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of Ontario



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Jeudi  
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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 mai 2024

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prières / Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL CARE  
FOR ANIMALS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION  
DES SOINS PROFESSIONNELS  
PRODIGUÉS AUX ANIMAUX

Ms. Thompson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2024 sur les professionnels vétérinaires et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to continue our discussion on the importance of enhancing professional care for animals. I'm very pleased to be sharing my time today with my two amazing parliamentary assistants, the members from Essex and from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Before I begin, I also would like to give a shout-out to both MPP Flack from Elgin–Middlesex–London as well as MPP Jones from Chatham–Kent–Leamington, because they too have played an important role in shepherding this important piece of legislation through to where we are today.

Back to the MPPs from Essex and Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, though: They've just recently begun their roles as parliamentary assistants in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and I want to say thank you. Thank you for jumping in with both feet and supporting not only this important piece of proposed legislation, but for jumping in and embracing the amazing work that gets done at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I also want to go back to the MPP from Elgin–Middlesex–London. In his role as parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, he actually facilitated consultations on this particular proposed piece of legislation across the province. We all

know that agriculture and food is very important to him, as well. I appreciate all the effort that went into it.

To the members of the Standing Committee on the Interior and everyone who presented at the committee and/or submitted written submissions as well, I'd like to thank everyone's efforts. I appreciate that I'm hearing that there's going to be unanimous support for this. We'll see when the vote happens, but I can tell you with certainty that we took the time to listen, to understand and, most importantly, to work with our stakeholders to ensure we get it right.

The Veterinarians Act needed to be reviewed, because it was first introduced in 1989. It has served Ontario animals and animal owners very, very well over the past 35 years, but it's 2024, and it's time we take a look at modernizing and making sure that we are enabling access across this province to professional care that pet owners and farmers alike deserve and need.

In 1989, it was Jack Riddell who introduced the Veterinarians Act. At the time, Jack represented Huron–Middlesex. Huron, as you know, is very important to me. I think it is somewhat surreal but an absolute honour to continue to build on something that a farmer from Huron county put his heart into, to continue on today to make sure that his legacy lives on through the initial piece of legislation. I take this opportunity to bring it forward into 2024 and beyond in order to make sure that we have a modernized system that enables professional care for animals.

In the years since the act was first updated, the practice of veterinary medicine has evolved significantly, transforming the way that animals are cared for in Ontario. As discussed during second reading and at the standing committee, veterinary care is increasingly provided by a team of qualified professionals. This proposed legislation reflects that the reality of one profession of veterinary medicine comprised of two professionals, veterinarians and veterinary technicians, has to be recognized. Registered veterinary technicians have specialized education, training and experience in animal care and are vital in terms of that team approach to care in many veterinary settings.

Again, we know we have a shortage of veterinarians in northern Ontario, rural Ontario and remote areas across this province, and vet techs are ready to step up and say, "We've got the expertise. We've got the training."

I know our veterinarians will embrace their approach as well, because again, one team, two professionals—it really makes sense today, in 2024, across the province of Ontario.

The current legislative framework, though, under the Veterinarians Act does not formally recognize the role of veterinary technicians. Do you know what? They have a very important role to play in animal care. By formally recognizing the role of veterinary technicians, we are expecting to enhance access to veterinary care and strengthen the animal care system in Ontario. By recognizing their complete scope of practice, it is our intent that this will result in more vet techs providing more treatments and services that they are trained to do and have the expertise to do, as well.

I know that RVTs, registered vet techs, and vet tech students are excited about having their role and training formally recognized.

Shortly before this bill was introduced, I really appreciated the opportunity to attend the AGM of the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians. While I couldn't necessarily tell the registered vet techs in attendance that this bill was imminent, let me tell you, they knew and appreciated that we had been consulting on updating the Veterinarians Act. There were 1,200 people very excited about the future of their field of expertise.

Let's take a moment, let's pause and let's go back to revisit how we got here today. Access to veterinary care has long been a challenge, especially in rural and northern Ontario. The College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, and the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians have been working together to advocate for changes to the Veterinarians Act for more than a decade. For more than a decade, they've been asking for this modernization, and I'm so proud to say it's under the leadership of Premier Ford and our government that we're getting the job done.

We knew the act was out of date, and we wanted to make sure any changes we proposed would help all animal owners, their animals, and our farmers. Husbandry is very important when you think about the priorities on-farm. In order to do that, though, we asked veterinarians, vet technicians, animal owners and farmers alike, animal welfare groups and others for their input. We took time, as I mentioned earlier, to listen to their concerns, their suggestions and their desires to see this particular act modernized.

#### 0910

In November 2022, my ministry launched a dedicated web page where the public was to submit ideas on how to modernize the Veterinarians Act.

Then, on March 1, 2023, we published a discussion paper and a proposal on the Regulatory Registry. My ministry also ran webinars where interested people could learn more about the proposal, ask questions and make comments. Through these consultations, we received more than 300 submissions. I was very impressed by that, and I thank everyone who took time to put pen to paper.

In order to make sure we heard from Ontarians from different parts of the province, the Associate Minister of Housing, Rob Flack, hosted seven round-table discussions.

Throughout these consultations, the majority of people told us they supported the proposed modernization of the Veterinarians Act. As a result of those consultations and taking into consideration more than 300 submissions, on March 7 of this year, I had the privilege of introducing this particular bill, Bill 171, an act to enact the enhanced professional care for animals act.

I want to thank all the members of this House for their support of this bill on second reading; in fact, Speaker, I was really over the moon, to be quite honest, to note that it was unanimous support.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Thank you.

Now let's talk about the work that was done in committee. When this bill was considered by the Standing Committee on the Interior, members of the committee heard from a wide variety of stakeholders, with 13 presenting in person and many more sending in written submissions.

During a particular presentation to the committee, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario's chief executive officer, Jan Robinson, in particular, expressed how the college could not be more thrilled that our government heard the need for the modernization of the delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario.

I want to take a moment to give Jan a shout-out. She has been an absolute champion in making sure that we had the bandwidth to reach out to stakeholders, but most importantly, when we had to have tough discussions and we had to really nail down what the priorities were for affiliated associations and organizations, she took the lead and made sure that people understood the importance of team and the importance of reflecting on the breadth of care that some people choose for their animals.

So, Jan, I want to thank you sincerely for that.

I also want to give a shout-out to some vet techs: Elise Wickett and Kelsey Streef. They spoke on behalf of the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians during the committee presentation on Bill 171. They expressed the association's strong support for what they believe is a comprehensive bill that will significantly enhance access to professional veterinary care in Ontario. Their enthusiasm and their points were well taken.

I think about Ashton Colvin, a vet tech who worked out of the Wingham veterinarian office, and she takes great care and pride in Maxi, her beloved dog at home. She said years ago that vet techs needed to be recognized for the expertise that they have, and I remember that conversation very well, when I was standing at their desk one day.

I think about the veterinary office that we visited, the clinic we visited in Thunder Bay. The veterinarian was very proud of his team of vet techs, and they were passionate and very eloquent in stating why the full scope of practice, expertise and training of vet techs should finally be recognized once and for all.

So those are some people who I can't help but think of and thank for reaching out and really telling us what they thought in terms of the importance of modernizing this piece of legislation.



The Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians also made an important point that we could not have reached this particular stage we are at today without the collaboration of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, OVMA—and I want to give a shout-out to all of you at that particular association as well. Again, I appreciate the candour, the heart and the seriousness in which you brought forward not only your ideas but your concerns. I have every confidence going forward, when we move past this enabling legislation into regulations, if this legislation should pass, that you will work incredibly well with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario to work on regulations that make sense for the entire suite of services and care that people choose to access for their pets, for their horses and for livestock across Ontario.

I really value the relationship that was trusted so that the candid discussion could be achieved. It wasn't lost on me, and I really want to take time to say thank you again to the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association for all they did to help us get to this point, as well.

Our partnerships have been crucial. As the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians stated, continued collaboration will lead to further advancements in the veterinary profession in Ontario. I couldn't agree more. As I've said, this proposed legislation will, if passed, regulate both veterinarians and veterinary technicians, reflecting again on one profession, two professionals. It's an approach and delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario that will lead by example across Canada.

In order to reflect this change, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario would be renamed the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario. It is our government's expectation that the college will develop regulations that provide a clear and broad definition of the scope of practice that is in line with the skills and training that vet techs possess. This is something that was supported in all written and verbal submissions to the Standing Committee on the Interior. Again, I appreciate everyone's input in that regard.

Let me take a moment to share some of those written submissions. For example, Ontario Pork said, "Ontario Pork supports the delivery of veterinary care using a team-based approach and the importance of registered veterinary technicians in providing veterinary care. By enabling better access to veterinary services and the scope of care provided, the proposed bill will help ensure that farmers can receive veterinary care for their livestock when needed."

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture said something similar. Speaking about bringing veterinary technicians under the same college as vets, the OFA said they believe "this will help to alleviate the workload of large animal veterinarians, especially in underserved areas of the province, and increase producer access."

While veterinarians and veterinary technicians are critical to animal care in Ontario, there are other service providers who also have a role. This bill recognizes that there are qualified and competent care providers who are

not veterinary professionals, but they have an important role to play in animal health if owners choose to pursue their services.

We have taken an approach which continues access to care while also protecting the health and well-being of animals. The new act will enable regulations to be made to formalize exemptions for non-veterinarian practitioners and help assure the public that these animal care providers will be qualified and competent to provide safe care. These regulations will set out the terms, conditions, limitations, guidelines and prohibitions that will detail how these professionals can safely continue providing care to animals.

For example, pharmacists will be able to continue to compound, dispense and sell medication to an animal owner if they have a prescription for it—again, if this legislation should pass. We're also enabling choice for pet owners by allowing them to fill their prescriptions through their vet or to get a prescription they can take to another store or pharmacist.

Another important aspect that was raised in consultation was access to ultrasounds for pregnant animals; in particular, small ruminants such as sheep and goats. If passed, this bill will ensure that ultrasound technicians who provide pregnancy checks—preg-checks; they're important—for small ruminants will be able to continue to do so. Just to rephrase that, throughout Ontario, we have technicians who can go on-farm and, in a non-invasive way, facilitate preg-checks for sheep and goats. Their services are invaluable, and we just wanted to share that example as an exemption that will be well received by farmers.

#### **0920**

This particular exemption, in allowing technicians to perform preg-checks on small ruminants, was also supported by stakeholders who wrote to the committee. For example, Ontario Sheep Farmers wrote, "Our organization was very happy to see the provision in the act allowing an exception for pregnancy ultrasounds performed on sheep. Ultrasound is an important tool used by our members to confirm pregnancy and ultrasound technicians are trusted members of our farmers' animal care teams." That was well said.

This bill, if passed, would also continue a number of key exemptions that exist in the current Veterinarians Act, such as the ability for farmers, their families and employees to provide care for their animals.

I think about our farm. Again, we live in a large, rural area. My husband has our veterinarian on speed-dial. They have a wonderful relationship, a trusting relationship. Our vet, Clayton, enables Dennis to care for our animals to the best of his ability.

Our act, if passed, would continue to allow farmers to use ultrasounds on their own animals, as is the current practice.

The bill does not propose to regulate lower-risk services such as grooming, hoof trimming or massage.

There are some animal owners, mainly owners of horses and dogs, who choose to seek chiropractic care for

their animals, as well. This bill will, if passed, provide title protection for chiropractors and allow the college to make regulations to set out the parameters on how animal chiropractic care can continue to be offered safely.

Chiropractors working on animals would remain members of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario and would not have to be a member of two different regulated colleges. The committee did hear from the Ontario Chiropractic Association, who welcomed the opportunity to continue to consult as the regulations are created, and I trust that through this effort and the facilitation of discussion that will lead to solid regs, all parties involved will do what's right to ensure that services can be available if an animal owner—or, in this instance, an owner of horses—chooses to access that particular service.

Again, I really appreciate the manner in which all parties have come together to recognize the importance of modernizing this particular piece of legislation. And should it pass, the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario would be required to consult with any profession which provides treatment that would be addressed in regulations and report those outcomes to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This would include chiropractors.

Let's talk about governance for a moment. With respect to governance, this bill also addresses the governance of the college. It would, if passed, add new objects to the college, including working with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent veterinary professionals. The proposed bill will also include a number of improvements that will enable the regulatory college to achieve positive outcomes. The proposed legislation would see the renamed college have six committees to oversee activities, ranging from accreditation, to licensing, to quality assurance, and disciplinary matters.

I'm going to focus on what the legislation calls "quality assurance" programming right now, because it breaks down into a couple of things. The college would be able to create requirements for continuing education for members, something that the College of Veterinarians of Ontario has requested and most other self-regulated professions require. Members of the college would be required to report if they suspect another member's abilities are impaired by health or other issues, and there would be legal protections for members who make such reports in good faith. The college would be able to collect and make public more information about its members, similar to other regulated professions in Ontario. These professions, of course, are regulated throughout the province.

In a written submission to the Standing Committee on the Interior, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario said, "The college is encouraged by the inclusion of a mandatory quality assurance program for the practice of veterinary medicine that will help to ensure ongoing competency amongst its membership."

Ladies and gentlemen, all of these proposed changes would bring the veterinary profession in line with other

self-regulated professions in Ontario, and I'm very, very proud of that.

Again, if the legislation is passed, the council for the college would also be expanded to include veterinary technicians, representatives from a veterinary medicine program and a vet technician program as well as more members of the public. This would bring more perspectives to the table—in other words, bring different lenses to a situation when decisions are being made.

One of the concerns we heard during the consultations was that the complaint resolution process for veterinarians took far too long. This bill proposes to streamline that process, which will be incredibly good for both animal owners and veterinarians alike.

All in all, reaction to this bill has been very positive, both as we are consulting and at the Standing Committee on the Interior. I am proud that we took the time to consider stakeholder feedback and to incorporate it into Bill 171. After consulting widely, we feel confident that we are taking the right steps for both pets and livestock.

During the committee hearing, we also addressed the shortage of vets. I understand that the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay raised some questions about how this bill would help improve access to veterinary care in the north. We recognize that there is a shortage of veterinarians in many rural and northern communities, and we are taking action to address this shortage through this bill and through additional initiatives.

As mentioned during second reading of Bill 171, I see this proposed legislation as one leg of a three-legged stool that supports our goal to improve veterinary care access across Ontario. We developed the Veterinary Incentive Program to encourage veterinarians to set up large practices in underserved communities. Under this program, up to 100 newly licensed vets are eligible to receive up to \$50,000 over five years to practise on large animals in underserved areas of the province. Since this program was announced late last year, nine veterinarians have been approved to receive this incentive. I'm really proud of that. We've taken what we've heard and we've taken action to make it so. I appreciate everyone who was involved in that particular initiative.

I think it's also important to recognize that we have announced that we are investing up to \$14.7 million to create 20 new seats in veterinary medicine programs in Ontario starting in September 2025.

I should note that technology is already playing a part in increasing access to veterinary care. I think it's somewhat interesting that here we are today, on May 16—happy birthday to my brother, Dennis—in a week whereby, I understand, students desiring to pursue a career in veterinary medicine are actually being interviewed. So it's kind of timely, if you will—the synchronicity of debating this bill in third reading and understanding that students aspiring to be a veterinarian are in the midst of interviews to determine whether they actually will be one of those new students in the full suite of opportunities that we are making available through this particular legislation. Again, that makes it somewhat surreal, but it underscores

the importance—because, again, we need more veterinarians across the province of Ontario, especially northern Ontario, and in underserved areas throughout rural Ontario.

We know that the veterinary profession in Ontario is revered, quite frankly, around the world. I give a shout-out to everyone—the colleges that I've mentioned already, through to the universities that are enabling this practice to become a career that people can be proud of.

I think it's interesting; when we talk about advancing and modernizing not only this veterinarian legislation but services, we have to embrace technology as well. I mentioned before that my husband really values our veterinarian, Clayton, and when needed, he's only a text away. Technology is changing the way veterinarians can support farmers and pet owners alike. We heard about how farmers, especially in northern Ontario, might be hours away from a veterinarian. In that particular situation, where distance could prove to be a hurdle that's tough to get over, telemedicine can really help. While some vets and farmers, as I mentioned, in our own case on our farm, are using technology to their advantage, I anticipate that more vet techs attending to a patient and consulting with a veterinarian over the phone will happen more and more.

**0930**

For instance, if passed, this particular legislation will—again, as I mentioned earlier—recognize the full scope of expertise and training that vet techs have. In order to increase access to care, if a veterinarian is on one end of the county and a call comes in on the opposite end of the county, technically—ideally—if this legislation should pass, under the veterinarian's direction, a vet tech could go to that particular farm or pet owner in the north end of the county and start assessing the situation, and be in contact with the veterinarian to determine what the best next steps are. I think that is a tremendous example of how there will be so much value in modernizing this particular piece of legislation—and I thank everybody's contributions in making it so.

Just to conclude, I want to share with everyone that, together with the vet incentive program, when we talk about increasing access to veterinarian care, the 20 new vet school seats and the proposed legislation that we are discussing today will help us care for our animals, whether they be pets, service animals or livestock. I believe the proposed legislation will work for animals and animal owners right across this province.

I appreciate the opportunity to have presented this piece of legislation, Bill 171, to the House. It's important. Our agriculture and food industry is a significant contributor to our overall GDP, to the tune of \$48 billion. We are an industry that is strong, poised to grow, and we need to make sure the professional services needed to support that growth are recognized in the manner in which they deserve. I think we've achieved that in Bill 171.

I'm so incredibly proud of the work that has gone into this bill, as well. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd be remiss if I didn't give a shout-out to our team at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ryan, as policy

director, has owned this particular piece of legislation and all the activities that were needed to get us to this point, and he was supported incredibly well by Lindsay and Tara—Lindsay being director of strategy; Tara, of course, being chief of staff. Our entire team in our minister's office has worked so incredibly hard to make sure we've nailed down proper communications, and we've worked incredibly well with stakeholders. I can tell you earnestly that we've had some tough discussions in order to get where we are today, and we need to recognize that people came to the table with the best intentions.

This enabling piece of legislation, if passed, will enable regulations to be put in place that will ultimately ensure pet owners, livestock owners and horse owners alike will have access to the professional care that they choose.

I also would like to take a moment to reflect on the debate that we've had leading up to this point in third reading, and I want to thank the members opposite—I want to thank the people for recognizing that we have done our homework and we're getting it right. This has been—again, I remind everyone—something that has been asked for, for over 10 years, and I'm so incredibly proud to be able to work with a team that understood the importance, understood the realities that underscored the need to modernize this piece of legislation.

I feel strongly that this bill takes a balanced and risk-based approach to the practice of veterinary medicine, while continuing to protect animal health and well-being, all the while respecting all the professionals who at one point in time may get called upon to care for a loved pet.

Actually, when I think about it, we have a dog getting spayed in the Wingham Veterinary Clinic right now. I hope everything goes well.

Again, it's because we love our animals that we need access to these services, not only at home in Huron–Bruce, but across this province of Ontario.

I can't underscore enough how our entire team has worked so incredibly closely with the stakeholders throughout Ontario to reach this stage of third reading. We're truly heartened to have received such thorough, thoughtful and instructive feedback and response to it. I submit to the members opposite and to everyone watching today that there has been so much work that has gone into it. I thank you for recognizing that. I'm sincere in saying that. I thank you for your unanimous support in second reading.

I understand that at the committee of the interior, there were good discussions, but as we tweaked it during clause by-clause, there were not a lot of adversarial comments. The tweaks that we made during clause-by-clause made sense. Thank you to all the committee members who saw the importance of what we were doing. We can't state enough how important committee work is. I'm sincere in saying thank you to everyone who helped get Bill 171 through the committee stages, as well. I appreciate it very much.

Just to close, I want to recognize that it's important to have a provincial lens on everything we do in this province. I'm really thrilled to be working with two

gentlemen who represent—actually, the trifecta here, we pretty much represent all of Ontario, when we add in our valued colleagues from the north.

The member from Essex and the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston are going to continue on this discussion and continue to share and tell everyone in the House today and people watching why modernizing this particular Veterinarians Act is so important in 2024.

At the end of the day, I feel it's very important that our professionals who get up at any hour of the day—and I mean any hour of the day—to care for our animals need to be well supported. We're doing just that if this legislation should pass.

Thank you very much. I'll hand it over to one of my amazing PAs, the member of provincial Parliament from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

**Mr. John Jordan:** I'm very pleased to speak today on Bill 171, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act. In my new role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, along with my colleague from Essex, this is the second time I've had the opportunity to speak to Bill 171. It's important for me to share that I have been impressed with the work by this minister and her ministry on this proposed legislation and the extensive consultation that went into shaping this bill.

I was also fortunate to sit on the Standing Committee on the Interior. The consultation was evident during the hearing at the Standing Committee on the Interior and was noted by both the government and members from the opposition.

I need to do a shout-out to our Associate Minister of Housing and our deputy government House leader for the work that they did as PAs in consulting on this particular bill.

We heard from a number of delegates that they appreciated that the government, and the minister in particular, listened to their ideas and concerns as this bill was being drafted. As a result of that consultation, we heard a lot of support for this bill.

During their presentation to the committee, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario's president Dr. Wade Wright and registrar and CEO Jan Robinson spoke of the college's support for Bill 171. The registrar and CEO stated that Minister Thompson has heard the need for the modernization of the delivery of veterinary medicine in Ontario, and that Bill 171 has the opportunity to ensure a platform that responsibly brings a modern approach to the regulation of veterinary medicine. We certainly appreciated the College of Veterinarians of Ontario's ongoing support and collaboration on the bill's development.

At committee, we also heard from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Brendon Laing, president of the OVMA, told us that they support this bill and appreciate the government's work on this file.

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The Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians is the body that both represents and currently regulates

registered veterinary technicians in Ontario. The OAVT has also been actively involved in the development of this bill. At committee, Elise Wickett, the executive director and registrar of the OAVT, told us that the “extensive consultation has culminated in a comprehensive bill that will significantly enhance access to professional veterinary care in Ontario.”

These strong expressions of support demonstrate that, if passed, this legislation would be met very positively by those who are directly impacted by it. In fact, these three organizations—the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association—have been working with OMAFRA for more than a decade to bring about these changes. It is great to see organizations working together with government to bring forward positive solutions, so I congratulate them on those efforts.

The committee also heard from groups representing owners of both farm animals and pets.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario's president, Craig McLaughlin, expressed the organization's full support for the efforts made to modernize the current Veterinarians Act and, particularly, for the in-depth consultation process. Beef Farmers of Ontario noted that the relationship between a livestock farmer and their vet is a very important partnership for ensuring optimal animal health and welfare. Large animal vets certainly play a critical role in supporting the viability of beef farmers.

From my own riding, Don Badour, cow-calf director with the Beef Farmers of Ontario, and Sheila James, vice-president of Lanark County Beef Farmers, sent this: “Beef farmers in the Lanark, Frontenac and Kingston area support efforts to modernize the Veterinarians Act. It is our hope that the changes related to incorporating veterinary technicians within the act, and clarifying the roles around the scope of practice and authorized activities that can be performed by veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other professionals, will provide more opportunities for farmers to access veterinary care on-farm.”

