prioritizing infrastructure for ready-to-go housing projects;
- (3) Improved consultation and greater certainty for more homes built faster;
- (4) Building more types of homes for more people.

I'll dive into each of these.

So let's talk about building homes at a lower cost. This includes things that indicate just how out of touch this government is. For example, it removes minimum parking restrictions around MTSAs, which is a bare-minimum policy and one that doesn't have much to give at all in places that are already highly car-centric, as developers will still build parking in these places. But that's not actually the question that home builders and developers have been asking. The real question they have is, how much density can go around MTSAs? That answer is not in this bill.

The minister will say that he's consulting—so let's look at the draft PPS. But why is he still consulting two years after the Housing Affordability Task Force already answered the question? And to make things even more infuriating, the government has already been stalling on that by saying they've been consulting with municipalities.

This is where life gets really bizarre. In related announcements, the government just said they will allow mass-timber construction for up to 18 storeys, but the development community is not clamouring for that. They're clamouring for clarity on restrictions that make it difficult to build that tall in the first place, such as clarity around angular planes. Similarly, there's a promise of consulting with fire safety stakeholders about single-exit stairs in small residential buildings, but this was something that Bill 109, two years ago, under the last Minister of Housing, had promised to do. So why are we still consulting?

The next major area of this legislation is prioritizing infrastructure for ready-to-go housing projects. This is where I really begin to feel bad for builders, developers and municipalities. The lack of foresight, planning, coordination and courage of this government has led to an environment in which no one can plan and, therefore, no one can build. First, development charges were off the table, throwing municipalities province-wide into chaos, causing property taxes to skyrocket and resulting in developers planning their construction accordingly—now an unexpected walk-back.

Interest rates are affecting housing, admittedly, from coast to coast, but it's telling that new construction is falling the fastest and hardest in Ontario compared to places like BC and Nova Scotia. As a result of all of these walk-backs, there is now a complete and utter lack of confidence in this government. When hundreds of millions of dollars are on the table, people don't know what they can expect next month, let alone next year, in terms of policy continuity and clarity of direction. No one can make investment decisions in such an environment, and certainly not municipalities planning for infrastructure.

The next section of this bill is improved consultation and greater certainty for more homes built faster. I'll say, where do I even start here? As I've already said, they've been consulting for the past two years and seem caught up in this as a way of delaying.

I'll also say that included in this section, the bill institutes a near-universal ban on third-party appeals that

is simply heavy-handed. There's no mistake that the current system of appeals is problematic, between long waits at the Ontario Land Tribunal—because it's underfunded and the significant number of political appointees, it has become a process creating more barriers to reasonable housing than are necessary. But a blanket ban that ignores the root causes? Clearly a more nuanced and calculated approach is necessary, which the Housing Affordability Task Force called for. But where a scalpel was required to address this issue, this government came with a machete.

I'll skip ahead a few moments just to touch on why this bill will not make a dent in the housing crisis. It won't get us close to 1.5 million homes, because it has nothing that will make a material difference to our housing efforts. We needed a major home run on housing, and all we got was a swing and a miss.

I've been talking to stakeholders, and they were ready for a big housing bill from this government. A new minister, a fire under his feet—the housing sector had its hopes up. But the lack of audacity from Bill 185 has resulted in some of the most profound disappointment I have ever seen from stakeholders since my time in office.

We have government MPPs getting up on stage at conferences, touting their out-of-touch vision for housing in Ontario. The Associate Minister of Housing was recently caught stating that he just wants “everyone to be able to have a detached house with a yard” and that “no one wants to bring up a child in downtown Toronto.” Well, say that—

Mr. Dave Smith: That's not what he said. That's 100% false.

Mr. Adil Shamji: It's a quote.

Say that to the millions of Ontarians who work in cities across this province. Tell them where they want to raise their kids.

This is the out-of-touch prevailing attitude amongst decision-makers in this government. The housing sector has had enough.

So who does this bill let down? In short, everyone—all those currently without homes who can't keep waiting, young people stuck living in their parents' basements, the seniors who want to find an apartment or condo to downsize to, couples looking to start a life together. For more reasons than I can count, Bill 185 is a failure for the people of Ontario—a massive missed opportunity.

If this government had any hope of meeting its 1.5-million housing target, they lost it when they tabled this bill instead of a much, much more ambitious one.