Reg Campbell, sheep producer in Beckwith township, just down from my own farm, said: “When it comes to labour-intensive situations like conducting ultrasounds on pregnant ewes, vets can't afford that kind of time commitment. That's a perfect example of where a trained technician could step in and provide the service when needed during a busy season, reducing the cost and streamlining the efficiencies for the production of the herd.”

I used to raise sheep; sheep are very high needs. You need to watch for coyotes, you need to control parasites, and sheep aren't the brightest bulbs in the box. They are always putting themselves in precarious situations, so they need a shepherd, but they also quite often need a vet.

Beef Farmers of Ontario also noted that in recent years, there has been a growing concern particularly around accessing timely large animal veterinary care. I know from my own farm experience, there are many animal care and best practice procedures that are carried out on the farm by non-vets and by the farmers themselves, who are either

formally trained or trained through experience. But when a farmer needs a vet, it's usually an urgent need and they need access to that vet. The accessibility of our veterinarians and our vet techs is important for both the animal's well-being and to mitigate the stress and anxiety placed on the farmers themselves.

I know for some in eastern Ontario, access to a vet can be difficult, but I'm sure the challenge is even bigger for those who farm in the more remote parts of the province, in our north. I am sure my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane is fully aware of this challenge.

And while I mention the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—I did have the pleasure of visiting his part of the world to attend the Earlton Farm Show, and I want to thank him for the time he took out. I also want to do a shout-out to Norm Koch, who is an integral part of the organization of the Earlton Farm Show—both great ambassadors for farmers in the north.

Other agricultural groups who sent in written comments on Bill 171 said similar things. The Chicken Farmers of Ontario support the bill and talked about their reliance on veterinary professionals to control the spread of diseases like avian influenza. I'll quote from their written submission: The Chicken Farmers of Ontario thank and appreciate the government of Ontario “for recognizing that veterinary care is delivered in a team-based approach—formally acknowledging the role of veterinary technicians—as this will help alleviate the pressure on the limited veterinary resources in rural areas and improve access to veterinary services, and ultimately, support reaching the goal of responding promptly and efficiently to mitigate potential disease spread.”

General farm organizations like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario also support this bill. I had the opportunity to speak to both of these when I was in Earlton. Drew Spoelstra, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, showed his support during the hearings when he said, “We applaud the government for acknowledging that modern-day veterinary care is delivered using a team-based approach. Bill 171 does an admirable job of reflecting the true nature of today's veterinary practices and in acknowledging the vital role of veterinary technicians in delivering quality care to the province and animal population.”

The Christian Farmers Federation wrote in to the committee saying that they supported the bill and the proposal to bring veterinary technicians together with veterinarians under the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario. In their written submission, they said, “We see significant benefits for all animal owners, especially for livestock farmers, in having both professions recognized, licensed and regulated under one professional body.”

Veterinary care for farm animals is important, but we realize that animals other than livestock require veterinary care. Humane societies were also consulted on this bill and spoke to the committee.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: During the committee hearing on Bill 171, the SPCA's

director of government relations, Drew Woodley, spoke about the organization's key priority in promoting greater access and availability of veterinary care throughout Ontario. Mr. Woodley stressed that accessing veterinary care is increasingly becoming a challenge for individuals and families who are caring pet owners. To this point, Mr. Woodley said the Ontario SPCA was happy to support Bill 171, noting, “This bill makes important changes to how veterinary care is governed in Ontario, which will hopefully improve access to care throughout the province.” He also described how important it is to recognize the training and skills of veterinary technicians—supporting the move to create a governance model that respects their contributions to the practice of veterinary care. We appreciate that the Ontario SPCA spoke in support of Bill 171, because safe and accessible pet care is important to the more than 50% of Ontario households that have a pet.

Speaker, having the support from both agricultural groups and the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society is a testament to the thorough consultation process that was undertaken by the minister and the team at OMAFRA.

In closing, Bill 171 rests on the shoulders of all the people who chose to engage to make sure that in Ontario, we have the best professional care for animals, both in our homes and on our farms.

Once again, I want to thank everyone who took part in the consultations and everyone who appeared before or wrote to the committee on the interior. Without their input, we wouldn't be where we are today, debating this bill designed to help enable enhanced access to veterinary care for all animals in Ontario.

With that, Speaker, I'll turn it over to my colleague from Essex.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the member from Essex.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston to speak about Bill 171, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, 2024. I'd like to start by recognizing the work that the minister has done on this important piece of legislation and her leadership in guiding us along the road to where we are today.

Speaker, veterinary medicine has been regulated as a profession in Ontario since 1877; that's 147 years now. Veterinarians were one of the first of the five regulated professions in Canada.

As the minister said, the Veterinarians Act was last updated in 1989, 35 years ago. A lot has changed since that time, particularly with developments in technology.

**0950**

As the minister described, the bill proposes to bring the veterinary technicians under the same college as veterinarians and rename that college the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario.

The proposed changes in Bill 171 are designed to increase access to vet care by letting the college better define a broad scope of practice for veterinary technicians. The proposed legislation would also streamline the complaints process, better define the scope of practice for

veterinary medicine, and improve transparency. And, if passed, this bill would align oversight of the veterinary profession with that of other regulated professions in Ontario—both health care professions and others like architects, accountants, lawyers and teachers.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association's president Dr. Brendon Laing, its CEO Mr. John Stevens and past president Dr. Matthew Richardson congratulated and extended appreciation to the ministry for its hard work on the development of this bill and for the improvements being proposed for the profession and animal care.

Modernizing the profession will make it more responsive to public expectations around governance, transparency, oversight and, most importantly, trust. Like many regulatory bodies in Ontario that oversee a profession, the veterinary regulatory college operates based on a self-regulation system. Members elect peers to serve on the governing council together with non-licensed individuals appointed by the Ontario government.

This bill, if passed, will expand the council of the newly renamed College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario to include vet techs and faculty members from both a veterinarian program and vet tech program, as well as more public representatives.

The principal object of the college is to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine and to govern members in accordance with the act. This bill would also add a new object of the college: to work with the minister to develop strategies to "ensure the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent veterinary professionals."

The regulatory college overseeing veterinary professionals has expressed its alignment with the proposed changes that aim to enhance ministerial oversight of the regulatory college's governing council—something the current college is asking for to be more transparent to the public—and bring more voices to the council of the regulatory college, including a greater role for public appointees, to ensure public perspectives are reflected, and spaces on the council for veterinary technicians and academic members.

The proposed changes would also set out a new name for the regulatory college, to reflect its role in overseeing two categories of veterinary professionals within a single veterinary profession. If Bill 171 passes, the college will be known as the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario.

Like any legislation in place for decades, it's important to revisit it to ensure it continues to serve its purpose efficiently and effectively. It is crucially important to consider, in these proposed changes, the needs of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, other animal service providers, the public and the agriculture industry.

The ministry has consulted widely on this proposed legislation, and the college will continue to consult as the regulations are developed. In order to ensure that happens, there is a requirement that consultations and collaboration between the regulatory college and other professions providing animal care is built into the proposed legislation.

An important aspect of the proposed changes is about quality assurance. If passed, the legislation would enable the regulatory college to develop a formal quality assurance program, which will be overseen by a new statutory committee. This change aims to better ensure continual learning and competence of members of the profession. The quality assurance committee would set the requirements for continuing education and refer cases of misconduct, incompetence or impairment to the college's investigations and resolutions committee.

The proposal mirrors what is currently in place for professional regulatory colleges in human health care and other self-regulated professions. This is designed to maintain public trust and assurance in the profession, as well as ensure all active veterinarians and veterinary technicians are up to date on the latest developments in animal care.

In addition to governance and quality assurance, the proposed changes would bring about a streamlined complaints and resolution process. This is being proposed because the ministry has received several letters over the years complaining about how long and drawn out the complaints process can be. The complaints process was also raised by veterinarians during the consultations. This improved process would include the components dealing with investigations, professional misconduct, a member's fitness to practise, and suspected incompetence.

The proposed changes would clearly enable a greater amount of information about a licence holder to be collected and, where appropriate, posted on the public-facing register.

Like other regulated professions, this would also allow for the college to post information about its members. This is intended to allow animal owners to check whether the veterinarian or vet tech is a member of the college in good standing.

This bill also proposes mandatory reporting requirements, which would require any member who suspects that another member's fitness to practise is impaired to report that fact to the college. There would also be legal protections for members making such reports in good faith. Such a report could be used to bring about an investigation by the college if it is felt that there is a need to look into a matter further or potentially discipline a member.

This bill, if passed, would also increase penalties to better reflect the seriousness of actions that harm an animal. Fines for taking actions that could foreseeably cause serious harm to an animal without being licensed by the college would be set in legislation and would carry fines as follows: up to \$25,000 for an individual on first offence and \$50,000 for a subsequent offence; up to \$50,000 for a corporation on first offence and \$200,000 for a subsequent offence. Maximum fines for practising veterinary medicine without a licence would increase to the same levels.

This proposed legislation also would give the college the authority to mandate that vet clinics have malpractice insurance, something that is currently not mandatory.

Ontario needs modernized legislation that embraces contemporary approaches to professional regulation and

governance; in other words, one profession, veterinary medicine, comprised of two professionals, veterinarians and veterinary technicians, serving the public interest. We feel that we have better reflected that reality in this proposed legislation.

These proposed changes are part of our broader efforts to support success for Ontario's agriculture and food industry and to streamline and simplify processes for those doing business in Ontario.

Modernizing the legislation that oversees veterinary medicine will better support all animal owners. We feel strongly that these proposed changes will help to bring about a veterinary profession that is more responsive to public expectations around governance, transparency and oversight.

The new legislative framework we propose aims to take a balanced and risk-based approach to the practice of veterinary medicine, while continuing to protect animal health and well-being. We are confident these proposed actions will help us keep growing Ontario together.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to pay homage to a very special individual in my riding, the riding of Essex. This individual was a great contributor to his community in so many important ways. I think that this individual very much represents and reflects his chosen profession, the veterinary profession, and probably stands as a great example to others to follow: Dr. Richard Barnett.

**1000**

I'd like to tell you a little bit about Dr. Barnett. He was the son of individuals who were part of the greatest generation, as we like to refer to them. His father served in World War II and was on active service for four and a half years in Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland.

Dr. Barnett always began his visits with a joke, and others who were in the practice and retired from the practice agreed that he was always a pleasure to speak with.

He once agreed to visit a pony gifted to a family, as it was quite sick, and even though he was not practising at the time, he was willing to give of his time and his professional efforts to ensure that pony stayed well.

Others have said about him that he played a very important role on a lot of farms. This is a great show of support to someone so important to farm operations. He was called a fine mentor, someone who took others under his wing and was willing to share his experience and his knowledge with others for the benefit of the community and of the profession.

People who met Dr. Barnett were not just his clients; they were like family. He spoke about how his mentor went out of his way to help those in need of veterinary care, but also might not have been able to fulfill the financial obligations that went along with that, and he went above and beyond, making sure that people were able to get the veterinary care they required, regardless of what their financial circumstances were.

Dr. Richard Barnett was a man who set the example for others to follow. He practised so long, it was said he had the oldest telephone message in the business.

He served as the president of the Essex-Kent Veterinary Association and as treasurer for the Ontario Association of Swine Practitioners.

Dr. Barnett said this of his career and his life: "I have been blessed in so many ways." And when he talked about his youth and being educated in a one-room schoolhouse, which was next door to his family farm, he said this: "It was a great time to grow up."

So I'd like to take this opportunity to pay homage to Dr. Barnett, his contributions to the community and his contributions to the profession, and encourage all members to vote in favour of this act, which will improve veterinary professions and veterinary care in the province of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you to the minister and the parliamentary assistant for their remarks on this bill.

I had the opportunity to attend one of the committee meetings that was reviewing this legislation, and I was particularly interested in the panel from the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society, the Toronto Humane Society and Dr. Martha Harding, who operates three not-for-profit veterinary clinics. They shared stories about how, in this current affordability crisis, we are seeing a doubling of demand for pet food to community food banks. They are seeing more and more animals having to be surrendered for economic reasons, which is absolutely heartbreaking, because all families—low-income people should be able to access veterinary services.

What in this bill will expand access to veterinary services, especially for low-income Ontarians?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Well, thank you very much for that question.

Simply put, the expansion and recognition of the scope of practice in our veterinary clinics across Ontario, whether it's urban downtown Toronto or in Rainy River, is going to improve access. Specifically, when I say that, I mean the recognition of the scope of practice for veterinary technicians is going to be a game-changer, quite frankly. If a veterinarian is tied up and somebody comes in or phones in requesting care, in teaming up with a veterinarian, the vet tech can now fully practise to their full scope of experience and training.

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

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleagues be able to debate and speak on really creative and innovative ways to make practices, like the veterinary practices, accessible and relevant.

I'm really thinking about young people. As the minister for women, it's important for me to see women have the opportunity to pursue careers. We've seen interest in veterinary practice amongst young girls.

I'm just wondering how this is going to help encourage more young people, especially young women, enter into the sector and become veterinarians in Ontario.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I appreciate the question from the minister, who is so dedicated and does such an

incredible job giving a hand up to women who want to pursue careers, no matter where their career path takes them. She's doing a spectacular job in that spirit.

In terms of veterinary medicine, I want to share with everyone in the House and watching today that women particularly are outnumbering men when it comes to this professional career. I'm really proud to say that there's an equalizer, because if you have the training, you have the expertise and you have the passion, anyone can be part of the team that offers enhanced professional care to animals.

The other thing I want to share is that we're approaching the increase to veterinary medicine by increasing the number of classes in Ontario by 20. We're also incenting veterinarians to work in northern and remote areas of Ontario by incenting them upwards of \$50,000 over five years if they practise large animal veterinary medicine.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** During the committee hearings on the bill, we heard from the Ontario SPCA as well as the Toronto Humane Society, who pointed to the fact that there are current regulations that give those organizations special status because they operate animal shelters, so therefore they are also able to provide veterinary services. They urged that new regulations be developed under this new governance system that's set out in this bill that would enable the expansion of non-profit delivery of veterinary care so that it doesn't have to only be associated with a charity that operates an animal shelter. They really emphasized the need to expand veterinary services to low-income Ontarians, and the current cost of veterinary services is a real barrier to access.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I thank the member opposite, because I understand you participated in committee, as well. Thank you for your time that you gave to reviewing this particular piece of legislation.

The fact of the matter is, that amendment and that notion is outside of the scope of this enabling legislation.

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

**Hon. Stan Cho:** It's the first time I'm probably going to talk about my French bulldog, Kevin. This guy is three years old and cost me a fortune, but I can't see life without him at home. I understand that his health care—well, to me and to my wife, he's our little fur baby. I can't imagine life without him.

Vets play a crucial role in our families here in Ontario.

I was curious about this legislation and how it could help to remove some of the barriers for entry into becoming a veterinarian and some of those barriers that people face today.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I think, first and foremost, the fact that we're recognizing the scope of expertise and training with vet techs is very important. I think that will encourage more people to pursue that particular career path.

I love the name Kevin for a dog, by the way—well done. I trust that he's getting exemplary care—

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The best care.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Yes, and he will be a great partner for any new family member that may come your way too.

**1010**

I have to say to Minister Cho, my husband said, as well, "Who would ever think I'd fall so in love with a dog?" I think we all think that way when it comes to referring to our pets. And we know there are young people throughout this province of Ontario that, because they love pets, want to pursue a career. With the Enhancing the Professional Care for Animals Act, I think we're creating a bright future for anyone who wants to pursue that career.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Again to the minister: During the hearings on this bill at committee, we heard about the veterinary legislative oversight acts that are in place in other jurisdictions—BC, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Florida—that all include non-profit veterinary services in their veterinary legislation.

My question to the minister is: Can she assure all of those veterinarians who want to be able to provide non-profit delivery of veterinary services that the regulations under this act will be expanded to enable that in this province?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite, but we need to remember that what we're debating today is enabling legislation, and the regulations will be facilitated through that new college that will be created, should this bill pass. With that said, I trust the individuals who have come together to work together to realize this modernization.

I'd like to give a shout-out to the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, as well as the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians and all of the other professions that provide services to either pets or livestock throughout this province. I trust that when it comes to those conversations that need to be had to bring forward regulations, there will be much thought and responsibility given to that action.

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you so much to the minister and to the parliamentary assistants for bringing forward this legislation, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us a little bit more about how the proposed changes will enhance access to professional animal care—and specifically, the changes to the scope of practice for vet techs and their ability to participate in team-based care to the full extent of their abilities and training—and how that will help improve access for us who have fur babies to come in and have them taken care of.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Again, all of our pets, our fur babies, as you said, are so important to us.

I'm really proud of the modernization that we're talking about in this particular piece of legislation. Whether it's



for livestock or pets, what we've done here is actually bring two professions under one college. In that, that team-based approach is going to improve access so that when you need care for your pet, it will be available to you, because the—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the Minister of Agriculture. Thank you for the response.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the deputy House leader.

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### HANNAH PARE

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Recently, we lost a beloved member of our community and a health care hero, Hannah Pare. Hannah was just 22 years old and was a neurology nurse at Windsor Regional Hospital. She tragically passed away due to complications during surgery. Hannah was an amazing nurse for our community who truly loved what she did and was dedicated to helping others.

Even after her passing, Hannah continues to help others by donating her organs, saving multiple lives.

Her devastating loss will be felt across our entire community.

To honour her legacy, Hannah's family has started a GoFundMe page to fundraise for a scholarship in her name at the University of Windsor. Hannah was very passionate about school, and her legacy will support others in their academic journey.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize Hannah's service as a nurse and to extend my deepest condolences to her family.

I am grateful for the impact that Hannah has made in the lives of so many.

### LABOUR DISPUTE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Today, my colleague MPP West and I wish we were in our ridings so we could join the 900 health care professionals holding a rally at Health Sciences North. You see, Speaker, these workers have been working without a collective agreement since June 2022, two long years ago. Today, May 16, is the long-awaited arbitration date.

We support workers.

I know that there are shortages in 15 different classifications of health care professionals, from respiratory therapists, pathologist assistants, lab technicians, radiation therapists, medical radiation technologists, physiotherapists,

occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, pharmacy technicians, prosthetic and orthotic technicians, perfusionists—and the list goes on. These shortages cause delays in tests needed for diagnosis, delays in care and treatment plans, and missed care altogether. All these delays lead to extended hospital stays, hospital overcrowding and hallway health care.

The top reasons why health care professionals leave their work are pay and working conditions.

So I sure hope that the arbitration brings them what negotiations were not able to bring: fair wages and good working conditions.

To all of the health care workers out there and allies at the rally today, I value your important work. We wish we could be there with you. I sure hope that after waiting for two years, you get a good collective agreement.

Solidarity.

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Our government, under Premier Ford's leadership, is getting it done by building Highway 413. In the coming year, by 2025, we will move ahead with construction and get shovels in the ground as a part of our plan to build Ontario.

With Halton, Peel and York regions all set to grow at incredible speed, our government is saying yes to building the critical infrastructure our province needs by building the roads and highways that will keep these communities strong and thriving.

Highway 413 will bring relief to the most congested corridor in North America. Preliminary design, environmental assessment work and consultations are under way for the new route. During construction, Highway 413 is expected to generate up to \$350 million in real GDP and support 3,500 good-paying union jobs, such as heavy-equipment operators, drilling and coring contractors, concrete and steel workers, utility contractors, environmental specialists, laboratory technologists, safety inspectors, and so many more in the industry. Once completed, not only will it improve our productivity and encourage economic growth by getting goods to market faster, but it will also have a measurable impact on the quality of life for Ontario drivers so they can spend more time with their families and less time stuck in gridlock.

Speaker, we are delivering on our promise to build Highway 413 with our plan to fix gridlock and make life easier and more convenient for millions of drivers in the GTA and across Ontario.

We're getting it done. We're building Highway 413.

## DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** We are facing unacceptable wait times for MRIs in Niagara right now. Right now, our community faces a staggering 306-day wait time for MRIs—a wait time that nearly doubled in the past year.

Since 2016, we have fought tooth and nail to secure additional funding to increase MRI operating hours. In

2021, we received funding to operate a brand new MRI machine. And yet, despite these efforts, our wait times have only worsened. Why are we in a dire situation and waiting 306 days? People in Niagara should not be forced to endure unbearable waits for medical procedures, yet here we are, waiting endlessly while our health care deteriorates.

This crisis will become another excuse for the government to push for privatization of our health care services. But let me be clear: Privatization is not the answer. It only benefits the wealthy few who will leave the rest of us suffering.

**1020**

We must hold the government accountable for its failure to prioritize the health and well-being of our communities. It's time to demand action, to demand change. We cannot allow our public health care system to continue failing us.

This government has committed to the funding to ensure Niagara residents have access to MRIs. So what is happening at Niagara Health? We cannot allow our health care to fail on purpose.

Speaker, 306 days, frankly, is unacceptable to the residents of Niagara.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. John Jordan:** I was pleased to join the Minister of Health last month for a very important virtual announcement which will positively affect many families in Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. A new regional pediatric surgical program was launched to address the wait-list for surgeries for children and youth in eastern Ontario—part of this government's investment of an additional \$330 million each year in pediatric health services in our hospitals and community-based health care facilities.

Led by the Kids Come First Health Team, this initiative brings the CHEO day surgery program to two sites: the Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital in my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, and the Brockville General Hospital in my neighbour MPP's riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Funding will go toward equipment and training at the Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital, including pediatric advanced life-support skills as well as general and orthopaedic surgery.

My thanks for the hard work and dedication of Mary Wilson Trider, who just recently retired from her position as CEO of the Mississippi River Health Alliance, which includes the Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital; Nicholas Vlacholias from Brockville General Hospital; and Alex Munter, CEO of CHEO.

Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, the government is providing significant financial support to hospitals and communities to improve how they deliver pediatric care, ensuring families in Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston and across the province can access care easier, faster and closer to home.

#### BICYCLE SAFETY

**Mr. Chris Glover:** In 2018, I was riding my bicycle along Bloor Street and a vehicle pulled past me, stopped, and a passenger got out the back door. There just was not time for me to react. I ran into the door. The bicycle was damaged. I was injured. I ended up with a horseshoe-shaped bruise on my thigh. That was one of 132 dooring incidents in the city that year.

I actually got off quite lucky. I've since spoken with another gentleman who was also doored. He was pushed under a truck when he got doored, and he's a quadriplegic. Sometimes dooring incidents even lead to death.

So I've been thinking about this, and I'm thinking there's a technical solution to reduce and potentially eliminate doorings.

Today in the Legislature, we've got engineering students from the University of Toronto who have developed a device that goes on side-view mirrors. If a bicycle or another vulnerable pedestrian or a vehicle is coming up the side of a vehicle, it will send out an alarm. It will send out a light, and it will prevent the person from opening the door, so that we can reduce the number of doorings.