Bill 185 plays it safe. It misses the mark. Playing it safe on housing is quite dangerous, and it is a letdown to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

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Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity.

The arrogance and the lack of knowledge emanating from this member is actually quite stunning.

The member knows, frankly, that the associate minister never said those words, but had no problem reciting that here today.

Forgetting all of that, this is a member who ran under Steven Del Duca, who admitted in front of a parliamentary committee that the housing crisis started with the Liberals. He ran under that member. This is a member who is opposed to high density along transit in his riding but is okay with it everywhere else. This is a member who just suggested that interest rates don't have a bearing on where we're at today.

He cited the CMHC. Well, do you know what the CMHC said? The CMHC said that it will cost mortgage payers \$15 billion. And what is their option? Their option will be to reduce spending. Their option will be to sell their property. That is what the impact of interest rates are on the people of the province of Ontario.

This member has the arrogance to suggest that everybody else is wrong, but he is right—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

The member for Don Valley East to respond.

Mr. Adil Shamji: That is a minister who ran under a Premier who, in public, said he wouldn't touch the greenbelt, and then in private, to his buddies, said that he absolutely would.

This is a government that says one thing and then absolutely does another. This is a government that promised to fix the housing crisis but has the worst record in history in this province.

Certainly, Bill 185 is a sterling example of this government's failure on every single major policy issue that matters to Ontarians.

Whether it is housing, whether it is health care, whether it is affordability—this government is keen to blame everything on everyone else except for themselves, and that is what I call arrogance.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for your presentation.

One of the housing experts back home who I take very seriously is Dr. Carolyn Whitzman from the University of Ottawa. She has been part of a number of different affordable housing initiatives. She has met with this government. She has met with the federal government.

Professor Whitzman identifies three major priorities in housing I'd like you to reflect on: end homelessness, protect renters; and scale up the right kind of housing.

And when I've heard Professor Whitzman talk about what affordable housing actually means, she constantly comes back to the theme of, it should be 30% of one's income or less. So I wonder if the member could confirm if you share that definition of affordable housing.

And then on the second issue of protecting renters, I'm wondering if the member could elaborate on whether we need an Ontario tenant-to-tenant rent control, so we don't have a situation in which one tenant is incentivized to move out and the rent gets massively jacked for the people coming afterwards.

I wonder if you could comment on both of those.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I thank the honourable member for his insightful question.

There's no mistaking it; if we want to address the issue of affordable housing, first we need to settle on a definition of affordable housing. For far too long, we haven't been able to get a definition that makes sense from this government. They have also been persistent in perpetuating some sort of other phrase called "attainable housing," for which they refuse to provide a definition.

I think I heard you say that in the definition you cited of affordable housing, it's 30% of income—the definition that I'm aware of is 30% of average household income. I think that is a definition that I would support. That is actually something that I believe has a chance of making housing relevant and accessible to the people of Ontario.

As it relates to what that housing looks like, I think it needs to reflect a wide variety of kind of housing. Far too often, we talk about people's ambition to own a home, and they deserve to do that. We need to have rental options, co-op options and affordable housing with wraparound community supports as well—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

We're going to go to the next question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: In committee, we spoke to housing stakeholders across this province. They all agreed that the carbon tax is increasing the cost of housing.

On April 1, the carbon tax went up 23%. Those costs are getting out of control. The people of Ontario cannot afford this awful tax, and that continues to spike, year over year.

Speaker, can the member opposite tell us if he or his colleagues in this House have spoken to members of their federal party friends to stop supporting this costly tax on housing?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'll be very clear that our caucus recently presented our intention to deliver a bold and ambitious plan to fight for and defend the environment and that it will not include a carbon tax. However, I wish that I could say that the same kind of commitment could be made by the government members across, who have not just supported—they have embraced a carbon tax of their own. By failing to have an environmental plan that actually makes sense in the province of Ontario, they have subsequently agreed to accept the federal carbon tax and, not only that, have additionally put on their own version of a carbon tax, known by the title emissions performance standards.

This government could make life affordable and they could actually look serious on the environment if they took the right steps. Instead, they've gone ahead, they've imposed their own carbon tax—emissions performance standards—have failed to have any sort of environmental plan of substance, and is happy to distract from things that could actually make a difference, such as waiving HST on home heating, which is something well within their capacity that could improve affordability in homes—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you. We'll go to the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think housing is something we all want to accomplish in the province of Ontario. One of the things, though, that I'd like to see in this bill is housing for all, for everyone, from people who are hard-working and for people who are on fixed incomes. And it's missing in this bill.

I can tell you, in London, it's a 10-year wait-list for community housing. Some people call it social housing. London has the highest number of households on waiting list per 100,000 people. And 16,472 more households were on the social housing waiting list in London, that versus 2023—compared to 2022. That's an extremely high number.

In this bill, is there anything about the government contributing to social housing so all Ontarians can have a place to live?

Mr. Adil Shamji: If there is anything in this bill that addresses that, I can tell you, I certainly haven't seen it. It certainly hasn't seemed as though anything like that would be a priority by this government. In fact, all I have noticed is that this government has set its sights on those within our province and amongst our communities who are most vulnerable, by failing to take important actions like substantially increasing rates for ODSP and Ontario Works.

So, no, regrettably, I have not seen that element in the legislation, nor do I see a government that is serious in wanting to make any changes in that area.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I find it curious that the member opposite says he's waiting for a definition of affordable housing. I will remind him that he actually voted in favour of the government's definition on affordable housing not long ago, Madam Speaker—all to remind you this is a member who voted against high-density development along major transit areas in his own riding. In fact, he campaigned very hard against the very things that he gets up in the House today and suggests that he's in favour of. He talks about the greenbelt. Well, as far as I know, it is only the Liberals who have ever opened up the greenbelt 17 specific times.

But I say to the member opposite very precisely, he campaigned against high-density housing in his riding. He said that he would stop it. He said that it was an abomination. His leader has talked about high-density housing as being disgusting. Is it now that he is reversing that position, and can the people in his community expect that he will support the high-density housing in and along transit corridors in his riding that he said that he would stop if he ever got elected to this chamber?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I find it so fascinating that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is so keen to cherry-pick my comments without actually taking anything within context. In fact, if he wants to continue perseverating over my social media, he will see a post within, I think, the last week in which I was at a major

development right at what will be the science centre station, which I was entirely supportive of.

I want to be clear: I do support increased density around major transit station areas, including in my riding. I'm on the record. My Twitter handle is @ShamjiAdil. Go check it out. It sounds like you've spent a lot of time there already. And to be clear—

Interjections.

Mr. Adil Shamji: And to be clear, I will stand against irresponsible development and where there isn't the infrastructure in place.

Now, I will say that I believe the development that he's referring to is one that was opposed by the city of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board, the Aga Khan Museum, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and justifiably needed significant improvements before it could be supported. But where there are actual, sound—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you.

Interjections.

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The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): That's time for the questions and responses. Thank you very much—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're done? Are we done?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order, please. We're still in debate mode. If you want to take it outside, if you want to have a further discussion, you're welcome to do so.

All right. We're going to move to further debate.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, it's my honour to rise in the Legislature today to express my unequivocal support for Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, and I am pleased to share my time with the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington. This landmark legislation represents a bold step forward in addressing Ontario's housing crisis, fostering growth in our rural communities and supporting our vital agricultural sector. Today, I will outline the key reasons why I believe Bill 185 is a crucial piece of legislation that will benefit all Ontarians with a specific focus on building homes, supporting rural communities, leveraging minister's zoning orders, the Building Faster Fund, the provincial Infrastructure Fund and addressing the unique issues faced by rural Ontario, agriculture and farming.

Ontario is facing an unprecedented housing crisis. The demand for affordable housing has skyrocketed, and the supply has not kept pace. Bill 185 addresses this issue head on by cutting red tape and streamlining the approval process for building new homes. By reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens, this bill will enable faster construction of homes, thereby increasing the housing supply and making housing more affordable for all Ontarians. The

bill's provisions to streamline approvals for a variety of housing types—including student housing and modular homes—will ensure that we can meet the diverse needs of our population. It's not just about quantity, Madam Speaker; it's about building the right homes in the right places, efficiently and effectively.

Our rural communities are the backbone of Ontario. They are home to our farmers, our natural resources and a rich cultural heritage that defines who we are as a province. However, these communities often face unique challenges, including limited access to infrastructure and essential services. That includes the rural areas in my riding of Carleton. Bill 185 recognizes and addresses these challenges by providing targeted support to rural areas. One of the most significant aspects of this bill is its focus on rural infrastructure. By investing in critical infrastructure like water and waste water systems, roads and broadband Internet, we are laying the foundation for sustainable growth in our rural communities—communities like Ashton, North Gower, Metcalfe and more. This infrastructure is not just about supporting new housing developments; it's about enhancing the quality of life for current residents and making these areas more attractive to new families and businesses.