Today, I will be introducing a motion in the Legislature to mandate these devices on all ride-share vehicles in the province of Ontario, to be paid for by the ride-share companies three years out. I'm hoping that the government will pass this motion and help us to reduce and potentially eliminate doorings in the province of Ontario.

#### OSAID

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** It's a pleasure for me to rise to talk about OSAID, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to address some of OSAID's amazing student delegates at the 2024 launch of SAID Day.

OSAID was established in 1987 and is the only student-led anti-impaired driving initiative in Ontario.

Impaired driving used to just refer to drinking and driving; now it includes anything that impairs one's ability to operate a vehicle safely. Impairment can be caused by alcohol; drugs, both legal and illegal; fatigue; texting while driving; and even things like loud music or loud friends.

Last year, OSAID won the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario's initiative of the year.

These young people are to be commended for their outstanding leadership and service in their schools and their communities. We know effective educational and awareness programs like OSAID have the power to shift attitudes, change behaviour and lead to safer driving practices.

Thank you to OSAID and to the team of dedicated students, volunteers and directors for continuing to remind us that the decisions made behind the wheel affect not just your own life, but the lives of countless others.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It's an honour to rise today to say thank you to the Guelph Climate Action Network and the Guelph-Wellington Coalition for Social Justice for organizing a community climate forum on May 4. I was so impressed that over 160 community members came out on a beautiful Saturday afternoon to problem-solve and discuss real actions we can take to address the climate emergency. I left the meeting inspired and energized by the people power in that room.

People talked about how vital local food, public transit, cycling and walking infrastructure, more homes in existing neighborhoods, and waste reduction are to reducing climate pollution. They talked about the need to disconnect their homes from dirty fossil gas and install heat pumps as a way to save money heating and cooling their homes. They made it clear to me that they want Ontario to invest in low-cost wind and solar, not expensive, dirty gas plants, and they don't want any more four-lane highways in the greenbelt. Most of all, they told me they want a livable, low-carbon future for their children and grandchildren. They want a government that's going to invest in preparing our communities for the climate emergency that we're experiencing—the floods, the droughts, the fires.

I want my constituents to know that I hear you, and I will work hard at Queen's Park to bring forward the solutions you want and that we all need.

## MOTHER'S DAY

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I'm honoured to share a touching moment from this past Mother's Day. With four children and seven grandchildren of my own, I deeply understand the joys and challenges of being a mother.

As we celebrated Mother's Day this past Sunday, I rise today on behalf of the people of Richmond Hill to pay tribute to the remarkable women who enrich our lives in countless ways: our mothers.

I recently attended a heartwarming celebration organized by the Catholic Community Services of York Region. It was a poignant event that celebrated the incredible mothers in our community, emphasizing their resilience and boundless love. Sitting among fellow mothers and their families, I was moved by their stories of sacrifice and unwavering support. It was a reminder of the profound impact mothers have on our families and communities.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to advocate for the well-being of mothers in Ontario. You are appreciated, cherished and celebrated, not just only on Mother's Day, but every day.

## HOUSING

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** It's Building Safety Month. Ontario's building officials play a critical role in tackling the province's housing supply shortage, while keeping us safe in accordance with the building code.

Since 1976, the Ontario building code has set the minimum standard for new and existing buildings in the province of Ontario. The code impacts our daily lives, from establishing safety standards in our homes to ensuring public spaces are accessible for all, and to establishing innovative approaches as we work to meet our ambitious goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

We cannot unlock Ontario's housing potential without keeping up with the latest innovations and standards.

That's why I am proud of our government's release of the 2024 Ontario building code, the largest building code update since 2012.

### 1030

The new addition provides opportunities to accelerate the construction of new housing projects, such as the expansion and the use of encapsulated mass-timber construction, while ensuring the buildings in Ontario continue to be among the safest and the most accessible in North America.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that continues to work with municipalities and builders to deliver on our mandates to ensure that all Ontarians have access to safe and secure housing.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm pleased to introduce, here in the gallery today, guests from the St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank: Karen McDade and Sarah Coleman. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you as guests today.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It gives me great pleasure to introduce Sue Lebeau, the CEO of West Nipissing General Hospital, and a dear old friend of mine, Mike Baker, the CEO of Temiskaming Hospital.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** It's my pleasure to introduce Doreen Armstrong-Ross, CEO of Dryden Regional Health Care Centre, and Andrew Williams, CEO of Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, also from the great riding of Perth-Wellington.

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** I'd like to introduce Lynne Innes in the House. Lynne is the president and CEO of Weeneebayko Area Health Authority, WAHA, since 2019, and is a key partner for health in the James Bay coast.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** I would like to introduce the members of the Canada Chinese Mazu Community Centre tour team, who are sitting up there in the public gallery. They are Ye Feng, Li Rue-Jia, Huang Shengjia, Xie Xiumin, Lin Yang Zhong, Ma Haohua, Cai Limei, Li Antony Chang and Cheung Chiu Lie Lan.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** I'd like to introduce Tolu Sami and Grace Tongue from the uOttawa Enactus club, who led their team to win the national Enactus Canadian Tire Environmental Sustainability Challenge award. Welcome and congratulations.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm very pleased to be able to introduce my constituent and friend, Emilie Coyle, who is

the executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. I'm so happy to see you this morning, Emilie.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I'd like to welcome a good friend and my political assistant from Ottawa who is joining us here in Toronto today: Dave Williams.

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** I'm very pleased to introduce members from the Ontario Hospital Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I had the great pleasure to visit with Rachael Wilson, CEO of the Ottawa Food Bank, as well as Alex Noreau, who works in comms for the Ottawa Food Bank.

Thank you for coming to your House and for all the good you do.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'd like to introduce Trevor MacKenzie, vice-president of Tribute Communities, from the great riding of God's country.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I'm delighted to welcome once again my constituents from Markham–Unionville, Jennifer Ng and Ernest Ng. They are the proud parents of page Victoria Ng. Joining them today is Victoria's youngest brother, Matthew.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'd like to welcome Kim Wilhelm, CEO of the Food Bank of Waterloo Region; Michelle Rickard, marketing and communications manager for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region; and Ashley Quan, senior manager, research and government relations for Feed Ontario.

Thank you for being here. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** It is PSW Week here in Ontario, and I want to introduce some really cool people from the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association in the House today, including CEO Miranda Ferrier, Ian DaSilva, Nicole Crawford, Becca Stolp Romanowicz, Tonya Haevens and Kaitlyn Cannon.

Thank you for all that you do. You are the backbone of long-term care in Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I'd like us all to welcome Emilie Coyle, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies; Jennifer Chambers, the executive director of the Empowerment Council; Yusuf Faqiri, the brother of Soleiman Faqiri; Maryam Faqiri, the mother of Soleiman Faqiri—they've all been here to support the justice for Soleiman act.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** It's my pleasure to welcome my constituents Margaret and Richard Hensen from Oakville North–Burlington. They're the parents of Mark Hensen, who works with our Premier's office.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I want to welcome to the House today a good friend, Nikos Alexiou from UNICEF. Thank you for being here in your House.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Mr. Speaker, we have, from the great town of Kingsville, Mayor Dennis Rogers and CAO John Norton.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Unless there's an objection, I'd like to continue with the introduction of visitors. I heard a no—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Speaker, I was joking.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Okay, we'll do it again. And everyone, let's treat it seriously this time. If there's an objection, we won't be able to continue with the introduction of visitors.

I heard a no.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm sorry; I heard a no.

#### ALICE MUNRO

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, President of the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of Nobel laureate, master of the contemporary short story and Ontarian, Alice Munro, who was the 13th woman to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award, winner of the Trillium Book Award, winner of the Man Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement, and recipient of many other honours and awards, who sadly passed away on Monday, May 13, 2024, in Port Hope, Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Mulroney is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of Nobel laureate, master of the contemporary short story and Ontarian, Alice Munro, who was the 13th woman to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award, winner of the Trillium Book Award, winner of the Man Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement, and recipient of many other honours and awards, who sadly passed away on Monday, May 13, 2024, in Port Hope, Ontario. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

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

It is now time for oral questions.

1040

#### QUESTION PERIOD

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** My question is for the Premier.

Survivors of sexual violence travelled from all across this province to hear this House discuss the crisis in our justice system yesterday, and their government betrayed them. They didn't just kill the debate on an important bill;

they wouldn't even allow a discussion about the thousands of sexual assault cases that are being dismissed right now in our broken court system.

Will the Premier stand in his place and explain to survivors of sexual assault why they are not only losing their day in court, but also losing their day in this Legislature?

*Interjections.*

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

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry that the Leader of the Opposition and her party are characterizing it that way.

What we did yesterday was in recognition, really, of the important step that this Parliament took as a whole with respect to the motion on intimate partner violence and the standing up of the justice committee, led by a former crown prosecutor, the member for Kitchener–Hespeler, to investigate how we can ensure that victims and survivors of intimate partner violence are better treated not only in the justice system, but by those who provide services for victims and survivors.

It seemed reasonable to me that we expedite passage of that bill into the committee so that it can also form part of the work that is being done by the standing committee on justice—very, very important work that is being done by that committee—so that it can report back to this Parliament, and as a whole, we can consider the options.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** First of all, I want to be very clear for the government here: These are two separate issues, actually: intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

We are asking, actually, about accountability, and we are asking about clearing the backlog for sexual assault cases. Our courts are so overwhelmed that in one year alone, over 1,300 survivors had their cases dismissed, thrown out. There is no justice in that. And you don't need to study it. It is a fact.

But once again, the government is playing procedural games on a very important issue.

So I want to ask the Premier—you are in government. You have the power. How about you be decisive for once and do the right thing?

*Interjections.*

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

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

The government House leader may respond.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In fact, I would submit to the Leader of the Opposition that that is exactly what this Parliament was the other day. It was very decisive in ensuring that this particular bill—which I have said, both inside the House and outside the House, has many elements which I think are very important.

The leader of the opposition is quite correct; intimate partner violence and what we're challenged with in that

bill are two separate things but are often handled in very much the same way, not only in our court system, but by those who provide services for victims, survivors and their families.

We've heard from countless numbers of individuals that, often, services are fragmented.

We look at the work that was done by the member from Haliburton and the committee with respect to human trafficking.

We lead the world in how we handle and tackle human trafficking issues. I think this Parliament can do the same when it comes to these issues. We're ready to do that work.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is back to the Premier.

It is unacceptable that they will stand here and say to the women who worked on Lydia's Law, the women who travelled to Queen's Park yesterday, and to Lydia herself, that it wasn't their turn to speak.

The government says they need to know more before they can address the crisis in the courts. Well, yesterday they had a chance to learn, but they refused to listen.

Survivors of sexual violence are being told to wait until the government gives them permission to come to committee. They feel betrayed. Lydia feels betrayed.

Premier, how can the intimate partner violence study succeed when you have lost the trust of this community in this province of Ontario?

*Interjections.*

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

I will continue to ask members to make their comments through the Chair.

Government House leader to respond.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I guess I just have more confidence in parliamentarians to do the important work that is required to ensure that we move forward for victims, survivors and their families.

We have a lot of things that we do in this province very, very well. But what we have heard from victims, from their families, from survivors is that often those services don't work well together. How can we make that change happen better?

I take it at full faith that the members opposite are going to work co-operatively with members from all sides of this House to move forward and do some very, very important work, similar to the work that we did, led by the member for Haliburton, with respect to human trafficking.

We want the same thing. To suggest that anybody is not hearing is just absolutely wrong.

Let's take the opportunity to do something very special, to work across party lines and get this right.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** That was a disappointing response, but I'm going to move on for now.

## HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The next question is for the Premier again.

Speaker, 10,000 patients are going to lose their primary care in Sault Ste. Marie by the end of this month, in just a couple of weeks, including retired steelworkers. Do you know why that matters? It's because those retirees founded the Group Health Centre, and they took a pay cut; they took their hard-earned dollars to build themselves a world-class, world-renowned clinic in their hometown. In exchange, they were promised health care at that clinic for the rest of their lives. But now that's being taken away, and this government has no plan to help them.

I'm going to ask the Premier: Is he going to make sure that his health minister finally acts here, or is the loss of primary care in the Soo not a major concern either?

*Interjections.*

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

Member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** We do have a plan. Since 2018, we've registered 12,500 new physicians in Ontario, including an almost 10% increase in family doctors. But we do know there's more to be done. Our plan is reversing the old Liberal policies that were really short-sighted—they were supported by the NDP—that eliminated 50 medical residency school positions; that is hundreds of less doctors practising today in Ontario.

On top of that, we can go back to the Rae Days. The Leader of the Opposition—you were a staffer there. I know you don't like the facts, but you were a staffer, part of the Rae Days, and you—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Order. Opposition, come to order.

Member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, please conclude your answer.

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you, Speaker.

We're working closely with MPP Romano on our expansion of primary care. As part of Ontario's largest expansion of primary care, we've invested \$1.1 million into two new teams in Sault Ste. Marie.

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

The supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** You've got to do better than Wikipedia here. Take the notes away; try to answer the question. You know perfectly well that this is not addressing the current issue. Access to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government side will come to order. The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry will come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order.

*Interjections.*

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

I need a note, too, to keep track of who has got the floor. I hope no one objects to that.

Start the clock.

Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Oh, my goodness. I hit a nerve there, eh, Speaker?

I just want them to answer the question. They know perfectly well that they're not addressing the current issue.

Access to primary care shouldn't depend on where you live.

If these patients in Sault Ste. Marie lose access to their primary care doctor, do you know where they're going to end up? They're going to end up in emergency rooms that are already overcrowded. And there's only one emergency room in the Soo. The next closest one is Sudbury. That's four hours away.

**1050**

So what is this government's plan to address the urgent crisis in primary care in Sault Ste. Marie before the end of the month?

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** As I clearly stated, I don't think the Leader of the Opposition likes to listen to the facts.

We've invested \$1.1 million into two new primary care teams in Sault Ste. Marie.

Speaker, I'll state it again: Ontario is leading the country, with almost 90% of Ontarians having a family doctor or a primary care health provider.

We are continuing to reverse the horrible Liberal policies that were propped up by many of the members of the NDP over there. Since 2018, as I've stated clearly, we've registered 12,500 new doctors in Ontario, and we'll continue doing what is needed to be done to ensure that we have the best publicly funded health care system across Canada.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, the fact is, this clinic is closing its doors to 10,000 people by the end of this month—10,000 more people in the Soo without health care, and this government has no plan.

Some 2.4 million Ontarians have no primary care right now, but for this government, for their health minister, that's not a major concern.

We're 350 physicians short in northern Ontario, including more than 200 family doctors. Many, many more—half of the physicians working in northern Ontario—are expected to retire in the next five years, and this government has no plan.

So I want to ask the Premier to stand in his place for once, stop making excuses, do something decisive and treat this issue like the crisis that it surely, surely is.

*Interjections.*

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

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** I notice the leader stumbled on her notes there, but we won't actually take credit for that.

Last year, we registered 2,400 new doctors who practise in our province.

We're also opening a new medical school at York University that the opposition can vote for today.

Last year was a record-breaking year for nurses in Ontario. We registered over 17,500 nurses. We've also increased the amount of nursing seats by 3,000 nursing seats in Ontario's colleges and universities.

We're funding the largest expansion of medical school spots in over 15 years, adding 1,212 undergraduate and 1,637 postgraduate seats across Ontario. Speaker, 60% of these spots will be dedicated to family medicine.

Again, I recommend the Leader of the Opposition vote for our budget today.

### CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier.

In 2016, Soleiman Faqiri suffered from schizoaffective disorder. He was temporarily housed in a correctional facility. He was denied mental health resources. Pleas from his family were ignored even though he was clearly in crisis. Soleiman Faqiri died in jail 11 days later. He was restrained with his hands behind his back. He was restrained on his ankles. He was restrained in many other places, pepper-sprayed, and his face was covered with a spit hood.

His death was deemed a homicide by Ontario's coroners in an inquest that put forward 57 recommendations directly to this government. The first recommendation called on the government to recognize that correctional facilities are not an appropriate place for people experiencing a mental health crisis. The government was expected to respond within 60 days; it has now been six months.

Yesterday, because of government inaction, I tabled the Justice for Soli Act. I and the Faqiri family, who are here today, call on this government to support the act. And they want to know, how many more people have to die in jails because they are living with a mental health crisis, before they act?

*Interjections.*

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

The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** Any death is too many. We are absolutely committed to making sure that Ontario's correctional system is safe for everyone.

Years ago, under the previous government's watch, they brought our correctional system and our public safety system to its knees.

That's why this government, under Premier Ford, has made a tremendous investment to make sure that our correctional systems are safe. We've invested over a half a billion dollars on infrastructure improvement. We've hired over a thousand new correctional officers. We have native inmate liaison officers, NILOs, and chaplains there.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot in a short period of time, and we will continue to do so each and every day.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Speaker, back to the Premier: Soleiman Faqiri's family knew something was wrong the minute he went to jail. They tried to visit him four separate times during his 11 days. They were barred from seeing him. The family and correctional staff knew Soleiman Faqiri urgently needed mental health support and service, but nothing was done.

According to the coroner's report, at the time of death, Soleiman Faqiri had over 50 bruises on his body, despite the fact that he was in segregation during his entire time in jail. There were over 60 policy breaches leading up to Soleiman's homicide while he was in government custody.

The family here is asking for an apology, recognition of their pain and suffering.

Yes or no, Premier, will you give the Faqiri family the apology they deserve for Soleiman's tragic and preventable death?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** Our thoughts are with the family and the friends of Soleiman Faqiri. This was a terrible tragedy beyond measure.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why, in the last years since Premier Ford has been our Premier, we have taken public safety very seriously—and that includes the investments in our correctional facilities, the half-a-billion-dollar infrastructure improvements, the suicide prevention and intervention training to make sure that our correctional officers understand things that they may not have understood 20 years ago.

It's important that everyone knows we will make the investments required to keep our Ontario safe.

### TAXATION

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Speaker, last year's Feed Ontario report saw a 38% increase in food bank usage in Ontario, with over 800,000 Ontarians having to access a food bank. This is the single largest increase ever recorded. Sadly, Ontarians are being forced to visit food banks because the regressive and harmful carbon tax is driving up the cost of food.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** The opposition colleagues don't want to talk about this. They want to ignore facts. We heard this morning from the PA to health. Speaker—

*Interjections.*

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

The House will come to order. The member for Perth–Wellington has the floor. He's allowed to ask a question.

Member for Perth–Wellington.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you, Speaker.

The independent Liberal members in this place and the federal Liberal government need to understand that if you

tax our farm families who grow the food and the truckers who ship the food, you end up taxing the Ontario families who buy the food.

This regressive tax is a disgrace, and it must be scrapped.

Can the minister please explain how the Liberal carbon tax is making life harder and more expensive for hard-working Ontarians?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** I want to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for a very important question.

I can't believe the response from the opposition parties in the Legislature today when everybody in our province and across the country knows that the carbon tax is driving up the cost of living. It has been confirmed by the Bank of Canada, C.D. Howe and so many different institutes, and it is having an effect on people's ability to afford groceries, gas and home heating.

This federal carbon tax, supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, is going to—well, it's the impact today. It's going to be the legacy of the federal government, and ultimately it's going to be the downfall of the federal government, because not only is it causing a crisis now in communities across our province and our country; it's going to create an even further impact next year on April 1, when the carbon tax goes up again.

**1100**

We have a plan here in Ontario. It's working, and it doesn't include a carbon tax.

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

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to the minister for his response.

As a young member in this place, I know the carbon tax has done nothing for the environment but instead has driven up the cost of basic necessities and made it difficult for food banks and other non-profits to serve our most vulnerable citizens.

Food banks across the province are now paying more for gas and diesel to transport the food, more for natural gas to heat their buildings, and more for the food on their shelves. Speaker, 69% of food banks are concerned that they don't have enough food to meet the demand, and the carbon tax is forcing them to stretch their already limited budgets even further. What's worse is that this tax burden is only going to rise every single year.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to protect our food banks and other non-profits from this disastrous carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks for the supplementary.

I would advise the opposition members to talk to the not-for-profits, to talk to the food banks in their region, like I do.

I talk to the Gleaners Food Bank, I talk to the Trenton Care and Share Food Bank in my riding, and they are definitely hearing from their clients that the carbon tax is having an impact on their day-to-day life.

That's why we've taken a different approach here in Ontario than Justin Trudeau and the federal government. We're lowering taxes. We've cut the gas tax by 10.7 cents

a litre. We've implemented the LIFT credit; it eliminates the provincial income tax for many low-income workers, and it's making a difference for them. We've eliminated fees. We've eliminated the licence plate sticker fees. We brought in One Fare for those who ride transit, saving them up to \$1,600 a year. That's real, tangible savings for the people of Ontario.

Here in Ontario, with our plan, which doesn't include a carbon tax, we are seeing growth in our economy, more good-paying jobs being created, like the ones that will soon be created at Honda, Volkswagen, Stellantis and those—

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

The next question.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Minister of Education.

As Ontario drags its feet to create new \$10-a-day child care spaces, this government has forced many affordable spaces we do have to leave the program, and this means doubling the costs that parents pay.

Ontario child care centres have been urgently calling for a funding formula that actually works. Back in September 2023, this government said it was working on a new formula that would be in place at the end of 2024. Now they're telling child care operators to wait another year.

Minister, what excuse do you have to give families who have to pay the price for your funding formula delay?

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

The Minister of Education can respond.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** The parents are saving \$6,000 to \$12,000 because of our government's policy on child care. So the price they'll pay is longer wait-lists, if we adhere to the advice of the NDP and Liberals, who want us to literally make the wait-lists longer by precluding one third of the sector from being involved in the federal deal.

That is your position. That is your stated recommendation to government: to preclude 70,000 spaces.

You're asking me a question about access, when you have urged this government to sign the first deal—which would have denied every parent in a for-profit child care. These are operated by women, small businesses, who simply want access to affordable care too.

Why does the NDP oppose affordable child care for every parent in this province?

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Speaker, there are two things that you need in child care: baby formula and a funding formula. And taking two years for a funding formula is unacceptable.

Ola, a child care provider, pulled out of the program, citing a broken funding model.



The YMCA, the largest operator in the province, has been warning for months about the risk of closures if the funding formula isn't updated soon to actually cover the costs for providing child care.

Families are worried about whether there will be affordable child care available when they need it.

Why is the minister putting more child care spaces at risk with these delays?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** The formula will be unveiled this year. It will be operational for January 2025, as we have said all along.

What we've also committed to is continuing to reduce child care fees. When we came to power in 2018, child care, on average, was \$46 to \$50 a day. It is \$23 a day, and on track to go down even further over the next year and a half, delivered by our Premier and our Progressive Conservative team.

We are increasing the spaces in every region of Ontario—86,000 additional spaces are on track, 19,000 in Toronto alone.

We are committed to affordability, to standing up against higher taxes on working parents. From the carbon tax to higher fees—we stand for affordability in this province.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I'd like to ask a question to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

The Liberal carbon tax is punishing Ontario businesses and making life more unaffordable for families and businesses throughout the province. It is driving up the price of everyday essentials such as food, heating and gas, making it more expensive for workers to transport equipment.