Minister's zoning orders have been a valuable tool in cutting through bureaucratic red tape and accelerating the development process. Bill 185 strengthens the framework for MZOs, ensuring that they are used transparently and effectively to benefit our communities. The new framework for MZOs will establish clear expectations for proponents and municipalities when requesting a zoning order. This will strengthen partnerships with local governments and provide opportunities for public consultation before a zoning order is made. By making the MZO process more open and transparent, we can ensure that this tool is used to support projects that truly benefit our communities, such as hospitals, schools, long-term-care facilities and, of course, housing.

One of the standout features of Bill 185 is the introduction of the Building Faster Fund. This \$1.2-billion program is designed to encourage municipalities to meet their housing targets by providing funding for housing-enabling infrastructure. Municipalities that make significant progress towards their targets will be rewarded with funding to support further development. This fund is particularly important for rural municipalities, which often lack the financial resources to invest in the necessary infrastructure for new housing projects. By providing this targeted funding, we are empowering our rural communities to grow and thrive, ensuring that they can keep pace with the rest of the province.

In addition to the Building Faster Fund, Bill 185 also introduces a historic investment of more than \$1.8 billion in the provincial infrastructure fund. This fund is aimed at supporting the construction of essential infrastructure across Ontario, with a particular focus on rural areas. Everyone knows, Madam Speaker, that infrastructure is the backbone of any community, and it is one of the backbones of Ontario. Without it, economic development

stalls and quality of life diminishes. By investing in infrastructure, we are not only supporting new housing developments but also ensuring that our existing communities have the services and amenities they need to prosper and thrive.

Rural Ontario, agriculture and farming are integral to our province's economy and way of life. Bill 185 includes several provisions that address the unique challenges faced by this sector. First, the modernization of the Line Fences Act is a significant step forward. This act provides a dispute resolution process between the owners of adjoining properties, which is particularly useful in rural areas such as my riding of Carleton, where properties are larger and fencing costs are higher. By updating this act, we are reducing the burden on municipalities and property owners, making it easier to resolve disputes and manage properties effectively.

Second, the bill includes measures to support agricultural development by streamlining regulatory processes and reducing unnecessary burdens. This is welcome news to everyone in the agriculture sector in my riding of Carleton, because this will enable our farmers to focus on what they do best, producing high-quality food and other agricultural products, without being bogged down by unnecessary red tape.

Third, the bill's focus on infrastructure investment will have a direct positive impact on rural Ontario. Improved roads, water systems and broadband Internet are critical for modern farming operations. These investments will make it easier for farmers to transport their goods, access new markets and adopt innovative technologies that can enhance productivity and sustainability.

Bill 185 also recognizes the unique needs of our urban centres and eastern regions. For the city of Ottawa, the bill proposes a special rule regarding the application of section 26.2 of the Development Charges Act. Specifically, if an application referred to in clause 1(a) or (b) is made to the city of Ottawa between May 14, 2024, and the day that is 15 days after the day subsection 3(3) of schedule 6 to the Cutting Red Tape To Build More Homes Act comes into force, the application shall be deemed to have been made 16 days after the day subsection 3(3) comes into force. In plain language, Madam Speaker, this provision ensures that Ottawa can continue its development projects without unnecessary delays, which facilitates a smoother transition and implementation of the new regulations.

While the document does not explicitly mention eastern Ontario by name, the general provisions and investments proposed in Bill 185, such as the Building Faster Fund and the provincial infrastructure fund, will undoubtedly benefit this region. These initiatives aim to support housing-enabling infrastructure and reduce regulatory burdens, facilitating development across the province, including eastern Ontario. By ensuring that regions like eastern Ontario receive the necessary support and investment, we are promoting balanced growth and development throughout the province.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, Bill 185 is a comprehensive and forward-thinking piece of legislation that

addresses some of the most pressing challenges facing Ontario today. By cutting red tape and streamlining processes, we are making it easier to build the homes that Ontarians need. By investing in infrastructure and providing targeted support to rural communities, we are laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and development. And by addressing the unique challenges faced by rural Ontario, agriculture and farming, we are ensuring that our vital agricultural sector can continue to thrive.

This bill is not just about building homes. It's about building communities, it's about supporting our farmers and it's about creating a brighter future for all Ontarians. I urge all of you to join me in supporting Bill 185 and taking a significant step towards a stronger, more prosperous Ontario. I look forward to voting in support of this bill and I encourage everyone to do so.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I'm honoured to rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024. This pivotal piece of legislation seeks to reduce the critical barriers red tape causes to productivity, economic development, growth and our prosperity. Unnecessary, redundant bureaucratic burden impacts the lives of everyday people in my riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington. These are the very people who are working hard to build our homes, who work in businesses of all sizes—the people who employ others. That's why we're focusing on creating the conditions to help individuals, families and businesses thrive everywhere in Ontario.

Since 2018, our government has made significant progress by bringing forward regulations focused on reducing costs that are helping create a more competitive market environment across the province. We've also saved people, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector over \$1 billion in gross annual compliance costs that they would have otherwise had to face. We've also reduced the number of regulatory compliance requirements affecting Ontario businesses and other regulated entities by 6% as of September of last year.

We know that more work needs to be done. As the province continues to grow, we'll keep working hard to improve government services and reduce unnecessary burdens on people and businesses. We're striving to make life easier for all people of Ontario by introducing significant burden reduction and regulatory modernizations. Our government is on a mission to support municipalities to build homes for people throughout Ontario and create improved quality of life by building stronger communities for everyone, from students to families and seniors.

Since 2018, we've saved Ontario's businesses \$1 billion in gross annualized compliance costs. That's a big deal. Our most recent rating by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's red tape report card is proof our efforts to reduce red tape are working in tangible ways—ways that we're all feeling.

Housing supply shortages have become a significant challenge for many communities across the country, and Chatham-Kent is no exception. I've heard from people of all ages from across my riding how delayed processes, high interest rates and limited supply have created significant obstacles for many homeowners and renters in our communities. In the face of these challenges, immediate and urgent action is required to facilitate the development of a wide range of new housing units to enhance housing affordability for everyone.

Bill 185 represents this opportunity. It's a concerted effort to remove barriers that often delay or deter construction projects. By simplifying regulatory procedures, expediting approvals and promoting innovation in housing development, this legislation aims to unleash the full potential of our housing market and underscores the commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive housing sector that meets the diverse needs of our growing provincial population.

We're proposing a regulation to ensure ministries develop business service standards for permits and licence services to help businesses understand how long they can expect to wait for a decision about a permit or licence they may need. This legislation would, if passed, allow families to have a realistic horizon on when their home, structure or condo would be built. For individuals, families and businesses, this is critical, because saving time saves money.

Madam Speaker, municipal infrastructure projects are vital to fostering our economic prosperity and enhancing quality of life for everyone. It's important to make these crucial investments now to power our municipalities and sustain the province's expansion by maintaining essential systems like water and waste water networks and facilitating connectivity to roads and bridges.

Chatham-Kent is home to more bridges than any municipality in the province of Ontario, and that's something that weighs on our citizens' minds.

With the goal of building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031, it requires partnership with municipal governments. Municipalities know their communities best. They know where it makes sense to build homes.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're supporting municipalities by giving them the tools they need to build homes. We've set ambitious housing targets and are holding municipalities accountable and rewarding them for their successes—the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, the \$825-million Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund—

Interjection: Game-changer.

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's a game-changer—and the fund is done not yet; it includes \$1.2 million in the Building Faster Fund.

In my home of Chatham-Kent, they have received one of the first cheques of \$440,000. In an area that they didn't expect any homes built, they hit it out of the park. This money contributed to much-needed infrastructure projects for our new housing targets. As a result of our government's efforts to eliminate needless administration

processes, our local builders are expediting construction of homes across Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

I'd like to take an opportunity to thank some of our local home builders that came out to celebrate this success. These included Maple City Homes, the O'Neill Development Group, Liovas Homes, Abraham group, J. Rauti Custom Homes, and many more that are dedicated in their efforts to work with municipalities and with our government to get homes built and shovels in the ground now.

Madam Speaker, I've been in conversation with parents of college and university students in my riding who are seriously concerned about the increased cost of renting and a lack of affordable student housing.