We know that workers in Ontario deserve better. The federal government needs to stop listening to elites, extremists and activists and start listening to the families and businesses that make up our province, who have had enough of this tax hike. It's time to scrap this job-killing tax today.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House the steps our government is taking to ensure we have a trained workforce ready to build Ontario's future and fight this Liberal carbon tax?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the parliamentary assistant and member for Ajax.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** As the member is aware, years of Liberal mismanagement and neglect have left this province with huge labour shortages and thousands of good jobs left vacant.

Sadly, to make matters worse, as millions of workers struggle with today's higher cost of living, the Bonnie Crombie Liberals and the carbon tax queen want to make

their lives even more unaffordable. Her support for the carbon tax translates into higher prices, not just at the gas pumps, but across all aspects of life. It effectively becomes a tax on everything, as it will cause transportation costs to soar and grocery bills to rise. By increasing the financial burden on essentials, the carbon tax under Bonnie's watch threatens to diminish the quality of life for all Ontarians, making it harder for them to thrive in an already uncertain economic climate.

That's why our government has established—over \$1 billion for the Skills Development Fund, which has already assisted over half a million individuals in advancing their careers and securing higher pay.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that answer.

I think you're absolutely correct. The people of Ontario spoke a few weeks ago in both Milton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and they told us what they think of this Liberal carbon tax.

This impacts every single person every time they go to fill up their tanks at the gas pump, and it drives up the cost of operations and transportation for business owners.

But let's be clear: Bonnie Crombie's Liberals don't care about what impacts this disastrous tax is having on Ontario workers and families. They are happy to see their federal cousins nearly triple this tax by 2030.

Our government will always stand up for the workers here in Ontario. It's time the federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts stand up and do the same with us.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House how our government is improving the lives of workers in spite of this Liberal anti-worker agenda?

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you once again to the member.

Again, it was bad enough when the Liberals simply neglected our trade workers. Now, under Crombie's leadership, it's even more dire as they support their federal counterparts in taxing not just the livelihoods but also the ability of these workers to support themselves and their families, with their oppressive anti-worker carbon tax.

However, our government will never go against the workers of this province. To support jobs in the skilled trades and all workers and job seekers across Ontario, our government is making groundbreaking investments in communities across the province to ensure workers and job seekers can upgrade their skills and get jobs closer to home.

Our government's message is clear: Skilled trades are open to everyone.

Our government is proud of the steps we have taken so far, and we have seen the results. We have seen the percentage of new registrants to the skilled trades who are women up by a historic 28%. We have launched the FAST program to get our youth into the trades.

Our government will always work for workers and job seekers to ensure Ontario's economy works for everyone.

1110

## JUSTICE SYSTEM

**MPP Jill Andrew:** In my community of St. Paul's—the question is to the Premier—we are fortunate to have the John Howard Society community office working tirelessly to support people affected by the justice system and those trying to rebuild productive lives post-incarceration.

JHS has been on the front lines, advocating for a just and reformed bail system. They have offered substantive recommendations to this government's Standing Committee on Justice Policy. One of those key recommendations was for the government to invest in bail supervision programs that have a proven history and provide a lower-cost alternative to pretrial detention, a practice that is disproportionately applied more to Black, Indigenous and racialized individuals than white individuals for the same and similar charges.

Can the Premier share what investments they have made in the current budget to address the need for more bail supervision programs?

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I appreciate the question. It's a very important area, because we do want people who are finished serving their sentence or on the back end of that situation to have the supports that they need to be successful in our communities.

We're in constant communication, whether it be with the John Howard Society or others who are providing service and bail supervision. We're making constant investments. We've increased capacity in terms of funding for victims' services. We've increased funding for those areas of need.

I'll get into some more specifics in the supplementary.

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

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Back to the Premier: It costs approximately \$300 a day to house—well, warehouse—an individual in pretrial detention; again, a practice that disproportionately targets Black, Indigenous and racialized populations, as well as people experiencing homelessness, mental health issues and addictions. That is millions of dollars spent yearly to incarcerate people who are legally innocent and awaiting trial. It is cheaper to invest in evidence-based community programs and services that address the root causes of violence.

The John Howard Society is recommending deep government investments in programs focused on prevention, intervention and reintegration, as well as robust investments in supportive housing, people, since the overall dismantling of the social safety net by this government has led to an increase in incarceration.

My question, again, is back to the Premier. Hopefully he'll answer. Why is spending \$300 a day to warehouse legally innocent people the status quo, as opposed to lower-cost, effective, community-based interventions like supportive housing?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I now understand why the member opposite voted against providing bail beds for those who are in need of housing and temporary shelter.

We are providing the supports, and we are going to hold people to account, but at the same time, we are doing things differently. We have started justice centres, which are one of a kind in Ontario. We got the idea from Red Hook in New York. They are meeting people where they are at, helping them with some of their underlying issues, while we provide appropriate responses from the justice system. We will not apologize for investing in all areas of this, and at the same time holding people to account.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Last year, to help Ontarians through the winter, Ontario Liberals proposed removing the HST from home heating. This Conservative government said no.

This spring, Ontario Liberals have proposed a \$1,000 tax credit for parents who put their children in extra-curricular activities and sports.

And just this week, Ontario Liberals have proposed a massive tax cut for small businesses that will save them up to \$18,000 a year.

What have we seen from the government? The Conservative gravy train getting longer and longer—bigger budgets for the Premier's office; a sunshine list of six-figure salaries that eclipses all others in history; sole-sourced contracts and special access to greenbelt lands for their friends, donors and insiders. While Ontario Liberals propose concrete measures to help families with the affordability crisis, this Conservative government is focused on adding passengers to their gravy train.

When will this government vote for common-sense Liberal tax cuts and start putting Ontario families first, over their friends, their donors and their insiders?

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

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, to our great member from Orléans: I appreciate his question, but I just have to remind him that his party was the one that bankrupted this province. His party was the one that chased 300,000 jobs out of the province, that destroyed our health care system. When we walked into the office almost six years ago, every single ministry was a disaster.

Move forward to today: There are over 700,000 more people working today, paying taxes.

We're the only government in the history of this country that has never raised a tax. We've actually reduced taxes. We've reduced the gas tax by 10.7 cents; we got rid of the tolls on the 412 and 418; we got rid of the car registration stickers, saving millions and millions of dollars for the people of Ontario.

Think of that: raised revenues by \$64 billion, never raised a tax, cut and reduced the burden off companies by \$8.5 billion each and every year—and we're seeing tens of billions of dollars of investment in our province.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard it all before.

When campaigning for office, the Premier promised a 20% tax cut for the middle class—six years later, nothing.

The Premier campaigned on reining in spending and cutting the deficit. Six years later, his government is breaking all records for spending, and the province's debt has increased by \$90 billion.

The Premier famously promised buck-a-beer, and while Ontarians prepare for the May Two-Four weekend, they know that a two-four in Ontario has never been more expensive.

While the Premier has broken all of his promises to the middle class, he has done his best for his friends, his donors and his insiders. The passengers on the Premier's gravy train are treated to first-class patronage, sole-sourced government contracts, greenbelt giveaways and special access, all leading to an RCMP investigation.

Why does this government continue to put the interests of highly paid insiders, lobbyists, friends and donors over the interests of Ontario families?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I think the Premier said it so incredibly well—but let's go back in time a little bit, when they were in power for 15 years and they increased the debt by \$200 billion. It's kind of incredible to think that all those hospitals they built and all those highways they built and all those subways they built and all those—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker; I'm being corrected by this side of the House, that I've got it wrong.

I have to correct the record: They built nothing. In fact, they saw the tail lights on those cars—those manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario to go to the United States.

Do you know what you're seeing now? Those headlights of the people coming to Ontario, 700,000 headlights coming back to Ontario—good-paying jobs in St. Thomas, in Alliston, and now in Port Colborne.

There's something happening in Ontario. The member opposite should take note of that.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** My question is for the Minister of Energy.

At a time when Ontario families continue to struggle with the rising cost of living and high interest rates, the federal Liberals went ahead with their 23% carbon tax hike last month. To make matters worse, the Liberals are doubling down and tripling the tax by 2030. It's unfair that the federal Liberals, supported by the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, are hiking this regressive tax on the back of every Ontarian. When this tax gets tripled, the increase in the cost of food, goods and services will triple for all of us. That's unacceptable.

Our government condemns the carbon tax, and we are once again asking the federal Liberals to scrap this tax now.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to address the devastating impact of the carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in power here in Ontario for 15 years, they tripled our electricity rates. They drove jobs out of our province to other jurisdictions. The Minister of Finance just referenced the tail lights that were heading out of the province as manufacturers picked up and left.

Well, those same Liberals, when they were annihilated here in Ontario, where did they go? They're all now working for Justin Trudeau up on Parliament Hill. And what has happened? We have this torturous carbon tax that's driving up the price of everything in our province.

Again, since we've come in, we've provided stability for electricity customers, and we're seeing the fruits of our labour: multi-billion dollar investments in our province. Those headlights are coming back to Ontario again and reinvesting here, while the voters in Ontario continue to put the vehicle in reverse and back over the Liberals because they are torturing businesses and residents, constituents, across our country.

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We are cutting taxes. We're lowering electricity rates. We're giving people a break in Ontario. Liberals—

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

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** Thank you to the minister for that response. It is reassuring to hear that our government stands firmly behind the people of this province and continues to fight the costly carbon tax.

While we have constantly introduced measures to make life more affordable, more needs to be done to address Ontarians' ongoing affordability concerns.

But last month at the Empire Club in Toronto, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, called our gas tax cut a gimmick. She said that she would cancel it when she got a chance.

Many of our constituents are already struggling. Denying them financial relief is not only unfair but also cruel.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House why Bonnie Crombie's Liberals are out of touch with their support for the carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** That was a bit of a news flash. I hadn't heard that.

The queen of the carbon tax isn't fooling anybody. Her majesty is in full support of the federal Liberal government's federal carbon tax—one that went up 23% on April 1, and one that's going to go up again next year. It's driving up the cost of everything in our province.

We know that when the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, comes in, she is going to continue to make life more expensive.

They're trying to rebrand over there. They're trying to talk about some tax credits, but it's just not believable

because we know the track record of Liberals at every level.

The funny thing is, when it comes to the carbon tax, across the country, Liberal Premiers, NDP Premiers—they're all with Premier Ford on this.

We need to scrap this punitive carbon tax now because it's driving up the price of everything. It's driving people to food banks. It's driving people into energy poverty. We don't need it. It's time to scrap the tax.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**MPP Jamie West:** My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, in Sudbury, multiple tenants have been targeted by their landlord. He's trying to force them to move out of his apartment. Marie is one of these tenants—and that's not her real name; she's afraid to use her real name. Marie told me the entire building had no heat all winter. She said the landlord was literally trying to freeze them out. When that didn't work, the landlord sent Marie a text. I'm going to read it verbatim: "Hi, this is the owner. Can we talk tomorrow? I want to discuss incentivizing you to give me the apartment unit back."

Tenants like Marie have been living in this building for years without any issues, then the building was purchased by an out-of-town landlord, and these tenants are being forced out of their own homes.

We're in a housing crisis, and unscrupulous landlords are doing everything they can to kick people out of their homes so they can double the rent.

Why isn't the Premier protecting people like Marie?

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I was listening very intently to the message, and what I heard was that a landlord is communicating with his tenants about potential future action. There are rules for that. There's a tribunal for that. There are ways that this can happen in a balanced way.

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** It's an independent tribunal. We have put so many resources into that tribunal that the member opposite has voted against. We have doubled the number of adjudicators. We had 30% more cases last year, but we cleared 45% more than the year before. We're making great progress in this area, and we're making the service available.

So I think the member's constituent has avenues to resolve this dispute if she doesn't want to talk to the landlord himself.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Let's be serious. Would I be raising this here if the regular avenues were working? It's a failure for this entire government.

The next tenant—I've got to call him Ray because he can't use his name, because he's so terrified about losing his home. Ray is a tenant in the exact same building. Ray's rent is supposed to include hydro, like all the tenants in there, but I guess shutting off the heat and bribing the

tenants wasn't working, so the landlord stopped paying for hydro. The problem is, Ray has medical equipment he needs to stay alive, and it needs hydro. So, Ray has to decide: Does he give up groceries, or does he risk dying? That's the situation the Premier has put us in.

These stories aren't uncommon. They're happening all around the province. And pretending they have blinders on—they're out to lunch.

When will the Premier implement rent controls and other safeguards to protect tenants from bad landlords like this one?

*Interjections.*

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

The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** The member opposite clearly isn't aware that we have created more purpose-built rentals than anybody in the history of this province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs does a phenomenal job on that.

As for disputes, if landlords are doing things inappropriately, there is a tribunal for that. There are rules. They have recourse. This is how the system works. It's an independent tribunal. We have resourced it with additional staff. We have doubled the number of adjudicators. We have fixed the back end that the NDP, supporting the Liberals, left in shambles. We had to build the thing from the ground up because they left it so bad.

We are getting the job done, and we won't take any lessons from the NDP.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Greenhouse growers are a significant contributor to the local economy in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and throughout Ontario, providing a wide range of great-paying jobs and nutritious food.

Just last week, many of us here had the opportunity to meet with members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to talk about challenges facing the sector. I heard how Ontario's greenhouse farming families are being hurt financially as a result of the federal Liberals' unfair tax schemes.

It's clear we need immediate action to end the carbon tax. It's time the federal Liberals listened to what we have been saying for years and scrap the tax.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the carbon tax is costing Ontario greenhouse growers?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I want to rise in this House and acknowledge that, yes, the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance was here last week. I hope the members opposite heard loud and clear how the carbon tax is punishing the people who produce good-quality food close to home here in Ontario.

The carbon tax is now 30% of everyone's energy bills, whether you are a chicken farmer or a greenhouse operator. Any relief that greenhouse farmers actually had

was completely wiped out on April 1 with the 23% increase in the carbon tax.

Do you know what the irony is in this? HST gets charged on top of the carbon tax. So we have a tax on a tax.

Moreover, people need to understand that farmers need carbon. They're part of the solution. In greenhouses, that carbon is needed to grow our food.

Why do the federal Liberals continue to punish—why does Bonnie Crombie stand with those federal Liberals and enable them to continue to punish Ontario—

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

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you to the minister for your work and for that response.

It's shocking to hear how the Liberal carbon tax is negatively impacting Ontario's fresh flower, fruit and vegetable growers. Our food supply chain relies on these very fruits and vegetables grown year-round in Ontario's greenhouses. That's why all governments should be working to ensure the success of this vital sector.

Speaker, the Liberal carbon tax is harming our farmers by adding unnecessary costs. The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts and the opposition need to face reality and eliminate this unnecessary, costly tax.

Can the minister please share with the House how the carbon tax is negatively impacting the prosperity and growth of Ontario's greenhouse and farming sectors?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** We're hearing from the greenhouse sector that they could increase production year over year, amounting to upwards of an additional 21,000 jobs over the next six years, but that won't be realized if they continue to be punished by the Liberal ideology that leads to this carbon tax.

It's unfortunate, because right in the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington's area, there are four greenhouses that are looking to grow—but unfortunately, because of this Liberal ideology that is costing them to see an increase in the cost of production of food, they're going to look to expand south of the border.

We're going to see the tail lights of farmers leaving Ontario because of this punishing carbon tax.

People need to wake up and understand that Ontario farmers can be part of the solution. Scrap the tax.

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#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Representatives from the Niagara region visited Queen's Park this week with a simple request for collaboration: Help build an affordable housing project within St. Catharines at 320 Geneva Street with the regional government. This project means 85 new—new—units of bridge and supportive housing. Niagara is seeking a provincial partnership on capital costs. It means getting people off the streets, out of encampments, and into safe, stable homes.

Minister, will your government commit to funding the completion of 320 Geneva Street in St. Catharines?

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I have to say, it's a pleasure to be able to stand here and speak about Niagara Week. We've had an amazing visit from representatives across the Niagara region, who had the opportunity to sit down with many of the ministers and the Premier. We had a great meeting with the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Infrastructure, who all spoke about the incredible amount of investments that are happening in the Niagara region.

I want to give one example that refers to what the member opposite is speaking about. One of the things we heard from the delegation from Niagara was gratitude for an 86% increase in the Homelessness Prevention Program funding. What that increase means is—it used to be \$11 million a year going into the Niagara region for homelessness prevention funding to support exactly the investments in bridge housing that you're speaking about. That is now over \$20 million a year—annualized funding, tens of millions of dollars going into these services to ensure that those who need it most are getting the investments.

I'll talk more about all the investments that are happening in Niagara in the supplementary.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Back to the Minister of Housing: That completely falls short of a commitment to building affordable housing on 320 Geneva Street. Building housing without a serious commitment to affordable non-market housing falls short.

We all know this government is lagging on its affordable housing targets, risking federal funding and leaving communities in desperate need.

Minister, here's an opportunity to build affordable housing served on a silver platter to you. The municipality will soon have shovels in the ground. With a provincial commitment, we can ensure the federal government comes to the table.

Will you fully support the 320 Geneva Street new-build project and help provide families with dignity and a place to call home in Niagara? This is a new build; this isn't what you've done. We're asking for a commitment from this government.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Again, that's an 86% increase in Homelessness Prevention Program funding that the Niagara region is receiving, going from \$11 million a year when the Liberals were in power to over \$20 million. Exactly these kinds of funds are being used for bridge housing in every corner of the Niagara region.

But it's not just when it comes to that program—it's also investments that we're seeing in health care and in education. New schools are going up in every corner of our region. It's investments in health care—by seeing not one but two new hospitals coming to the Niagara region, the largest investment in Ontario's history. It's about

changes to ensure that we have good jobs, and yes, it's about—earlier this week—ensuring that the people of the Niagara region are going to have excellent jobs at Asahi Kasei, with a \$1.6-billion investment in the EV battery plant. Those are providing good jobs. It's not just putting food on the table for hard-working families, but ensuring that they're able to put a bit away for a future rainy day.

That's the kind of investment that this Premier and this government is going to continue—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for St. Catharines will come to order.

The next question.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Ontario's long-term-care sector is being impacted by a rapidly aging population.

Speaker, the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, failed to plan ahead for the needs and care of our seniors. As a result, only 611 long-term-care beds were added across our province, and 40,000 Ontarians were left waiting for a place in a long-term-care home.

While our government has made critical investments that address the care needs for seniors across the province, there is still more that needs to be done to increase capacity in long-term care.

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is ensuring all Ontarians can get the care they need in long-term-care homes?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member addresses something extremely important, which is planning for the future.

I think back to 2006, when the government of the day introduced something called the Ontario growth plan, which said they knew Ontario was going to grow at a record pace. But we also knew, at the same time, that we have an aging population, which means that we have record growth within the senior sector.

Speaker, the last Liberal government, even though they knew about this growth, failed abysmally to plan for that growth. In fact, they said they were simply hoping for the best. They made this plan to build 35,000 spaces in long-term care—and guess what? They missed the mark by 33,000. When they left government in 2018, they had built a net new 611 beds.

That's exactly why this government, after years of neglect by Bonnie Crombie's party over there, is getting it right. We're building for seniors. That is our plan. It is simple: Let's build. Since 2018, 18,000 spaces have been built or have shovels in the ground.

We are working for our seniors because they worked for us. We're taking care of them in Ontario.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you to the minister for his response. It's great to hear that unlike the previous Liberal government, our government continues

to prioritize the needs of seniors and build more new long-term-care homes.

Speaker, families in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora want to ensure that their loved ones will be taken care of in a long-term-care home in their community.

As Ontario's aging population continues to grow, it is clear that we need to build more long-term-care homes across our province. By investing in long-term-care infrastructure and services, our government will be able to build a stronger system that will provide care and support for Ontario seniors and their families.

Once again to the minister: What is our government doing to build more homes faster in this province?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is absolutely right; there have been some serious challenges when it comes to getting shovels in the ground. I think to the Liberal carbon tax federally, which is affecting the cost of construction. I think to inflation and supply chain challenges. But we're going to remain undeterred from getting shovels in the ground.

Willowdale—four and a half kilometres north to south, three and a half kilometres east to west. I have more spaces being built in my riding alone than the Liberals built over their entire mandate in the province of Ontario. And that's the story across every single region.

I have letters here from members of the independent party, from the members of the NDP, asking for more development in their neighbourhoods, because they understand something very important: that seniors took care of us, and it is our turn to take care of them. That is what this government is doing.

We are supported by the Ontario Long Term Care Association, who says, "No ... jurisdiction has made this level of continued commitment and investment in long-term care."

Speaker, this Premier is showing his leadership in taking care of our seniors. We're getting it done for those who took care of us in Ontario.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Mr. Joel Harden:** My question is for the Premier.

We're working on a new downtown community safety plan in Ottawa to respond to a request from this government that we use funds to enhance people's safety downtown and on our transit system. We now have 120 days to respond to the government. We're meeting actively with local officials to help us come up with the best plan.

My question, which is a straightforward one, which is part of our preparations, is, is the government prepared to fund, in our community safety plan, an unarmed crisis response unit that could help our neighbours who are suffering with mental health issues and addictions?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member is quite correct; the Premier and the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Infrastructure did undertake a quite historic agreement

with the city of Ottawa. We're working very closely with the city of Ottawa to make sure that our priorities align. Obviously, there are priorities with respect to infrastructure in that area and public safety. That is something that the Premier made a focus on.

I'm meeting with the mayor next week, and we will further discuss some of the priorities for the city of Ottawa.

Ultimately, we want to make sure that the city of Ottawa continues to grow and prosper, and that it continues to have the best infrastructure that it possibly can.

1140

We have been told that after years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, the investments in hospitals that we're making, the investments in roads that we're making and the investments that we're going to be making with respect to public safety will all help ensure that Ottawa is prosperous going forward. We need the federal government to help out, as well, but—fingers crossed—they're not always there for us when we need them.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I want to thank the government House leader for that response, but I would appreciate this morning, given the pressure I'm under as part of these negotiations at home, that we have a specific answer in this debate to the question; that is, when we put forward a plan for community safety in our city, to help some of our neighbours who are struggling—if anybody has been in our downtown or any downtown, you've seen them with mental health and addictions behaviours. We want to make sure that the best help is available to de-escalate people, reach people and get them on a pathway to treatment.

What we've seen in Toronto is that an unarmed crisis response unit of professionals is extremely successful. We would like to know, as we prepare to respond to the government, is the government prepared, in our community safety plan, to fund those unarmed professionals, to fund food security professionals? I see Rachael Wilson from the Ottawa Food Bank here in the gallery. There are many people who can be part of the strategy to make sure people get fed, people find affordable housing, and people get the help they need.

So the specific question to my friend opposite: Can the unarmed crisis response unit we're getting ready be funded by the government in our proposal?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I want to say clearly that, under the leadership of Premier Ford, public safety matters all over Ontario, including in Ottawa.