We want to make sure students have access to clear and comprehensive information about their housing options before they go off to school. As part of the proposed legislation, all publicly assisted colleges and universities are required to publish detailed housing policies. These include options—what's available for on-campus and off-campus housing. These policies will ensure that students are aware that safe, affordable options are available to them within a close commute to their campuses. We'll make sure that institutions implement regular reporting on student housing, providing ongoing transparency and accountability to students and their parents.

It's an anxious time for parents in my riding who are supporting their kids who are going off to post-secondary school for the first time. A journey down the road to St. Clair College in Chatham or my alma mater, the University of Windsor, is a big deal for families—and it's where my son is attending this fall.

The choice of a 60-minute commute to campus each day or local options that can be on-campus or off-campus housing can be scarce, they can be scary, and they can be expensive.

Parents across Chatham-Kent–Leamington and across Ontario need realistic, affordable options to support our next generation of leaders.

Beyond the immediate benefits to homebuyers and renters, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act will have a positive ripple effect throughout our economy. The construction industry is a significant driver of economic growth, providing jobs and supporting various related industries. As more housing projects move forward, we will see increased employment opportunities for construction workers, engineers, architects, and many more skilled trades, providing for the prosperity of our province.

The reduction of red tape in housing development has also important implications for producers of agriculture. By streamlining the regulatory processes, we can better manage the important balance of clearly defined areas designated for residential development and those reserved for agriculture production. This strategic approach allows for the growth of our communities while protecting food production—and that sector, of course, sustains all of us.

Reducing bureaucratic barriers can encourage the development of innovative housing solutions that integrate well with agricultural areas. We can also promote the

construction of farm worker housing that's critical in Chatham-Lent–Leamington. It's housing that's modern, safe and convenient. These options are for the workers who work our fields, our orchards and our greenhouses. They support the workforce, but they also support a safe, consistent food production system that Ontario relies on.

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Bill 185 makes significant progress. It's a milestone in our ongoing mission to address the housing crisis, it supports food production, it supports our kids going to college and university, and it encourages economic prosperity for everyone in Ontario.

Our government is committed to serving all of Ontario. We're making significant strides toward that goal. If passed, this proposed legislation will pave the way for more success stories across the province.

This legislation facilitates the construction of homes; creates more job opportunities; protects valuable agricultural land by supporting the adoption of innovative practices in farming, planning and the relationship between municipalities that make that planning process work and the province that guides it. This balanced approach ensures we can grow sustainably, providing opportunities for both current and future residents; to do so, we must continue to remove bureaucratic barriers and allow us to build prosperous innovation throughout Ontario. It's inclusive housing for everyone.

For this reason, the House should support this bill, and I'll be supporting it.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: In under six years of the Conservative government, we're losing 319 acres of prime farmland every single day. Ontarians can't afford to buy groceries. They can't afford to pay their rent. They can't afford to buy a house—homeless encampments in every community in Ontario. They can't afford to buy a house. Poverty rates are the highest level in our history—highest debt in the province of Ontario's history.

So my question is, other than your friends, your developer friends and the Weston family, who are you guys really helping?

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank the member for Niagara Falls for the question.

Who we're helping? I'll summarize what I said.

We're helping students with access to homes on or near campuses—on university campuses, on college campuses, even in Niagara region.

We're helping farmers develop reasonable, remote, on-farm housing that's close to the farm, where they want to be. It's safe.

Innovation means the food systems that feed all of us, and those acres of farmland that may be used to produce a certain number of kilograms per metre squared of agriculture now produce 16 times that much in controlled environment agriculture greenhouses, and they can be built anywhere.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank my friend the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for his remarks, as well as the member from Carleton.

Just spending so much time in the municipal sector, both as a councillor for eight years and about 20 years as a civil servant myself, working on housing applications, I'm delighted to see this bill, because, quite frankly, there is a lot of process involved, a lot of ways that we are stalling the ability to provide housing for people.

I'm hoping the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington can elaborate a bit on the kinds of changes that he sees for his community happening. Potential developments had been stalled, and with the passage of this bill, we'll be able to see them realized.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

This bill is all about options. It's all about building a strong relationship between municipalities—444 of them—in the province of Ontario. It's about investing in infrastructure that can actually build homes. It can build on-campus housing that's happening right now in the member's nearby riding at the University of Windsor, our alma mater. So it's about options—it's about respecting people, and a wide range of different housing types and different housing needs.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to follow up with the member about what you had to say with respect to housing for migrant workers, agriculture workers, because I think this is a really critical issue.