I want to give a special mention to a great chief in the Ottawa Police Service, Chief Eric Stubbs. I speak with Chief Stubbs on a regular basis, and he's excited with the government's announcement of helping to work with the city of Ottawa and put in extra resources that will help him combat the crime in the ByWard Market district, where acts of criminality are deterring tourism.

That's why, throughout Ontario and in Ottawa, our government will work with police services, with municipi-

palities, to make public safety not only a focus but a priority.

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

A number of members have points of order they wish to raise.

DIANE DEANS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll start with the member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you, Speaker. I wish to beg the indulgence of yourself and members of the House that we have a quick moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of Diane Deans, a city councillor who served our city of Ottawa for 28 years, representing Southgate ward at the south end of our city. She passed away this year after a brief battle with cancer, but she fought for our city every day.

I just appreciate Diane, and I hope you all can do that, too.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in memory of Ottawa city councillor Diane Deans, who, sadly, passed away. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. Members may take their seats.

VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services on a point of order.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Visiting us from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill is Yan Kiu Chan, the proud mother of our outstanding page captain Jeslyn Chui.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and I'll see you both after question period.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the member for Kiiwetinoong.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch. I want to welcome people from Mishkeegogamang First Nation: Mary Ann Panacheese, Lilly Southwind and Charessa Bottle. Welcome. Thank you for coming. Meegwetch.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the member for Spadina–Fort York.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I just want to invite all the members of the House here to a demonstration. The University of Toronto engineering students have developed a device that goes on side-view mirrors that will detect a bicycle coming, and it will hopefully reduce doorings in the province of Ontario. It will be demonstrated at 12:30 on the front lawn.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the Minister of Energy

**Hon. Todd Smith:** On behalf of the member from Barrie–Innisfil, our Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, I want to welcome the mom of one of our great pages, Harry Patel, who has been working very hard in the last two weeks. Krutika Patel is visiting. Krutika happens to work with Aecon on the Darlington nuclear plant.

Welcome, Mom.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the Minister of Transportation on a point of order.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to do quick introductions for Dr. Purna Kandel, Kiroj Shrestha, Chanda Adhikari, Kamal Gywali, Bidya Karki, Man Poudel, Rajan Khatri and Dibesh Khanal, who are visiting from the Nepalese community—leaders here with us today at Queen’s Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member from Brampton West has a point of order.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to welcome Dr. Purna Kandel from Brampton.

Welcome to Queen’s Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I’ll remind the members that the standing orders provide for introduction of guests before question period and early in the afternoon, when we resume sitting after lunch.

## DEFERRED VOTES

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

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, we have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 180, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

*The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.*

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

On May 13, 2024, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of Bill 180, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

On May 15, 2024, Mr. Fedeli moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Fedeli’s motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Barnes, Patrice	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Pierre, Natalie	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Pirie, George	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Quinn, Nolan	Wai, Daisy
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew	Williams, Charmaine A.
Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed	Yakubski, John
Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian	

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

## Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Shamji, Adil
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 32.

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

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved third reading of Bill 180, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1156 to 1157.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On May 13, 2024, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of Bill 180, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

## Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
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Babikian, Aris	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Barnes, Patrice	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Pierre, Natalie	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Pirie, George	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Quinn, Nolan	Wai, Daisy
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew	Williams, Charmaine A.
Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaled	Yakubski, John
Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian	

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

#### Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Blais, Stephen	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Shamji, Adil
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day):** The yeas are 65; the nays are 32.

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

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

#### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'm going to ask this group of legislative pages to assemble.

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

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

members or work here as staff. But no matter where your path leads you, we wish you well.

Please join me in thanking this fine group of legislative pages.

*Applause.*

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

*The House recessed from 1202 to 1300.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I have the pleasure to introduce an Oakville resident and a friend of mine, Matt Giffen, who is also the CEO and founder of Bench Brewing Co. in Niagara.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I just want to introduce to the House the U of T engineering students who are here today to demonstrate the dooring device that they have created and are demonstrating out on the front lawn today. Their names are: Aigne Bruce-McGeady, Brandon Raftis, Michael Nawrot and Joseph Halliday. Thank you to them for their work in creating a dooring device for the province of Ontario.

*Interruption.*

**Mr. Chris Glover:** That's the device.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That is out of order.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I thought that was a drum roll for my brother-in-law, who is here for the first time.

It's always a pleasure when we have the residents of Mississauga—Malton here. Pushkar Goyal and Kanav Sharma, welcome to Queen's Park.

And it's an absolute pleasure to introduce my brother-in-law—my only brother-in-law—who is here for the first time, Ashish Mittal.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 16, 2024, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

##### SAFER ROADS AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

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

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:

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

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the Minister of Transportation care to briefly explain his bill.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** The Safer Roads and Communities Act, 2024, would, if passed, improve safety and protect families and communities by targeting road users who engage in dangerous behaviour, including impaired driving and stunt driving, as well as those who are convicted of auto theft. This bill would also help improve safety for e-bikes and commercial vehicles.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 POUR L'ADAPTATION ET LA RÉSILIENCE AUX CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act providing a climate change adaptation program for Ontario / Projet de loi 198, Loi prévoyant un programme d'adaptation aux changements climatiques pour l'Ontario.

**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 for Toronto–Danforth, if he wishes, to briefly explain his bill.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** This bill uses reports done for this government to provide a series of structures and actions necessary to protect the people, the property of this province. And I want to thank Seniors for Climate Action Now and Dr. Jennifer Penney for the work they did to make it possible.

### EV-READY HOMES ACT (ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING), 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 SUR LES MAISONS PRÊTES POUR LES VE (RECHARGE DES VÉHICULES ÉLECTRIQUES)

Ms. French moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to electric vehicle charging / Projet de loi 199, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui concerne la recharge des véhicules électriques.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Oshawa like to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Electric vehicles are the future, but we are not yet EV-ready. New homes should be built with the future in mind. There is a significant cost to installing after-market, at-home charging infrastructure, whereas it would be more cost-effective to have it already roughed in.

This bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to add a new section 15. This is required in order to permit the future installation of electric vehicle supply equipment that conforms to section 86 of the electrical safety code. The EV-Ready Homes Act amends the Building Code Act to ensure that new homes built in Ontario will be ready for future electric vehicle at-home charging infrastructure. The EV-Ready Homes Act is an important step to ensure Ontario is ready for its electric future.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Point of order, Speaker.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I seek the unanimous consent of the House to wear the kaffiyeh that was gifted to me by members of London's Palestinian, Muslim and Arab community with a request that I wear the kaffiyeh as I present a petition.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for London West is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to grant her permission to wear a kaffiyeh while she presents a petition in this House. Agreed? I heard a no.

## PETITIONS

### WEARING OF KAFFIYEHs

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank Reem Sultan and members of the Palestinian, Muslim and Arab community in London who gathered signatures on a petition calling for a reversal of the kaffiyeh ban in this chamber. Members of the Palestinian, Muslim and Arab community are concerned about the decision to exclude the wearing of the kaffiyeh from this chamber. The kaffiyeh is a culturally significant garment that dates back centuries as a spirit of the enduring resilience of the Palestinian people.

I am proud to support this petition, which is signed by 120 residents in London West, and I will send it to the table with page Anika.

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I have a petition entitled, "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors (Bill 189: Lydia's Law)."

This was a very important private member's bill that we were going to be debating in this House yesterday. It addresses the fact that women in this province continue not to see justice in the court system that is underfunded by this government. There were 1,226 cases of sexual assault

in 2023 that were thrown out of court because there were not enough staff in our court system to see these cases. These were women that were assaulted that had to live through their trauma not once but twice, and unfortunately, the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington stood in his place and moved a motion that would send this bill directly to committee and denied women the opportunity to come and be heard in this House.

**1310**

So, I fully support this petition. I think that it behooves all of us, on both sides, to listen to the people of the province because that is who we are elected to represent. And I share the outrage of women across the province that you've silenced the voices of women in this province, and I will add my name along with the thousands of women that share my dismay and outrage with this government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to remind the members of standing order 42(b), which indicates that members may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition but not reading the text of the petition. And I know the member didn't read the text, but I would ask members to keep their presentations of their petitions brief, consistent with the standing order.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I have a petition here entitled "Raise Social Assistance Rates."

Currently, recipients of Ontario Works receive \$733 and Ontario Disability Support Program receive \$1,227. Both of these amounts are well below the poverty line. There have been some modest increases to the Ontario Disability Support Program. However, those receiving the Ontario Works program—their rates have been frozen for decades.

We know that during the pandemic, through the CERB program, it was determined that people needed a minimum of \$2,000 per month in order to be able to survive, and so this petition is calling on the government to immediately double social assistance rates for both OW and ODSP.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Anika to take it to the table.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I have a very important petition, Speaker, and it's titled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors." This petition was part of a tool under a private member's bill, Bill 189, Lydia's Law.

The reason why this petition is very important is because it's connected to survivors' voices. Unfortunately, this government decided not to allow a debate on a very important private member's bill which gave access to sexual assault victims to have their voices heard here in this Legislature through members who have been elected to represent their ridings.

Speaker, there were 1,326 cases actually thrown out in 2022 or withdrawn or stayed in our justice system, which

is an injustice, quite frankly. And 80% of sexual assaults are not reported—

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** It's not to diminish the gravity of the situation, the topic of the petition, but the fact—the standing orders are very clear. The member's colleague was just reminded: a brief summary. Perhaps watch House of Commons. Watch how our Parliament handles petitions expeditiously and efficiently to save the Legislature's time. So, please, I ask you to comply with the standing order 42(b), as the Speaker just reminded all the members of this House.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I thank the member for his intervention. It is correct that there is a new standing order asking members to briefly summarize their petitions, and I'll again recognize the member for London–Fanshawe to briefly summarize her petition.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Actually, I can—you know, it is a brief statement we're supposed to present, and if the member wants a copy of the petition, he can see that I'm actually looking at the information to make it as brief as possible without reading the petition.

So, again, the reason this petition is very important is because it is asking this Legislature to honour the recommendations of the Auditor General's 2019 report 1 and 3, which allowed better access, more access to survivors of sexual assault to access the independent legal advice because of the way they're being treated in the courts. And, quite frankly, the way women are being treated here in this Legislature isn't the right thing to do when we're talking about the rights of people and sexual assault victims to be heard in the justice system, to get legal justice and put their offenders through the system to make sure they are convicted correctly.

I support this petition, and I would like to sign it and give it to page Harry for being so patient here, listening to me today with this petition. Thank you, page Harry.

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

We're going to continue with petitions. There's still eight minutes on the clock.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am very proud to present this petition entitled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors." It is a petition that urges support for Bill 189, Lydia's Law, legislation that I am proud to be a co-sponsor of, along with my colleague the member for Waterloo and also the member for Toronto Centre.

The petition notes that the vast majority of sexual assault cases in this province go unreported. There are a very small number that actually go to trial. Of that small number, last year more than 1,300 of those cases that went to court were withdrawn or they were stayed before a trial had been held. This is shameful for the survivors who had

the courage to actually report and tried to pursue justice. It is a denial of justice for those survivors, just as they were denied an opportunity to hear a debate about Lydia's Law in this chamber.

The petition calls for the recommendations that were made in 2019—five years ago—by the Auditor General to ensure the proactive reporting on sexual assault cases that fall through the cracks in this broken justice system and to look for reasons that—

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Speaker?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** We're going to silence women again, are we?

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you, Speaker. The member is in breach of standing order 42(b), which only permits a member to make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicate the number of signatures.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I want to thank the member for Burlington for again reminding the House of the new standing order, which I continue to do as well, and I would ask the member to make a brief statement summarizing the petition.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I am trying to be as brief as possible.

The petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to adopt the provisions of Lydia's Law, including the Auditor General's recommendations to ensure some accountability from this government for taking sexual assault cases to trial and also to enhance the independent legal advice program and the Victim Quick Response Program.

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I affix my signature and send it to the table with page Kai.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I have a petition here titled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors," and it calls on the Legislative Assembly to pass Bill 189, Lydia's Law, that has been put forward by the official opposition NDP.

Speaker, just in 2022 alone, 1,326 cases of sexual assault were either withdrawn or stayed before trial, and we already know that 80% of sexual assault cases go unreported. The criminal justice system is very hostile to survivors, and it is very, very difficult to get justice. So in 2019, the Auditor General put forward recommendations in order to reform the system, and Bill 189 aims to do just that. The bill adopts recommendations 1 and 3 from the Auditor General's report, which would ensure that survivors get the supports that are needed and help them be able to go through the system and get justice at the end of the day.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Diya to take to the table.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I have a petition here titled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors (Lydia's Law)" and I cer-

tainly hope the MPP for Burlington doesn't rise on a point of order and try to silence women's voices again in this House—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That's not a summary of the petition, so please summarize your petition.

**1320**

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** But I do hope that, and I think the women of Ontario hope that they won't be silenced because this bill—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I ask the member to summarize the petition.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes, absolutely. The bill was a response to the Auditor General's recommendations from 2019. That is how many years now under this government's watch that these recommendations weren't implemented. We know 1,326 cases were thrown out. How many have gone unheard? Women would have seen the justice they deserve under this government had this government acted to enact the Auditor General's recommendations.

It is our intent, and I would hope it would be the government's intent, to support this petition so that we can keep women safe and so that they can seek justice in this province and in this House. It hasn't happened, and I'm hoping maybe the government will come to the light that this is not the way we respond and we respect women who are survivors of sexual assault in this province.

#### PROSTATE CANCER

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to thank my constituent Carl Kelly, who is a prostate cancer survivor and an active volunteer in the London Prostate Cancer Support group, who provided me with signed copies of petitions urging this government to ensure OHIP coverage for PSA testing.

The petition notes that prostate cancer is the most common cancer to affect Canadian men. It notes that early detection of prostate cancer saves lives and that PSA testing is a critical screening tool to enable that early detection. It calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that PSA testing is covered under OHIP for all eligible residents of this province.

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

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to thank the hundreds of faculty, staff and students of Western University who are calling on this government to stop Bill 166. Although this petition was signed before the government passed the legislation, which the official opposition opposed, the petition is calling on the government not to move forward with the enactment of that bill.

The petition notes the significant cuts to community mental health services and the effective disbanding of the anti-racism directorate, which have led to an increase in demand for mental health services on campus and an in-

crease in reported incidents of hate and racism on Ontario campuses. It also notes that this government has come nowhere close to providing the funding that colleges and universities need in this province in order to provide appropriate mental health and anti-racism supports for students.

It notes that Bill 166 opens the door to political interference, which is why—

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail et à d'autres questions.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to rise in the House to talk about workers. Something I continue to say in this House: I'm proud to say that I was a union president and worked in the auto sector. But today, I'm going to start my speech—before I get into what's not in the bill, quite frankly, again. I want to talk about an individual who yesterday I attended his funeral to celebrate his life with his family, his friends, his brothers and sisters, a lot of elected representatives; there were a lot of city councillors, MPPs and MPs. His name is Gary Parent. He gave his entire life to making life better in the labour movement and in his community, whether that be his elected position within the Local or on the labour council. He was a good friend of mine. I had a lot of good times with him in Port Elgin; a lot of times in Windsor with him and Kenny Lewenza, the presidents and other presidents of Local 444. He was a true champion for workers' rights and public services in Windsor and beyond.

One thing that Gary really believed in was public service. I had the opportunity yesterday, which I never did—I'd met his wife many, many times and socialized with his wife many, many times, who's sick, as well. Two of the speakers were his grandkids. I was absolutely amazed that, what Gary was teaching to the community, he taught to his family. They are all involved with public service. But that's what Gary wanted to talk about, how proud he was of his kids and his grandkids and what they're giving back to the community. And like I said, Gary just didn't do his job as a brother in the labour movement; he dedicated his whole life for the betterment

of not only his community, but Ontario—and, quite frankly, on a bigger scale, this country.

It was an interesting celebration of life. The priest was extremely funny talking about Gary's life as they celebrated his life in the true sense of celebrating his life. His good friend, and probably his best friend, I would think, Kenny Lewenza, did an incredible speech for 40 minutes talking about Gary and his life and everything that he did. And there was a lot of laughter. I think, Speaker, you can relate. It's going to be nice—although you won't hear it when you're dead and gone. It's nice to celebrate with friends and family, but you can still celebrate your life with a little bit of laughter.

But the one thing I wanted to say that really took place in this House over the last few days, which is a little disappointing, and we saw it raise its ugly head again today asking to do these petitions, for which the rules have been changed—he was a tireless advocate for workers and public service. Gary was the first advocate for addressing harassment and sexual violence in the workplace and beyond, issues that overly affect women. He understood the importance of creating safe and inclusive work environments where everyone could thrive free from the fear of discrimination. His efforts to raise awareness and implement policies that support survivors of harassment and assault have left a lasting impression on the labour community, and quite frankly, right across the province of Ontario.

But I have to say this: I was deeply disappointed, however, that neither of the Conservative MPPs from my area—and one who is here now—bothered to show up to honour Gary's memory and celebrate his life. This is what really bothered me the most. But they did make an effort to stand in this House and vote to shut down the voices of hundreds of sexual assault survivors seeking justice who had travelled from all over the province for debate on my colleague from Waterloo's bill. That action really bothered me because that's what Gary stood for in Windsor, and those colleagues should have known that.

So I just want to say on behalf of the NDP caucus, myself as a friend and a brother to Gary: Thank you for everything you did in Windsor. Thank you for being a good friend of mine. We had a lot of laughs together. Thank you for being a caregiver.

That was the other thing people don't realize. I brought a motion forward last Thursday around a caregiver bill. Gary, as sick as he was—his wife was sick, too, and what Gary did was he took care of his wife. No matter how sick he was, he would find a way to get into his car and drive to the home that she was in every day, from 1 to 5, to go visit his wife. I believe it was 52 years they were married, and I know he loved her to death.

**1330**

I think if there's one thing that we can thank Gary for as we go forward—because I'm not going to give up on the caregiver motion—it's that I give him a promise and thank him for doing what he did for his wife, even though he was as sick as he was. I want to thank the entire Local 444.

I forgot to mention that Gary—Madam Speaker might not know this, but he has been in the labour movement so long that it used to be United Auto Workers—I don't know how many in this room would remember that; probably not too many—and then it became CAW, and then it became Unifor. So he has seen it all in the labour movement.

On behalf of our party, myself and my family, who knew Gary as well: Rest in peace, brother.

I'll get on to talking about Working for Workers. I don't know how many times I have to stand up here and talk about Working for Workers. I'm going to be honest: There have been things in Working for Workers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 that we've supported. There are some things in here that you can support, but there are a lot of things in the bill that we can't support, or they don't talk about it. I'm going to list them, because I didn't realize I only had 10 minutes. I thought I had 20. I didn't look up; I was too passionate in those opening comments.

Why isn't anti-scab in the legislation? We've been saying it. We've been asking. I got a call this week from a union member from Unifor. They're using scabs in their workplace for a strike that's going on right now.

Bill 124: Why won't you repeal that bill? It has cost you millions of dollars to go to court fighting that, taking on workers. Why do you continue to fight workers?

The "notwithstanding" clause: How many remember the "notwithstanding" clause? You know, Madam Speaker, I had 500 EAs in front of my office during that time. Do you know what they did? They said to this government, "You can take our wages away from us, but we're not going back to work until you get rid of the 'notwithstanding' clause." That's the power of the union, when we stick together.

One that bothered me—and I have talked to the minister about this, not a lot: Paid sick days is another one that's not in the bill, which makes no sense to me.

Deeming is not in the bill, again. How many times have you heard—and I know some of the members who are here are on that committee. I've got a minute to do this. Why should a worker go to work, putting in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and he unfortunately gets injured on the job, has to go to WSIB, and then WSIB deems him to a phantom job that's not there, says he can make \$17 an hour and takes it off his benefit packages? And now what happens is, instead of the responsibility of the employer, it becomes the responsibility of the government, because he goes on ODSP. And then what happens is he ends up living in poverty. And what did he do wrong in society? He went to work, put in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, so he could take care of his family, so he could buy a home, maybe send their kids to university or to college. But no, not in this bill. It wasn't in workers 1, wasn't in workers 2, wasn't in workers 3, wasn't in workers 4, not in workers 5.

Do you know why it's not there, Madam Speaker? I know you're looking at me wondering why it's not there. Because they don't care about workers: That's the issue. I've been doing this game in the labour movement for 40 years. You've never cared about workers, and you never will.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Question?

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you to the member opposite for their remarks. I'm curious: You talked a lot about what's missing from the bill. I didn't hear too many comments about what is in the bill, so I was hoping that you could comment about the proposed legislation that aims to support women in the skilled trades and our government's efforts to provide menstrual products on construction sites to create a more inclusive environment for women who choose to pursue a career in the skilled trades.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** First of all, I certainly believe in skilled trades. I think we have some of the best skilled trades in the entire country. Make no mistake about it.

But your comments—I'm going to hold up the bill. I know I'm not supposed to do that, because I'm not supposed to have props. Why don't you show me where it is in the bill? On what you just said, show it to me in the bill. So, why don't you hold that up? Hold it up and show me where it says that in the bill—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I'll remind the member about props, please.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I support skilled trades. I represented skilled trades for over 40 years in my workplaces. I understand skilled trades. But you stand up and you say stuff that's not in the bill, and you've done that not only in workers 1, workers 2, workers 3, workers 4, workers 5—show it to me in the bill. I'm here until 3:30 if you want to come over and highlight it for me. I'll gladly read it for you, but—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Excuse me. Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Props—thank you.

I recognize the member from Humber River-Black Creek.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thanks to the member. He is so passionate in fighting for labour reform and fighting for workers, as always.

We're sitting here through the fifth incarnation of this Working for Workers. Again, I want to go back to what he ended the speech with: How many Working for Workers bills do you think we're going to sit through before they actually fix deeming in this province? Why don't you talk to us a little bit about that?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** That's a great question. I hope everybody here understands why it's so important to get rid of deeming, because I don't believe any worker in the province of Ontario when they get injured on the job should have to end up living in poverty.

And because I didn't have a lot of time to speak about it I'm glad you said that question. Do you know what happens that I didn't say? Because of the fact that they end up living in poverty, it puts an incredible stress on the marriage and the family. So now, the kids can't go to dance, or they can't go to figure skating. They can't play women's hockey. They can't go to university. Do you know what happens to most of those workers? They end up splitting up. They end up losing their family. They end

up losing their wives—no fault of their own, because the only mistake they made: They went to work on that Tuesday and got injured on the job.

Now, I begged this government. I begged them at committee. We put amendments for it on every one of these bills. I can't answer the question why they won't do it. I can't answer the question why they won't take care of caregivers in the province of Ontario. But I'm not going away until they decide to get rid of deeming in the province of Ontario and protect workers.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member for Niagara Falls for his speech. It was a wonderful tribute to Gary Parent, who was certainly a giant in our community back home in Windsor-Essex.

I know the member opposite has a tremendous track record of dealing with bad actors as employers. There are quite a lot of them, and they need to be addressed. Really, this bill includes some penalties for employers who are bad actors. They violate health and safety standards. So the increase in penalties that are proposed is intended to address those exploitive practices that exist in the workplace when it comes to workplace health and safety. So I wanted to ask the member opposite, what are his thoughts about whether the penalties are sufficient enough or not?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, you should know that you could put all the penalties you want in place, but if you don't enforce it—and even on the skilled trades, that's one of their biggest issues: You put penalties in place, but you don't enforce it. The average—I think it's \$100,000. I'm going off the top of my head. I can't look through the notes to get it, but I think the fine was \$100,000. The average fine was \$31,000 on the ones that you fined. So if you're going to put the penalties in place and you're going to up the penalty, you have to enforce it, and you're not enforcing them. You know that. Everybody knows it.

So, it looks good. It's a good headline: "Conservative Government Increases the Penalties," but it's never enforced, and then they don't do any inspections. Before you come into government, we used to do—I think it was 2,300 inspections in the province of Ontario. Do you know how many we're doing today under your leadership? It's 780. So you cut the inspections down, and you cut the fines down for—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Response?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** So, to your point, it's not working, because you're not doing your job. So if you want to protect workers, enforce it properly and hit bad employers.

Monte said it the best. I can say "Monte" now; he's not here. Monte, at that last labour council—he said we've got to get rid of those bad employers. And do you know who's a bad employer when you bring in bills like Bill 124? Yourself.

1340

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to talk about women workers in this province. I want to know if you've heard the expression "pinkwashing." Literally what that means is a government or a branding company puts the smallest thing out there, some kind of frivolous thing, but when you look behind it there's nothing of substance. I would say that this bill is nothing but pinkwashing. Because you know what? Period products and clean washrooms are not going to cut it when women do not earn what men earn in this province.

We had a bill here—Lydia's Law—that the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington chose to discharge to committee so we couldn't debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Stick to the bill, please.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** But he didn't understand that women work in gender-based violence organizations and interval and transition houses, and they are the lowest-paid workers in the province. And 30% of them are planning to leave—leave—because they are traumatized by what they see.

So my question to you is, do you think the women of Ontario are going to be swayed by clean washrooms when they do nothing to support women with real change?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, first of all, I want to say that women play an important—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'll try and answer the question. What I want to say is, women are extremely important in the workforce in the province of Ontario. If you take a look at the education sector, 75% are women. If you take a look in the health care sector, 75% are women. If you take a look at long-term care, with PSWs, 75% are women. Women should be treated with respect and dignity. Now, the language that's in this particular bill does not touch on forcing the companies to make sure that the washrooms are taken care of and that. I was at committee, and I don't know the gentleman's name at the back but he was there, too.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Response?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I am responding.

ATU tried to get their women drivers who may have their periods to be able to use washrooms during their route. This Conservative government turned that amendment down. That's a true story.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Further questions? I recognize the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

**Mr. John Jordan:** Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston—close. Thank you, Speaker.

Thanks to the member opposite for his comments and his work on committee. To the member opposite through you, Speaker: you started into your presentation with, "I can't support things in the bill," and then you went on to talk about—which is common—things that aren't in the bill. So my question to you is, what specifically in the bill do you not support?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I think we've been pretty clear that there are things in the bill that we can support. The reason

why I do what I do in committee—and, unfortunately, your government took me off committees because I ask the tough questions. Because if you're going to work for workers, how do you allow deeming to happen in the province of Ontario? How do you allow scabs to come into a workplace when I'm on strike—fighting for better pay, better wages, better benefits—and you allow scabs to take my job away. Why do you do that? So when you say, "Well, this is what you do, you talk about stuff that's not in the bill," I'm trying to educate you because you guys don't know about the labour movement. I'm trying to educate you on what's important to workers in the province of Ontario.

Anti-scab legislation is important. Deeming is important. Paying fair wages, treating women with respect and dignity, making sure there's equality so if you've got a job as a teacher—or that might be a bad example. If you've got a job as a woman where you're getting paid 70% of what a man is getting for the exact same work—I'm trying to educate you. I'm trying to help you, because I feel that it's fair and reasonable that if you're going to bring bills that say, "Working for Workers," you should know what you're talking about and you should know what workers want in this bill. Whether—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you to the member from Niagara Falls.

I recognize the member for Don Valley East for further debate.

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** It's an honour to rise in the House today to discuss the latest iteration of the government's Working for Workers Act. I think it is particularly timely that we're having this conversation. I would like to point out that this week we are celebrating Personal Support Worker Week, a profession that has been very much on the front lines in health care, home care and community care that far too often is forgotten, that for far too long has not been treated with the dignity nor given the support that it deserves. I think back to the challenges that our community and our province faced during the pandemic. Our personal support workers rose to that challenge—those personal support workers who deserve our genuine respect, our gratitude and our support in all of its forms.

As we think about how we can work for workers, I want to encourage all members in the House to think about how we can work for those personal support workers, because as I look at the measures that have been proposed in this legislation, at face value there certainly are good things. But to me, what is most conspicuous are the many things that have been left out and, even more conspicuous, the many actions that have been taken by this government that actually work against workers. In the midst of Personal Support Worker Week, I reflect on a few of those, the first being lack of real wage increases. We know there have been proposed increases, but they only apply for front-line care. If you're a PSW who drives from home to home, then your wage plummets. We have a lack of wage parity amongst the home care, community care and acute care sector.

If we were working for workers, those things would be in this legislation. If we were working for workers, this

government wouldn't have voted down the opportunity to ensure that PSWs and DSWs get WSIB coverage if they work in a retirement home. Let's get moving and "get it done" for all workers instead of just looking at it in a superficial manner.

We can take a step back from just PSWs. When I reflect on the record of this government—when I think about Bill 124 and the impact that it has had on education workers and on health care workers; when I think about Bill 28, this government's attempt at overriding collective bargaining rights of education workers; when I think of the fact that this government does not have, or even speak about, a health care worker retention plan; when I think about the data that was released just last week that said we're short more than 50,000 nurses and PSWs, and that PSWs have an attrition rate from their profession of 25% per year, and then the Minister of Health has the audacity to say she's not concerned about it—that makes me think, despite what we have on this piece of paper, that we categorically do not have a government that is working for workers.

But let's dive into what is on this piece of paper, because that's what I'm here to do. That's what we're all here to do today. It's superficial, it's vague, too much is left to the regulations and too little of it can be enforced.

Looking to schedule 1, for example, building opportunities in the skilled trades: There is a requirement for satisfying prescribed academic standards in the skilled trades, and that requirement is removed. It allows alternative criteria to take its place. Madam Speaker, what are those alternative criteria? I don't know. I don't think there's anyone in this House who knows. As is often the case with this government, the specifics are left to be prescribed in the regulations.

For as much as we've heard a variety of campaign slogans by government members on the other side—"For the People"; "Get it Done"—I am convinced, at this point in my short political career, that their next campaign slogan should very much be "Prescribed in the Regulations," because everything is left to the regulations and almost always, nothing is in the legislation. This bill is no different.

I am the critic for housing. I know how badly we need to make the skilled trades accessible. We need to jump-start the sector. We need to create that pipeline of skilled workers, whether they're ironworkers, electricians, masons, carpenters, bricklayers, journeymen, plumbers and more to build the homes that Ontario needs. But don't you think that the next generation, the workers who will be working with them, deserve to know what this government means by "alternative criteria" in terms of qualifications before voting for this bill? I'd certainly like to know, and I think they would, too.

**1350**

I recently called on the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider returning to a one-year teaching degree for seasoned skilled trades workers looking to become vocational instructors. It's a good way to catalyze and accelerate a skilled pipeline of workers. I see nothing



like that in this bill. Instead of making it easier for seasoned professionals to become instructors, instead of making it easier to teach the next generation of skilled trades workers, this government is just moving the goal posts for qualifying to be one.

Now, I want to move to something that I have personal experience with which is in schedule 2, the amendment that removes sick notes. I'll be honest with you, of course, it's a good move, but I can't believe that we're still talking about this. When the government first announced this a few weeks ago, I was asked by media what I thought about it. The truth is, I was confused. I was confused that we're still having a conversation about this because the reality is that sick notes were banned before this government was elected. And as with so many other walk-backs and reversals, the Premier came in and removed the ban on sick notes. As though that wasn't bad enough, when COVID-19 happened, he came in and he reversed that again. Then, he reversed it again; that's a fourth time. Here is one last reversal, hopefully the last time we ever have to talk about removing sick notes.

The reality is that I was working in the emergency department last week. Let me paint a picture for you. There were 50 patients waiting to be seen. Our on-call doctor had been brought in. I picked up the chart, and it was a patient here for a doctor's note.

Is it a good thing that we're removing this requirement? Of course it is. But six years into this government's mandate, why is it still here? Why is it only coming up now? It should have been gone long ago. In fact, it was gone before this government came into power.

Whether it is the greenbelt, whether it is urban boundary changes, whether it is development charges, whether it's Bill 28, Bill 124, it seems as though every single thing that this government does is characterized by a lack of doing any homework, a lack of consultation—except for the Housing Affordability Task Force. There, all this government does is consultation. But everything else, no consultation, no action, no homework and walk-back after reversal after mistake.

Of course, looking at this legislation, there are some measures that can be applauded. I'm glad to see the definition of workplace harassment and sexual harassment get expanded to include virtual forms of harassment. I would have preferred it if the legislation that was supposed to be debated on Wednesday was actually debated, as opposed to getting fast-tracked into committee, where I have no doubt no further action will be taken.

But there is something here: legislating clean bathrooms. Who could possibly argue against that? The only thing that I can argue is that enforcement must be more of a priority when this government drafts legislation, especially when it actually has ideas that many of us can get on board with.

As I have reviewed this legislation, as I have reflected upon it and its potential to improve the work environment for workers, I have to say, of course, at face value, there are decent things in it, but it leaves a lot to be desired and was a wasted opportunity by this government.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member for his comments today.

When the government announced this bill, they said in their media release that this would contain a suite of measures to support workers, including requiring menstrual products to be provided on larger construction sites. Do you see any requirement for menstrual products on construction sites in this bill?

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** I have got to be honest with you, all I can see is a whole bunch of superficial commitments, none of which actually address the things that workers are coming to me and telling me that they actually want to see to improve their retention, for example in health care, in the construction trades and places like that.

To your question: I didn't see it in my review. Did you? I don't think any of us did, and yet again it is just the latest in a series of examples of press releases that are put out by the government professing to change the world and commit to all sorts of things. When the rubber hits the pavement, they're never able to deliver and, frankly, never willing to deliver.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member from Don Valley East for his comments, as well as his service in our health care system. I know it's truly appreciated. It's tough to balance this, to keep your tasks up as a legislator and the professional credentials.

I'll go back to my community, where we have had a dearth of skilled trades over the years. In fact, we have had a dearth of investment, including our local hospital, which the last government stopped. So I look forward to investments like these or legislation like this to facilitate getting workers to build our new hospital, which will be built beginning in 2026.

My question to the member opposite is whether you intend to stand with the government on this: the support for supporting skilled trades; menstrual products for female workers, creating a more inclusive work environment for those who are on the job sites and really, really need that sense of inclusion that they belong on a site.

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** I sincerely appreciate your remarks and know that you strive to strike that really tough balance as well, and I'm sure you are doing a very good job at that.

I want to be really clear: This is not about standing with the government, standing with the opposition or anything like that. Let's get beyond the rhetoric. This is about standing with workers. When I stand here and I point out the many shortcomings, it is with a view towards helping all members in this House on all sides make this legislation actually work for as many people as possible.

I want the constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh to have a large, well-functioning, modern, up-to-date hospital, and I want that hospital to have the skilled trades workers in order to be able to do that. I have the same problem in my riding. We need desperately to upgrade our hospital. We need the funding for that. But this bill, I regret to say, isn't

going to be enough to get your constituents and my constituents what they want and need.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** A quick question.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I appreciate you raising the point that I've been talking about: pinkwashing, where this government just puts a big headline out there that they're working for women, and when you look at the substance of the bill, it is not there. We see time and time again that this is a government that has not only ignored women's voices with Lydia's Law—we see that they're shutting out their voices from this Legislature—but they're proactively working against women in the workplace.

Bill 124 froze the wages primarily of women workers. There's a charter right challenge for women education workers. There were the midwives, for heaven's sakes; they fought the midwives in court. And now we see gender-based violence and interval/transition workers are the lowest paid in the province. So not only do you shut out the voices of sexual assault survivors with Lydia's Law; you're shutting out the voices of women who work in these centres.

Do you see anything in this bill of substance that addresses the real needs of women working in this province?

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** Thank you for that very passionate question, which highlights so many of the challenges that women in our province face. When you list them like that, it becomes so clear that with such profound challenges, we're not going to solve them through incrementalism. I mean, tinkering around the edges, like modifying a definition on workplace harassment—is it a good thing? Sure, it's a good thing, but I call that incrementalism. That is just putting something out there so it looks as though you're noticing or paying attention and really missing the root causes.

So in answer to your question: No, I do not see anything in this legislation that addresses—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

Further debate?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** I'm proud to speak today on behalf of Bill 190, the Working for Workers Five Act, and I want to thank my cabinet colleague Minister Piccini for his comprehensive approach in this legislation to support women at work, and I worked very closely with him, and my team did, just making sure that we're able to capture the voices of so many women who have been trying to break into the trade sector, who have been trying to have the opportunity to have a really excellent-paying job in the trades.

1400

As Minister for Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, I'm privileged to work every day to advocate for women and girls so that they can excel in their communities, in their careers and in life. Madam Speaker, the round tables that we have been able to do, meeting with women who have been advocating as much as they could but not having the support behind them to see the culture

changes on the job site. Conversations with women like Brandi from fair trade workers—I just can't remember the name, because I'm going off my notes here. I'm just so struck by the strength in these women, who are working in a sector, especially the skilled trades sector, that hasn't been encouraging and welcoming. They have been wanting to see change for a long time, and resoundingly they are saying that we are finally a government that is listening and doing things to make a change and a difference on these job sites.

Bill 190 is yet another example of how we are acting across government to improve opportunities for women. I'm proud to stand behind this legislation, which, if passed, would empower more women and girls to fill the jobs we need to build Ontario and to help ensure that they can be safe and protected in those careers.

Under Premier Ford's leadership and with the partnership and teamwork of my colleagues in this Legislature, our government is broadening women's career pathways to a wide range of fields through employment and training supports. Two of our most successful programs—the Investing in Women's Futures Program and the Women's Economic Security Program—fund organizations across the province that provide targeted skills training and development to help women enter the workforce and build their careers.

What I also really appreciate with these programs and the organizations that are running them is they focus on job readiness, so helping women rebuild their lives after escaping violence, helping women be able to get counselling support and wraparound support, so that they are able to be in a more healthy space to be able to maintain the careers that they want and also helping them realize the strength and the ability of their experiences and realize that, even though they've gone through some hardships, they have been able to get out of it. We want to ensure that these women are forever empowered to keep moving forward.

These programs are actually working, and thousands of women have gone through—and the stories. If you could just take a listen to the stories. I met this one woman at George Brown College who was working in the restaurant industry and had said, during COVID when she wasn't able to work because the restaurants were closed, that she really needed to make a change, because the income that she was making was not enough, and she could see that there were a lot of financial hardships that she was going through. She was able to sign into a program that helped her become a welder. Through the welding program at George Brown, she was able to get a job at George Brown, and now she is running the welding program and mentoring other women and girls to be able to follow the same path and realize the potential that they have in them. She said if it wasn't for these types of programs to help her do it, she might not have had the ability to completely change her life with the salary that she's earning now.

Today we're helping more young women and girls, than ever before, start careers in construction and in the trades. Through Ontario's Skilled Trades Strategy and

programs such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and the Pre-apprenticeship Training Program and the Achievement Incentive Program, more women are rolling up their sleeves and getting it done, and realizing that they could get into these industries. They're saying that this is a whole new world that, had they had the encouragement to get into the trades when they were younger, they would have. So this progress, it's successful, and we want to keep moving in that direction for Working for Workers 5.

The legislation builds on the government's work by continuing to make careers in construction and the skilled trades more welcoming and accessible. Approximately one in 10 construction workers in Ontario are women, and approximately 4% of workers in Ontario construction-skilled-trades-related occupations are women. This legislation will help improve this statistic and help close the gap and help ensure that women who enter the trades stay in the trades.

One way is by helping young women who explored skilled trades careers by opening more pathways to apprenticeship, networking and training opportunities—this is huge, Madam Speaker—so more women are able to get the support they need to succeed in the trades that they choose. It is ensuring that they are getting coaching support throughout the process, getting them connected with a job where they can fill the apprenticeship need in the companies and connecting them.

Bill 190 will also allow grade 11 and 12 students to participate in more apprenticeship learning while completing high school, and support the creation of a new, centralized skilled trades job database.

That is that connection I'm talking about: When somebody is in the carpentry skilled trade and in school learning it, now, when they need an apprenticeship position, they're able to access a database to put them into the place where they're going to be able to do their work. So, they're earning and learning at the same time, and that connection is being supported by our government, because we want to make sure that when they enter the skilled trades, they have a clear pathway to do so.

Young women pursuing careers in the trades can access new opportunities, gain experience and more easily connect with job opportunities and mentors. I can't overstate how much of a difference the right teacher can make and, like I was talking about—her name was Lily at George Brown. Every woman that comes through the program not quite sure if they want to get into it because they feel like they're the only one—having another woman say to you, "I did this. I can make sure you can get through it too," is the most encouragement that that woman needs at the time.

By 2026, it is estimated that as many as one in six jobs opening in Ontario will be in the skilled trades. Ontario will need thousands of additional workers over the next decade to build homes, roads, hospitals and communities of the future, so encouraging more women to pursue these careers is essential to addressing the workforce.

We also see there is a large amount of people who are retiring as well and I think it's so important to acknow-

ledge that. Because there hadn't been many women in the past getting into these jobs, it doesn't mean that women don't want to do these jobs, right? Women don't need to feel pigeon-holed, that they have to go into certain careers. They also now have the ability to be able to explore the careers that maybe their family told them—or maybe even guidance counsellors in schools told them—that they shouldn't get into these jobs because it's not typical of a woman to do skilled trades. We're disbanding that.

So, encouraging more women and empowering women to succeed sometimes means more than just creating opportunities in the workplace. It means making sure that women are safe in the workplace.

Being able to travel across the province in different communities and hearing from women—so often, we've heard from women that the spaces are not inclusive for them. Women have said, "I need to use the washroom. I shouldn't have to park 10 minutes away from the job site to use one. I shouldn't have to change in the Tim Hortons washroom to get myself ready to go to work. When I go to use the washroom, they're disgusting."

Even though we've said they need to have a washroom for women, sometimes they're not cleaned. These things make environments inclusive and encouraging for women, and they've asked us to do these things. This is what we heard in the roundtables: They said, "We need somebody to help make sure that these places are kept clean so that when we need them, we can use them." And when we have said, "Yes, we'll listen," more women are saying, "Finally. Finally, you've heard us. Finally, this job place is going to be accessible and inclusive for me."

So, I just want to keep us moving in the same direction, keep encouraging women and girls to enter into trades careers, help rebuild their lives, and we're going to continue to keep doing this.

1410

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question to the associate minister of women's issues: You said, "Finally, you heard us" to the women you talked about, but believe me, women want more than clean washrooms, and it seems to me that men would like clean washrooms too. I don't know if that would be a thing, but I think most men I know want a clean washroom.

You talked about keeping women safe and protected—very important. You talked about being struck by the strength of the women as you heard their stories. But women and girls wanted to have their stories heard in this House with Lydia's Law and your government silenced them.

Why did you turn your back on those women in this House?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** The member from London West has been here longer than I have, so I'm sure the member understands that when something goes to committee, that space—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** You have a point of order?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I just want to correct that I am the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Not that there's anything wrong with that.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Not that there's anything wrong with that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** That is not a point of order. And if we were going to start calling out, then I would probably be on the thing, as well.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** My apologies to the member, but it just goes to show that the member has been here longer than I have. One thing I do recognize is that when we're in the House debating, it doesn't give people from the community the opportunity to speak. It just makes the women and the men in here speak. But when it goes to committee, people from the community can actually share their voice and actually talk about their experience. That's what we want. We want to hear from the people in the committee. We've heard from the members in here.

We want to hear from the people in committee and we are getting it done faster by not wasting time. Let's get it to committee, let's talk about it and actually solve the issue of court cases being dropped in Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you. We're going to have further questions. I'm going to call the House to order and I'm going to remind the House that we are debating the Working for Workers bill.

I recognize the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

**Mr. John Jordan:** Thank you to the minister for that presentation. I want to congratulate her, as well, because I think she said in the House a number of times about the 30% increase in women working in the trades.

I'm wondering if she can comment on what she feels the success factors have been in the past and present, and additionally, are included in this bill for that growth.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** Thank you so much to the member. You know what, you're absolutely right. We have been able to make a stark increase in the amount of women who are taking apprenticeships in Ontario. And it's because of putting things like clean washrooms on job sites. That was a major deterrent. Like I said in my speaking, some women would say they'd have to park 10 minutes away and change in a Tim Hortons bathroom before going to work. That's not okay. That's not equity on the job site.

Also, the request was made of us to have period products, right? And we've done that. Companies like EllisDon and other job sites want to make sure that their space is inclusive; that when you're on the job site, if you can't bring something—as a woman, when you have your accidents, you need something quickly to take care of your

situation there. This is why we've done these pieces and women have said thank you, because it's about time that we're making job sites accessible and inclusive for women.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** We talked about how women are in the workforce and they're in certain jobs and how we need to support them, but they also need child care. We need to support women who are working and make sure that \$10-a-day child care spaces are available. And quite frankly, Speaker, this government has put delays upon delays. Just today we heard that there is a funding formula, but it's still not going to be available until 2025. It's been two years for that funding formula to actually kick in so we can support women who are working and actually access affordable child care for \$10.

Can I ask the member—you know, parents are saying, "Enough is enough." What do you think about the delays? And you said, "Let's get it done faster. Let's get things going so women could get back to work. Women need child care to get back to work." Can I ask you, why is it taking so long for this government to actually create a funding formula to create the \$10-a-day child care spaces?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** I'd like to thank the member for the question. Child care is extremely important to see women working in Ontario. When the federal government has given us a very small box in how to create this funding program and how to execute the program that they have put out for us, it's challenging, because if we had full control, I'm sure we would be able to get things done way faster, but we're kind of restrained, federally.

But what we have been able to do, and I've heard from a lot of parents—the fact that we've been able to cut child care fees significantly in half has been really helpful for seeing those parents who want to be able to work to work, and I think that is a really great step, because for the first time since 1974, I believe the stat is, we've actually seen an increase in parents who have children zero to five, women who have children zero to five, working.

So we're in the right direction, we're moving in the right direction, but I encourage all members in the House to advocate to the federal government to allow the province to [*inaudible*] and get more child care spots paid for and funded in Ontario.