So many of us don't want to remember the pandemic and all the difficulties it brought upon people in the province, but I remember reckoning with the fact that nine migrant workers died between January 2020 and June 2021. When a study was done—all of the various coroners' reports, housing experts who were thinking about this—they linked the issues with cramped conditions of housing and the inability of workers to effectively isolate.

I remember a gentleman from Jamaica, I believe it was—he was in his forties—who died on his own while he was isolating, or attempting to isolate.

I'm wondering if you can elaborate—because this is a shared priority we have—on how we can make sure migrant farm workers, who come to this country to feed their families, are safe.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank the member from Carleton for that question.

The types of housing we're seeing now with controlled-environment agriculture, or greenhouses—it's state-of-the-art. It's inspired by on-campus housing at universities like Carleton, Ottawa, University of Windsor. It's safe. It's clean. It's secure. By allowing planning to have more infrastructure, to have the waste water, water resources and all the services go to the farm where the housing is located—on-farm campus, where all the supports and resources are there. You have modern, state-of-the-art farms that have housing complexes that don't resemble anything you've ever seen, other than a modern, safe, clean, enjoyable university dorm—separate living quarters,

good air exchange, separate eating facilities, washroom facilities.

These valuable workers will live on their farm campus like they would at a university campus—safe, clean, healthy and secure.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I enjoyed the presentation by the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

His riding is very similar to mine, and I know that in his riding many young people go off to university or college and they seek to have some housing available to them on-campus. Just like people who leave my riding of Essex, they might go to other places seeking university education or a college education, and they're looking for on-campus housing.

The good people from McMaster University recognized that this proposed legislation in front of us will allow universities to build student housing more quickly and at a lower cost, while reducing pressure on area market housing for students. So McMaster University recognizes the good work that this proposed legislation will do. My question to the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington is, would he comment on that?

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's an exceptionally timely question that my member from Essex asks, because I'm at that point in my life when my sons—my third son is now going off to the University of Windsor, after touring many different universities. My middle son just recently graduated from the University of Guelph. His cohort was in that COVID time where there was no housing available. So Guelph and the city of Guelph missed an opportunity to build and develop and invest in on-campus housing. Now you have that bubble. You have all this need and all this pent-up interest in on-campus housing, and there is none that is available.

I was happy to visit the University of Windsor recently. They have a beautiful hall called Alumni Hall—highly coveted, sought after. Right next to it is its twin hall, stalled in different various stages of construction. That construction and all those planning processes can be released, and 20,000 spaces for new college students and university students can be released with the passage of this bill, because it releases the burden from universities and colleges to go through this myriad of different planning processes and appeals to actually allow this to support families of students everywhere in Ontario.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We agree that there is a housing crisis in Ontario. We'd all be crazy if we didn't see what we see on our streets, with people living in tents, in shelters and under bridges. But it's not just a housing supply crisis; it's about affordability, people being able to afford the homes that they have.

What we're seeing now—70% of Ontarians are renters. And what we're seeing with this government, because you have no real rent control and no oversight—people are

being evicted into homelessness, and 70% of Ontarians are facing that.

This bill has no real rent control. It has no inclusionary zoning proposals. It has no landlord-tenant reform.

We have something like 60,000 cases that are waiting now at the Ontario Land Tribunal forum.

With as much respect as I can muster up—this bill is just weak sauce, compared to the tragedy of housing that we are facing in this province.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank you for the sincere question.

I pride myself on knowing a whole bunch of stuff about a very little amount of experience—so what I did is, I asked the experts. I asked home builders. I asked a full range of home builders—the niche home builders to the great big guys with the big projects and skyscrapers and

multi-family residences. I said, what are the pressures? What do we need to install that wide range of housing options? They said our pressures are coming from three areas: high interest rates—once the interest rates go down, that pent-up need, that pent-up ambition to move on to the next level is released. Two, planning processes—planning processes and delays—and third-party, fourth-removed complaints about someone 50 kilometres away that can stall a critical housing development that can offer a wide range of housing options for a wide range of different people in different markets. That's what's happening—interest rates, supply and planning processes. I am very proud to say that this bill remedies a big portion of that.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

Report continues in volume B.

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