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

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Oh, sorry; I didn't see my friend from Richmond Hill there.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to ask a question. I enjoyed the minister's remarks, and you talked about the importance of getting more women into the workforce. So you mentioned some of those numbers. I think you said one in 10 in some of the trades that you had gone through.

I'm curious; how do you feel that we can progress towards defining that success and that gold standard of having that equal opportunity for women? How will this

legislation improve those conditions so more women can get to that gold standard?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** Thank you to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Really and truly, it's about making sure these job sites are safer and healthier and inclusive for women. It really is—that's what it's about.

We have an opportunity right now to make sure 50% of our population has the same opportunities as everybody else. And women are wanting to get into these sectors. If we don't start making these job sites inclusive now, if we don't start investing, which we have been, and having more people do the reviews of these job sites and to make sure that they're clean, if we don't start doing these things, we're not going to see changes.

We hadn't seen changes happen in a long time, and when other governments had the opportunity. But we're making this change, and we are seeing the results, because more women are getting involved in the trades.

I'm blown away. I went to an event a few weeks ago, this convention, and the room was filled with a thousand young girls from high school trying out tools, checking out the competitions and being inspired. This is the next generation, and we've got to continue to make the spaces the best they can be—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

Further questions?

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I want to thank the minister for her presentation. In this bill, despite eliminating employer requirements for sick notes, there are no more paid sick days. That's one thing that is really, really important for all workers and, I would say, even mostly women workers, because oftentimes when children are sick, it's women who are at home taking care of them. Similarly, when it's our elderly parents, it's women who need those paid sick days from their job.

But my question really is around clarification. Right now, the elimination of the sick note—is that covered for just the three-day period which currently exists under legislation, or are the sick notes eliminated for any sick day?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** The sick day requirement—we had heard from a number of women, because I did throw the question out to women about the sick days and how it would help them. Some women said, because, unfortunately, some job sites treat women differently than men, that some women were feeling like they were required to have the sick note, and it was preventing them from getting the support they need. So, removing the sick note requirement is really going to help a lot more women feel like they're getting treated fairly in this whole process when they have to take time off, so when they need to take time off, they can. We all know when we get sick, the process of having to get a sick note can be very difficult for a lot of the workers, and especially women. After three days, if you need to extend it and get a sick note, we're removing that requirement, which is it so important for us because, like I said, women need—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

1420

Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Speaker, I would like to begin my 10 minutes by expressing that I am in state of complete rage and anger with this government's behaviour towards women. But I respect you, and I respect this House, and what you're going to see is me doing my best to contain the rage that not only I feel, but that my constituents and many, many women across the province feel. I wanted to share with you that what you see is me trying, okay? Let's see how this goes.

When it comes to women and women workers in this province, this government has been an abject failure. There's no quantifying it any other way. Let's just talk about how time and time again, this government has not only denied women the workplace entitlements that they deserve, but they have proactively worked against the best interests of women in the workplace. There's a list as long as my arm; I just have the highlights of that.

First, let's talk about midwives. These are primarily women workers. They won a judgment against this government to provide them equal pay, and the government was found guilty of systemic discrimination based on sex. What did this government do? Pay them? No. They took midwives to court. That's crazy, right?

Then there was Bill 124, a bill that suppressed and stole the wages of primarily women workers in this province. It went to court and was found to be unconstitutional, and now the government owes how many billions and billions of dollars to pay these women what they are owed.

Then there was the bill to remove the charter rights from the mostly female workforce of education support workers, and it was a massive, massive anger outcry that forced you to roll that back.

I was reminded by the member from Don Valley East that they voted down extending WSIB coverage to support PSWs working in home care. We know that's a largely racialized and female workforce. Many at the time were in the gallery to hear the debate, and the government said no. Clean washrooms, great, but these are women who are looking for safety protections in the workforce, and this government completely denied them.

My outrage that I'm sharing with you—and I will say it again—is that this government silenced the voices of women in this province when it came to Lydia's Law and women who are sexual assault survivors. They didn't want to hear debate. That's fine, because we are talking about women in the workplace, but let me explain that while they did not want to hear from sexual assault survivors and didn't want to hear them tell their stories, what is missing from that debate is the primarily women who work in these gender-based-violence organizations across the province in all of our constituencies. These primarily women who work in interval and transition houses, work in sexual assault centres, work in these organizations—primarily women—have had their wages frozen for 15 years, and they are working in increasingly complex and difficult situations because of the rise of violence against women.

This is a government that chose not to declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic. Despite all of the evidence, despite the Renfrew inquest, despite us asking time and time and time again, despite all of our communities, municipalities, calling it an epidemic, this government chose not to do that. That is completely demoralizing for women who work in these organizations, who work in all of these gender-based-violence organizations, sexual assault centres, across all of our constituencies.

I would just say that the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler came to Hamilton with a big cheque, and believe me, women’s agencies are grateful for any little thing that they can extract from this government. Whatever crumbs this government decides to give to these organizations, they’re happy to take. But that, again, is pinkwashing. Pinkwashing is when you ignore the substance. You come with a big headline like this bill about period products and clean washrooms, and you say that’s you working for women. Arriving in our communities with a cheque for desperate organizations is taking advantage of the fact that they’re desperate for some money from this government, but it’s ignoring the epidemic of violence in our communities against women, and it’s ignoring the conditions that these women actually work in.

Many of these women work overtime. They work long weekends. Why do they do that? Because they are completely committed to protecting women and girls in our province and to keeping them safe. I don’t feel that I can say the same is true of this government.

If this government wanted to actually address what women need in the workplace, I can’t think of a better place for you to start than women who work in VAW shelters across our province. There is a report that was done called the Feminist Brain Drain. It essentially talks about the problem that is existing. It says, “While the backbone of shelters”—and transitional houses—“are ... struggling to recruit and retain staff,” it’s because they are facing “burnout, exhaustion, vicarious trauma, and overall lack of wellness in their workplaces.” Women work in these workplaces. They have to come with the strength to support women and children who have seen the absolute worst.

Again, discharging Lydia’s Law and not allowing sexual assault survivors to have their voices heard—where are these women going to go now? They’re going to take their trauma and their grief and their rage at this government to these organizations. And these women, who are already underpaid, who are working long hours, who are trying to do the job that a government should do, now are going to be burdened with the grief of these women who were denied not only their justice in court but were denied justice in this House by this government. It’s a shame.

As I said, this is me trying to contain my rage, but what I am saying is factual. It’s absolutely the case. This is what has occurred in this province, and this is under this government’s watch.

We know that women-led sectors—women primarily work in what I would call the caring sector or the giving sector. We have women who primarily work as health care

workers, primarily work in gender-based violence and interval houses and shelters. They primarily work as ECEs. What we see, especially when it comes to ECEs, is that they also are underpaid.

While this government has dragged their heels on coming out with \$10-a-day child care, the early childhood educators are leaving the sector. Some 50% have left in the last five years. Why? Because they are not paid. They’re undervalued, and they’re not paid adequately to look after the youngest people, our young children. The fact that the sector is ignored by the government’s bill after bill on working for workers—you’re ignoring women-led organizations, and you’re ignoring women-led workplaces. I would say early childhood education is a significant example of that.

Early childhood educators in Ontario are among the lowest paid in Canada. These are women among the lowest paid in Canada. This is the government that has made absolutely no attempt to have equal pay legislation in this province, equal pay legislation that would help women workers: women workers in early childhood education; women workers in our interval, transition and gender-based-violence organizations across this province. The status of workers is that the only way we’re going to keep ECE workers working and attract them is if we pay them more. It’s just a simple matter of supply and demand.

I will leave this with you, that if this government really wanted to work for women workers in this province, women want more than a clean washroom. They want more than period products made available. Is that important? Yes, but it’s the least that you could do. It’s the least that you could do, particularly given how you’ve betrayed women by taking Lydia’s Law and discharging it out of this House.

I will just leave you with this, Speaker. These organizations have to fundraise for wages, essentially. Would we allow firefighters to have to fundraise for their wages? Would we allow police services to have to fundraise to pay the wages of the officers in this province? I think not. Organizations in the gender-based-violence sector are starting food banks for their own staff—not for the women they serve; they’ve already done that—food banks, for workers in gender-based violence organizations.

**1430**

I will end by saying that in Hamilton we have so many wonderful organizations, like SACHA, like Interval House. The YWCA is hosting their 14th annual fundraiser, Walk a Mile in Their Shoes, and that’s to support their critical work for programs to end violence against women. It takes place on June 12. While you have nothing to help women in the bill, show up to Walk a Mile in Their Shoes and help those women fundraise to keep women safe in this province.

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

**Mr. John Jordan:** Thank you to the member for her comments and her passion.

I had the fortunate pleasure in my previous career of having 240 staff, and 231 of them were women, so I

appreciate and know the importance of women in our workforce.

With trades, this is something that we're trying to build. Also, in my riding I'm very thankful for the—not crumbs, but the investments that this government has made to Interval House. I'm thankful to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for visiting community services for visiting and spending the time with the women in that shelter. So there's definitely an awareness here.

My question is: Is there anything in this bill—not things that could be in future bills or in past bills; anything in this bill—that you think will help the environment for women in the workforce?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I thank the member for his question and I appreciate that you had that many women working in your workplace. So it astounds me that you would have voted in favour to discharge Lydia's Law to committee, because I can't imagine that in a workplace of that many women you didn't see issues of intimate partner violence; you didn't see issues of gender-based violence or trauma. Because the stats will say that you did, whether you recognized it or not.

While showing up with a big cheque is important, as I said, these organizations are starved for funding. You need to do more. You need to dig deep and have the courage of your convictions to vote what is appropriate and vote what is just, not just what you're told to do.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** We're going to go to further questions. I'm going to remind the member that we're debating the Working for Workers Five Act.

I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I agree we're debating the workers thing and that we're talking about workers all afternoon, so whether you're a man or woman you're talking about workers. We're all workers.

I want to talk about wage theft. Between 2020 and 2022, Ontario workers filed more than 8,400 successful claims for workplace violations and were owed \$36 million. The Star reported that by the end of 2022, government collection recovered less than half, less than 40%. The numbers were \$36 million owed to workers; \$13 million was collected. These bad actors got to keep \$23 million in wage theft.

Do you believe that the bad actors or scumbag employers should keep \$23 million in wage theft?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Absolutely not. I think it's the government's job to have the back of workers who have had their wages stolen. What else do you expect the government to do?

I really want to talk particularly about women workers, women who work in precarious jobs, women who work piecework. They're very often afraid, even if they know what their entitlements are. They're often afraid to speak up about the wages that are being stolen from them, because they fear reprisals.

The associate minister for women's issues said that in the skilled trades sector, women feel that they are treated differently. Well, that's no different from all women

across all sectors. If they really wanted to help women in the workplace, as she has said in her speech here, you need to look at women having their wages stolen—the most low-income women in our province, pieceworkers, garment workers. You need to address that. The government's job is to make sure that women get the wages that they deserve.

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

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** I do appreciate the passion coming from the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. I appreciate the passion, and I think that is the passion we need in order to see change in Ontario. I don't want to see the member lose their fire. However, passion and speaking about the issue is one thing, but actually moving into place, the changes that need to be made, is another thing. What we've been able to do in our government is go out and listen to women and give them a chance to speak about the things they need us to change.

So I ask the member, why is it difficult for us to actually listen to the women who've experienced trauma and share their stories in committee? Why are we not rushing that and giving them the opportunity to do that, to speak, so we can hear them, so that we can make changes. Because in the trades, and in these sectors, women have experienced sexual assault and they need to have their voices heard. So what is the problem—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

Response?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you for appreciating my passion. I can assure you it's not going away any time soon, so thank you. But you can do both: You could hear the women that came here, the 100 women that were here—you could hear them in this House—then you could send it to committee.

I would also remind you that intimate partner violence and the issue of sexual assault perpetrators, rapists, going free is not the same issue. This is a problem with the courts, and this is a problem with your government's failure to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic.

You pass bills here in a day, in two days, and we have all kinds of time here to debate your bills and debate bills that you've made mistakes on. Why did you not want to hear from the voices of women in this House that were prepared to come here? Instead, you dispatched it to committee where you know—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you. I thank the member for her passion.

I recognize the member from Parkdale—High Park.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I thank the member for her presentation. There's been quite a bit of discussion this afternoon around working for workers, particularly women, and so I think that one of the things, when you look at what the Conservative government says versus what they do, you see that a lot of times the actions actually hurt women. When you look at Bill 124 and the attack on health care workers, when you look at the child care sector, these are sectors that are predominantly

women—actually predominantly low-wage, racialized, immigrant women.

So my question to the member is, particularly when you look at child care, the wage enhancement that was promised by this government back in January has still not arrived. Workers still are not receiving that wage enhancement, and that wage enhancement only applies to a very small percentage of workers, not all child care workers. Do you think that this is the right way forward, and does that help all women who are in the child care sector?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you for that important question. As we know, it's not just women that need child care so that they can be in the workforce; it's the workers that are primarily women that are relying on food banks. These are the people that look after our kids, and they can barely afford to survive in the province.

I met with a child care organization called Today's Family in my community, and they shared with me that they are completely committed to the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care program, but that they're struggling to implement it because they can't afford to pay the workers what they deserve and they can't continue to retain workers who cannot work on starvation wages, and I will just say that I had a question in the House the other day about women and families that can't afford baby formula.

So this is a government that's completely tone-deaf, is in their own bubble when it comes to the impact that women are facing, the economic difficulties that women are facing in this province under your government's watch.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Quick question?

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member opposite for her statement and her passion. We are totally understanding of it.

I know young people in my community, including plenty of women, are struggling to find the opportunity to find meaningful work. I know that this legislation has new pathways for those young women to find a career that can help pay the bills. MPP Leardi, MPP Jones and I met at St. Clair College a number of women in the WEST trades program for electrical trades. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on supporting those career pathways for young women.

1440

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Women in the trades is important. This is a nut that many governments have been trying to crack. This is not the first government that's attempted to make sure that women in the trades feel comfortable in non-traditional work for women. It's not new. But you can't go right to that without addressing the conditions all around for all working women in this province. You can't just cherry-pick and say, "We just want to focus on the well-being of women in the trades sector." You need to look at the broader economic sector as well. It's important; I agree. But this bill is so narrowly focused I don't see how it will succeed in accomplishing what you're saying.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** As we recognize North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, it is very fitting to be speaking on Bill 190, Working for Workers Five Act, 2024.

As always, before I start, I want to say thank you to the supreme God for giving me health and well-being compared to the last time so I can stand up and be the voice of Mississauga–Malton. Thank you to the family, the staff and, of course, the residents of Mississauga–Malton for giving me an opportunity to represent them.

Madam Speaker, this bill is making sure that every worker is important to this government. Ensuring every worker returns safely to their family is crucial, and the initiative that I am going to talk about is actually talking about Ontario's ongoing commitment to that goal.

Today, we're implementing, and we're asking, if passed—the changes to further advance the progress we have achieved over the past few years in supporting and protecting workers in this province.

And I want to talk a little bit about the achievement this government has with respect to the workers. The investments which are made by this government are: investing \$1.5 billion in the skilled trades strategy to modernize and promote the trades, investing \$1 billion in skill development projects—over 600 projects training over 500,000 workers. The workers, through the training, are able to get the training and advance into the jobs, in another way getting better jobs, bigger paycheques.

And we have seen Ontario has the highest representation of women and visible minorities in skilled trades today, thanks to these policies in Canada.

Let's look at last year. Ontario had the highest number of apprentice registrations in over a decade. The government eliminated apprenticeship fees and cut journeymen's fees by half. And the output? Madam Speaker, the output is simple: Ontario has welcomed more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined, and that is the report card of this government and the policies.

Let's look further, Madam Speaker. Number of jobs: Ontario has created over 700,000 new jobs since 2018. Thanks to the historic investment, today, close to 600,000 Ontarians are working in construction, more than at any point in Ontario's history.

We're making the hiring and employment experience fairer by requiring job ads to state whether a position is currently available or just a potential future need so that when a worker applies they know what is going to be happening, requiring employers to respond to the applicants within a prescribed period after they have interviewed for a job with a hiring decision. We're standing for our workers.

Under the Employment Standards Act, we are doubling the fines for individuals convicted of offences to \$100,000, the highest in the country.

Madam Speaker, yes, I'll hear it loud and clear: "Oh, will increasing the fines reduce the people who are making mistakes, wrongdoings?" Well, yes, of course. We want to



make sure they understand that it's not a casual business, and we want to make sure, by increasing the penalty for repeat offenders, we're going to stand for our workers.

Madam Speaker, if you want to look at the tale of two governments, the penalty for repeat offenders exploiting workers under the Liberal government, supported by the NDP of course, was \$1,000.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's not correct, and you know it.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** If you go out today, \$1,000 will get you not even an iPhone. Forget about anything else.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Why do you guys come here and lie?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Less than the cost of a phone today. But that's why, Madam Speaker, the government is taking action.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Speaker, you heard it. I heard it. You could hear it.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** We all heard it.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** By raising this penalty to \$5,000 per employee—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Want me to say it again?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Please stop the clock.

You know what language is allowed and not allowed in the chamber, so I will caution you in regard to using it and not offer to use it again even though you know it's not supposed to be used.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'll take the caution.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It doesn't mean I won't repeat it, but I'll take it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Well, if you repeat it, we'll have to ask you to leave the chamber.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Can we get order in the chamber, please? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, thank you. The member for Niagara Falls, thank you.

The member for Mississauga–Malton may continue.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to say to the member opposite: Yes, you do have an opinion, and you should express the opinion. That's why the people of Niagara have voted you in. But at the same time, even if we disagree, we need to be civil. So I just want to say—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** No problem. Please heckle. There's nothing wrong in heckling. And thank you, Madam Speaker, for intervening.

Let's go back to what matters most to the people of Ontario. What is more important to the people is that this government is taking action—action by raising the penalty to \$5,000 per employee, because it is unacceptable for bad actors to buy their way out of consequences for putting workers at risk.

We are also reducing the administrative burden for sick workers and health care professionals, and putting patients before paperwork. Madam Speaker, the WSIB has been

successfully streamlining and modernizing its processes, from digitizing document submission to enabling direct deposits and tracking your claims online, so that any and every worker who is applying can get the service they need and deserve. And they will continue their effort by working with health sector organizations to explore further options to reduce the administrative burden on workers and doctors.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, our government will further reduce the paperwork for health care professionals by prohibiting employers from requiring a sick note for a worker's job-protected leave. On average, family doctors are spending 19 hours filling out forms and documentation. That's nearly half their work week on paperwork and other red tape.

That's why we're consulting on amending exemptions under the Employment Standards Act to no longer exclude IT workers from some of the basic rights, like overtime pay.

Through this bill, Madam Speaker, we are keeping front-line heroes and workers healthy and safe. We are making sure, by lowering the service time required for firefighters to receive compensation for skin cancer from 15 to 10 years. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you remember it used to be 25 years in the previous government, from 25 to 10 years, moving the coverage directly into the legislation. We're making sure to include wildland firefighters and wildland fire investigators under the same coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder that applies to municipal firefighters.

Madam Speaker, again, through this bill we're not just helping and supporting workers. We're actually giving an opportunity to the opposition to stand up for the workers and make a difference.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Oh, God. Thanks for nothing.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Well, I know members on the opposite side are going to say, "We support the people of Ontario." When this side of the government is making the investment through the budget, what happens? They actually vote it down. They did that this morning.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter what they do. We will continue to keep working for the workers to make sure the workplaces are safer and more welcoming, even for our women workers, by modernizing the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include virtual harassment, and making sure that the constructors and employers maintain washroom facilities, when they're provided, in a clean and sanitary condition and maintain records of washroom cleaning. The other side is going to say, "What a big deal." Well, talk to the women who are working at those construction sites about what a big deal it is.

**1450**

Madam Speaker, we want to encourage more women to get into the skilled trades and create a more inclusive environment. We are requiring that menstrual products be provided on construction projects above a certain size and duration.

This is the reason this bill would benefit injured workers, women at work, internationally trained workers

and job seekers young and old, no matter your background, and the heroes who put their lives on the line to keep us safe. While the benefits will be spread across our entire economy, the measures are of critical importance to skilled trades, construction, regulated professions, service and hospitality.

This is the time when we all can come together, stand up for the workers and vote in favour of Bill 190 so that we can build a better, stronger Ontario.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Yes, I would just say that I've stood up for workers my entire career. I hope you can spell it.

He did raise WSIB. Let's be clear on WSIB: Why does your government continue to support deeming instead of getting rid of deeming that is forcing workers to live in poverty? My question is, why are you forcing workers to live in poverty?

And I will say, because you raised the budget, there isn't an opposition that has ever supported the government's budget, including the 15 years that you guys were the official opposition. You voted against every single budget, so learn your history before you talk—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Response?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I would like to say thank you to the member for that question and reminding that they had the choice to support this budget and they did not. They had a choice to say yes to the investments to the people of Ontario and he himself said that they picked their choice and they actually did not vote in favour of investing. But that's totally fine. That's the reason people have sent you here to be their voice.

Talking about the WSIB—the member talked about it—the WSIB provides the lost wages, medical coverage and assistance in getting back to work. I just want to talk about the data: 96% of claims have an allowance to be seen within 10 days; up to 89% in 2019. The rebate—for the first time in history, the WSIB issued a surplus, but at the same time, made sure that it was able to give back the claims to the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Question?

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you to my colleague for his remarks regarding Bill 190. I was interested to hear about the firefighters and the wildland firefighters that he mentioned in his remarks. I'm curious if he can expand a little bit more and tell us what new protections are included in the act to enhance the health and safety of front-line workers and heroes.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Before I answer, I want to say thank you to the member for Burlington for doing an incredible job for the residents of Burlington and what an incredible question that she asked.

As the Premier always says, the firefighters are our heroes. When everybody is running away from the fire, they are the ones who are going towards the fire. They make sure that the people come first before themselves, so we just want to take a moment to thank them. This is a

government who believes in our firefighters and wants to support our firefighters.

That is why this act will introduce robust measures to protect the health and safety of front-line workers. The service time required for firefighters to receive compensation for skin cancer will be lowered from 15 years to 10 years. It used to be 25 years; from 25 to 15, and now 10. For example, if there was a firefighter who worked for about 11 to 12 years, in the previous way, he would not have got the coverage, but today, he or she will get the coverage, and this is one way we want to make sure that we support and respect our firefighters.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The member, I want to thank you for your comments today. One of the games that the government plays in this House is they always say, "Oh, the opposition, they voted against this, they voted against this, they voted against this." We voted against your budget bill, and your budget bill is bankrupting our schools, it's bankrupting our colleges, our universities—11 out of 23 universities in this province are declaring shortfalls, are running deficits this year. Our hospitals are being bankrupted so that you can privatize all of our public services.

How could you possibly ask us to support a bill that is bankrupting the most important public services in this province?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I know I don't have enough time, but this is such a wonderful question. In a simple, single way, the data shows that this government is making historic investments. Because of these historic investments, we've seen the results: 700,000 more jobs. At the same time, we are building schools, we are building universities, we're having more doctors and we're having more nurses. We want to make sure that if anyone has chosen Ontario as a home, their home is going to be built for them so that together we can all build a prosperous Ontario.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's an honour to rise in the House today to talk about this bill. It's titled Working for Workers. It's the fifth bill with that title, but it doesn't deserve that title.

One of the things the government announced when they announced this in their media release—and it got all the headlines—was that it would include a suite of measures to support workers, including requiring menstrual products to be provided on larger construction sites. That sounds like a good thing, except it's not in the bill.

This is one of the things that this government does. They do what my colleague from Hamilton West calls pinkwashing. They put out this headline that, "Oh, we're doing this wonderful thing for women workers. We're going to make sure that there are menstrual products available on construction sites," but it's not in the legislation. So it means nothing.

When I look at the record of this government with regard to women and women workers, it's really quite

appalling. It starts with the midwives. Midwives were fighting for equal pay for work of equal value. The Human Rights Tribunal decided that, yes, their case was legitimate. What did this government do? They appealed that decision to the courts and then it went all the way to—it took several years, went to the courts. The courts upheld the decision and said that, yes, this government and the previous Liberal government were ripping off midwives; they were not giving them equal pay for work of equal value. They were actually underpaying them because they are women workers.

The next thing they did is they passed Bill 124, which illegally capped public sector workers' wages at 1%. This primarily impacted women workers, disproportionately women workers. A lot of these workers, health care workers, PSWs and nurses that this government illegally tried to cap their wages—that had to go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. It took four years to get there and then it was finally overturned. Now the government's having to pay them out.

In the meantime, what happened was women workers were so distraught, especially the health care workers, the nurses and the PSWs through the pandemic—they were not getting rewarded for the work that they were doing, not getting rewards for the risk that they were taking to support people and to help patients through the pandemic. So a lot of them left. As another of my colleagues mentioned today, there's a 25% attrition rate among PSWs per year in this province because this government refuses to pay PSWs a legitimate working and living wage that's commensurate to the work that they're doing.

This government passed Bill 28 when they first got into power, and Bill 28 actually stripped the workers of their charter rights using the “notwithstanding” clause. This was charter rights, the fundamental freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association. It stripped them of their legal rights against arbitrary detention. This meant that if those education workers went on a wildcat strike, they did not have rights against arbitrary detention. They could have just gone and arrested them all.

**1500**

It also stripped them of their protection under the Human Rights Code. The Human Rights Code protects against discrimination based on gender, based on race, based on ability, disability, gender preference. This government actually stripped those workers, who were primarily—60% of those workers impacted by that bill were women workers.

Yesterday, in the Legislature, my colleague brought forward Lydia's Law. This law is about compelling the province to provide statistics on sexual assault cases and mandating progress reports. It comes because there have been 1,171 sexual assault cases that have been stayed in 2023. In 2022, the number was 1,326 sexual assault cases stayed.

There's a case I was just reading about online in the news. There was a student who was sexually assaulted on her campus. The case went, over an almost-two-year period, to court. She had the courage to face her assaulter

in court, but just before the case came to conclusion, the case was thrown out. She never got her day of justice. She never got the court to actually hear and make a decision on that sexual assault case. She had the courage to come forward and go through all of the process of making the charge and going through that court case

There are hundreds of women in similar cases. There were 100 women in this Legislature yesterday to hear Lydia's Law—

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the deputy government House leader.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you, Speaker. We've been patient, but I don't believe the member opposite is speaking on debate material that's germane to the bill before us today. We've allowed him to stray, and we've indulged him and been respectful and certainly respect his passions, but to stray this far from the bill at hand shouldn't be tolerated by the Speaker's chair.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

I caution the member; you are outside the scope of the bill that we are discussing.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** This government has said that this is a bill about improving the working conditions of women, and it's called Working for Workers. When they announced it, they said, “Hey, we're going to have menstrual products available on construction sites.” That's not even in the legislation.

So when the government is trying to pretend that they are working for women workers, they should actually step up and work for women workers. There are a lot of women workers who work in sexual assault agencies, supporting survivors of sexual assault. They are dealing with the trauma. They are dealing with underpayment and with a lack of funding for the important work that they are doing.

Many of them were here in the Legislature yesterday, and many of the survivors were here in the Legislature yesterday. All they wanted to do was to hear the debate on Lydia's Law, and this government cancelled the debate. The members opposite in the Conservative Party stood and voted not to hear that debate, even though there were 100 survivors of sexual assault in this Legislature yesterday.

It's not just this example that this government is working against women workers. This government has shown incredible disrespect for women workers. Women still make 32% less for the same work of equal value than men. If you're going to have a Working for Workers bill, and you're going to pretend that it's for women workers, you should be addressing that gender pay gap, because it's just incredibly unfair that women are still, in 2024, not getting paid equally for work of equal value. You've shown with the midwife case that you are willing to take women to court to fight against their right for equal pay.

I'll just go to another Working for Workers bill. This government always announces, and they have a really good, catchy byline. This time, it was menstrual products. In a previous Working for Workers bill, they said they were going to give gig workers the right to use the washroom—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I know. It's 2024, and they're going to give them the right to use the washroom.

That was a great diversion from what the actual bill was about because what that bill was about is, there was a tribunal hearing that said gig workers had been misclassified as contractors, but they were actually employees, so they were entitled to protections under the Employment Standards Act. What that bill—that “working for workers” bill—did is, it stripped those workers of their protections under the Employment Standards Act, so they are not entitled to minimum wage for all of the work hours that they had worked.

For example, a lot of the gig workers, a lot of the drivers—there was a report in the Toronto Star recently that said that after expenses they are making \$6.37 an hour. And this government's response to the abuse and the exploitation of gig workers was to strip them of their rights under the Employment Standards Act to create a separate subclass of workers that are called “gig workers,” who do not have the protections that other employees do in the province of Ontario.

I think this government is trying to get away with something. This government is trying to convince people that they are supportive of workers, but your record shows exactly the opposite. As far as women workers go and as far as women, and particularly survivors of sexual assault go, what this government did yesterday was absolutely shameful.

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

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to the member opposite for his remarks. He talked at length about the importance of having women in our workforce, which we all agree is very important here and important to prevent gender-based violence.

On page 108 of the budget we are investing an additional \$13.5 million “to enhance initiatives that support women, children, youth and others”—racialized communities—“who are at increased risk of violence or exploitation....”

Can the member opposite please tell this House and those watching why they voted against the budget a few short hours ago?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** If this government was really supportive of women, and particularly sexual assault survivors, they would not have cancelled the debate on Lydia's Law yesterday. To try to quote a line in the budget and say, “Hey, we're giving X million dollars to this one,” it's the same thing as when the government announced this bill and said that they were going to mandate menstrual products on construction sites and then not have that in the bill. It's a diversion and it's an attempt to cover up this government's horrific record on women workers.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** In my riding of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake I have Niagara College—this member talked about education—which is \$12 million

in debt, with 12,000 students, because of this Conservative government. Then, just down the road, Brock University: \$25 million in debt, 19,000 students.

My question is pretty simple: Why do you think the Conservative government is deliberately underfunding our post-secondary education, which is going to harm our students?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** They're trying to privatize our education system. They're trying to privatize our schools, they're privatizing our colleges, our universities. They've been doing it for years.

I actually got involved in politics when my kids were in elementary school because the Mike Harris government of that day was underfunding our schools. I actually had a newsletter that I was putting out to parents. Every week, I would put out another edition and it would highlight the two things that the government was cutting—that this government, through their supervisors at the Toronto District School Board, was cutting from our schools. Sometimes it would be the daytime custodian at my kids' school or it would be the gym classes for kindergarten students or it would be the art program.

This government wants all of our public services and all of our public assets to go to their corporate friends so that they can generate profit, rather than provide services to the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Just a reminder on impugning motive.

Further questions? The member from—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Hey, it's my turn.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Oh, sorry—the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** No, Niagara Falls just went, so Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Speaker, I'm really sorry.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Through you, Speaker: I find the new term recently coined by the NDP as “pinkwashing”—it's harmful, it's scandalous, and it actually diminishes the value of the input we received from female workers looking to find a rewarding career in the trades.

**1510**

But, believe me, there is a clip reel somewhere being developed now watching you socialize that harmful term that diminishes the value of women in the skilled trades—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** And you're on it.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you.

My question to the member is: Does the opposition not agree that requiring employers to maintain clean, sanitary and healthy washrooms in all workplaces—does that not uphold the dignity for all workers, especially our female workers looking to enter the skilled trades?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I come from a trades background. My father is a tool and die maker. All of my family members were working in different trades. I was a forest firefighter in northern Ontario with some of the first women crew members in the 1980s. So I appreciate any effort to get women into trades, to open up doors for

women, because there are often too many barriers to get them into different jobs.

Clean washrooms: They should be mandatory on any work site. The thing that this government announced, though, when they announced this bill is that they were going to have free menstrual products available on construction sites. That was the announcement and it's not in the bill.

So you're pretending that you're supporting women workers. You make an announcement that you're supporting women workers. You say that it's going to be in the legislation, but it isn't there. So what are women workers supposed to think of that? Are they supposed to think that, "Oh, well, maybe they will fulfill their promise"?

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I just have to say I think this government realizes the huge mistake that they made by silencing the voices of women in this Legislature by discharging Lydia's Law directly to committee to silence the women that came forward to talk about their experience of having justice denied in the courts. Those women are traumatized and outraged by this government, particularly the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, who stood in his place and moved the motion to silence these women.

But what I want to talk about is that this bill, about working for women, completely ignores the women that work in gender-based-violence organizations across the province. They have to fundraise for their wages. They have had to start a food bank for their own workers. They're dealing with more and more complex, traumatized cases, as we see an epidemic of gender-based violence, which this government refuses to declare as an epidemic. So why would this government exclude and ignore not only the voices of sexual assault survivors but the voices of women that work in that sector?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I really appreciate the member from Hamilton West and your incredible advocacy for women workers and for survivors of sexual violence. I have no idea why the government did not allow that debate to go forward. I guess they did not want to hear what those women had to say.

For the survivors of sexual assault who came here yesterday, many of whom had had their cases thrown out of court because this government is underfunding our court system—there aren't enough staff in our courts, and those cases are getting thrown out. Sexual assault cases are getting thrown out. So they came here to have a day in the Legislature where they could actually hear their cases brought forward. They could hear their stories brought forward. Yet this government silenced it.

I think that's got to be traumatizing to the women who came here, the 100 women. There was one woman who flew from Los Angeles to hear that debate, and this government silenced that debate, silenced those women's stories. I think that's absolutely shameful.

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

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I first want to begin with commending the member from Spadina-Fort York for his work as a firefighter previously. So I'm going to ask you if you and your party will support our government's efforts to expand the PTSD coverage for wildland firefighters and other front-line heroes to address their unique mental health challenges. As we know, the work that they do is very difficult. We've expanded WSIB coverage quite significantly since coming to government through our Working for Workers. So I would like to know if you will be supporting that.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I am very much in favour of expanding support for wildland firefighters. I have friends who are still doing wildland—well, actually, he just retired, but he had been doing it for more than 40 years. And there is certainly a disproportionate number of cancer cases, there is PTSD, as with all firefighters, and supporting all firefighters, both those who deal with domestic and residential and commercial fires and those who deal with wildland fires—it's absolutely vital that we provide the supports that they need and the WSIB coverage that they need, because, right now, the record in Ontario is appalling: 20% of injured workers live on less than \$10,000 a year; 40% live on less than \$15,000 a year. Workplace injuries should not be a ticket to destitution.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** A very quick question, very quick response.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I think we all support firefighters whenever we can; I think that's pretty clear. What I don't understand is, we raised this as a party before you did Working for Workers 4. Why do you think this government didn't include that particular part in Working for Workers 4 and waited till number five and had to put it in because of what was said by this NDP government?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I think that eventually what the NDP is able to do in the public and in this House is to raise concerns about workers, and eventually, the public is loud enough and the call is loud enough that this government is forced to respond. I think that's what happened with the wildland firefighters. I know our colleagues in the NDP have been fighting for wildland firefighters for years, for coverage, for presumptive coverage of cancers, for better wages, for paid training for wildland firefighters, and finally, the government has listened to at least some of those—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT  
SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty, the Administrator has been pleased to assent to certain bills in Her Honour's office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

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

An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.

An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

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

An Act to revive 1000151830 Ontario Inc.

An Act to revive Qui Vive Island Club Inc.

An Act to revive Richard Crosby Investments Limited.

#### WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

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

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Good afternoon, colleagues. I rise today to talk about Bill 190, Working for Workers Five Act, 2024, that was introduced by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and as a professional with a background in HR, I'm happy to speak to this bill.

Today, I would like to focus my attention on a couple of items, specifically, opening the pathways to skilled trades and increasing fairness for job seekers and employees.

Speaker, we are building a better Ontario for the future. That future needs workers that can build and maintain the infrastructure that we need. We know there's a huge shortage of skilled workers in Ontario. The majority of skilled tradesmen and women are retiring or approaching retirement, leaving a gap in the labour market. As the demand for skilled trades workers continues to grow in the manufacturing and construction sectors, our government is committed to taking action to ensure that our province has the tradespeople to grow and prosper. We need to remove the stigma and introduce students to technical education, teaching them important skills that may eventually lead to a good-paying job and career in the trades.

That's one of the reasons why the Ministry of Education is making it mandatory for students to take at least one technical education course starting this September. Programs like the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program support skilled trades initiatives in secondary schools. OYAP is a specialized program in high school

that allows students to explore apprenticeships and consider careers in the skilled trades, generally starting in grade 11 or grade 12, through their school's co-operative education program.

#### 1520

Building on OYAP, our government is creating a new stream to further increase interest in the trades: FAST, Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training. This training program will allow students in grades 11 and 12 to participate in apprenticeship opportunities through co-op credits. Students would work toward their high school diploma. Upon completion of this program, they would receive a new seal on their Ontario secondary school diploma recognizing their dedication to learning a trade.

The FAST program would allow students to focus their senior-level courses in co-op, accelerating their entrance into a skilled apprenticeship. FAST would also help to address dropout rates and provide students who are at risk of dropping out of school the opportunity to pursue different pathways to completing their high school diploma.

I'd like to share a quote from Cathy Abraham, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association: "We welcome the new OYAP FAST program and thank the Ministry of Education for listening to feedback received from stakeholders during its robust consultation. School boards recognize there is a need for more students to pursue opportunities in the skilled trades as part of a modernized secondary school program. This plan recognizes the importance of exposing students to the skilled trades while also ensuring they remain connected to their school, increasing the likelihood that they will graduate. We look forward to further dialogue with the Ministry of Education on other aspects of implementation, to help ensure student success in whatever path they choose."

I want to take a moment to talk about a skilled trades program that I have been a huge supporter of that I learned about probably about a year or so ago. At Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School in Burlington, there is a construction shop class that builds tiny homes. This project exposes students to a number of different skilled trades including carpentry, construction, electrical and plumbing, offering them hands-on experiential learning. Not only does this class have a wait-list, but the majority of the students in the class are women.

The Working for Workers 5 legislation pursues measures that will encourage more women to join the skilled trades. Our government's message is clear: Skilled trades are open to everyone. Our government is proud of the steps we've taken so far, and we've seen the results. In the past year, the percentage of new entrants to the skilled trades who are women is up by a historic 28%. We're going to continue pursuing measures that will encourage women, just like the women at the Notre Dame tiny homes construction class, to join the skilled trades and make sure the doors to these in-demand careers are open to everyone.

Changes that we're proposing in this legislation will require employers and constructors to maintain washroom facilities and provide menstrual products based on the size

and duration of the project. Encouraging more women to get involved in the trades fosters an accepting, inclusive environment and also makes Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to require menstrual products on construction sites as part of occupational health and safety requirements.

I was recently at an event that celebrated women coaching other women. There was a young lady who was a guest speaker. She told us about her journey as a student where she wasn't sure what she wanted to do, but after taking an apprenticeship program, she became an electrician. She has now purchased her first home at the age of 25. She has a thriving business and is encouraging other women, young and not so young, to explore a meaningful career in the trades. By opening the pathways into the skilled trades, we are making it easier for students and giving women a chance to take a different direction in their career.

We're also encouraging mature workers to leverage their existing skills and education. The Working for Workers Five Act, if passed, will allow mature workers to meet alternative criteria that leverage their existing skills and experience, providing them a chance at a second career in an in-demand field and a well-paying job.

Speaker, our government continues to remove barriers through a new online job matching platform for new and prospective apprentices, to network and share opportunities that match their skills. We have also, since 2020, invested over \$1.5 billion in the skilled trades through programs like the Skills Development Fund that support training in different sectors. This is because we know that in order to build Ontario, we need skilled workers and tradespeople working along side us.

Also in this bill, we are proposing to make the hiring process more transparent. As someone who has worked in human resources for the greater part of my professional career, I understand how important it is for employers to adopt clear, transparent and respectful recruitment practices that include notifying candidates on the outcome of their interviews. From an employer's perspective, providing no communication to candidates following an interview is a sure way to leave a bad impression. It can also negatively impact an organization's reputation and its ability to attract talent in the future.

I'm sure we all know someone who has gone through a very rigorous recruitment process, only to never hear back on the status of their application. Once that experience is shared, other qualified candidate may choose not to pursue opportunities with that organization. This information alone can be enough to deter a candidate from applying and illustrates the importance of providing constructive feedback to candidates and at the very least informing them that they will not be progressing.

Further, when a candidate receives no feedback for weeks following a first or second round interview, they may presume that they have been unsuccessful and there is an increased chance they will either reject a job offer, have lost interest or will have found a job elsewhere. From a candidate's perspective, hearing back from a perspective employer is an opportunity to ask for feedback, to learn from their experience and for closure.

This legislation, if passed, would also require potential employers to state on the job posting if the position is vacant or for future consideration, enhancing transparency for job seekers and ensuring they invest their time and resources wisely.

The Working for Workers Five Act builds on the previous Working for Workers legislation. If passed, Ontario will continue to lead the country with new initiatives, including the OYAP FAST program, providing supports to encourage more students to pursue careers in the skilled trades. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Questions? I recognize the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much to the MPP for Burlington. While we agree with you that women in the trades are very important, there have been many, many governments that have been trying to encourage women in non-traditional trades, so we support that.

While we think it's very important that women have clean washrooms, that any worker has clean washrooms is what we need in this province. Making period products available is great. I think that's really important.

But you talked a lot about hearing the stories of women. Your government and you voted to discharge Lydia's Law directly to committee and silence the voices of women who wanted to talk about their experience of sexual assault and having their cases thrown out of court. Sexual assault perpetrators, rapists, went free: 1,300 last year; over 1,000 the year before.

Why did you vote to discharge that bill and not support workers and women workers in this province who want to have their stories heard?

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** As the member opposite mentioned earlier in her comments, this legislation has been referred and sent to committee, where we'll deal with it faster and hear from women's voices directly.

I will now return to messaging that's on the bill, about women, and would just like to read a quote, perhaps, that speaks to women who are working in the trades and their input. We heard from Karen Pullen, chair of Ontario Building and Construction Tradeswomen:

"Today's Working for Workers Five bill includes welcome measures that will improve conditions on job sites across the construction industry in Ontario. Clean, functioning washrooms should be the right of every worker, male or female. Providing menstrual products on every job site is a tangible way to level the playing field for women on site."

1530

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It's a little disheartening to hear the rather flippant comments that are coming from the other side—the opposition—here today, almost as if we haven't taken the time or the thought to consult with many different stakeholders on this bill, including women.

I just wanted to get your take, to the member from Burlington, as a woman. I think it's very important that we

recognize we have a very diverse caucus made up of folks from all across the province, all different creeds, races and a very large representation of women who have input into these bills as well. As a woman, I just wanted to get your comments on how you think that we're able to move forward and we're pushing the envelope. No matter what the NDP say, we are going to do what is right and what is best, and I want to get your take on that.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you so much to my colleague. I will share that in my constituency office in the riding of Burlington, I have met with a number of different stakeholders, including the West End Home Builders' Association, who has a group called Women in Industry. I have heard from women in the skilled trades who work at the Centre for Skills Development, also in my riding of Burlington, and I have also met with the women boiler-makers in Burlington. What I continue to hear from women is they may go through and that they may pursue a career in the skilled trades, but one issue that came up time and time and time again was accessibility to washrooms that were lit and that were within a reasonable proximity to the job site, that they were clean and that there was an availability of menstrual products.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** On a point of order, I recognize the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** This is for the benefit of all members in the House: with respect to standing order number 59, the routine orders scheduled for the week of May 27.

On Monday, May 27, in the afternoon, government motion number 3, which will recognize newly elected members, and third reading of Bill 171, Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, 2024.

On Tuesday, May 28, in the morning, Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024; in the afternoon, a bill to be introduced; at 6 p.m., the member for London-Fanshawe, Bill 191, Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee Act, 2024.

On Wednesday, May 29, in the morning, third reading of Bill 188, Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024; in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 188, Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024; and, at 6 p.m., my friend the member from Windsor-Tecumseh's Bill 193, Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Amendment Act, 2024.

On Thursday, May 30, in the morning, third reading of Bill 99, Garrett's Legacy Act (Requirements for Movable Soccer Goals), 2023. In the afternoon, third reading of Bill 188, Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024; and, finally on Thursday, May 30, at 6 p.m., the member for Sudbury, Bill 118, Injured Workers Day Act, 2023.

#### WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

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

Seeing none, Mr. Piccini has moved second reading of Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Shall the bill be ordered to third reading? I heard a no.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Please assign the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** The bill is now moved to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the member from Essex.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROMOTING LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH), 2024

#### LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (PROMOTION DES ACTIVITÉS DE LOISIR POUR LES JEUNES)

Mr. Blais moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to encourage children's extra-curricular activities / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt non remboursable afin d'encourager les activités parascolaires des enfants.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for your presentation.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Good afternoon, colleagues. Promoting Leisure Activities for Youth Act, 2024, PLAY: It's very simple. We all remember the joys of playing growing up. Over time, we've learned more and more about the physical, mental health and academic benefits of play. For our kids, it can be as easy as running around outside or picking up a ball and bouncing it with their friends. But participating in sports and extracurricular



activities as a child can help set you up for a healthier lifestyle as we age. And while it is sometimes harder for us old guys to play, it remains a critically important life skill and health habit, one that is much easier if it's developed at an earlier age.

As a dad, one of my greatest joys is seeing the important life lessons my son takes away from his participation in sport: important lessons about fitness, about teamwork, leadership and commitment, the ability to persevere through difficult moments, to remember that it's never over until it's over.

In fact, Madam Speaker, one of the important benefits of sports was recently brought to my attention, and I think it is particularly important and poignant given what's happened in the Legislature this week: 94% of women in the C-suite played sports, including 52% of them playing high-intensity university sports. Three quarters of women in leadership surveyed said that a background in sport can help accelerate their careers.

En tant que père, l'une de mes plus grandes joies est de voir les leçons de vie importantes sur la condition physique, le travail d'équipe, le leadership et l'engagement que mon fils apprend grâce à sa participation aux sports.

During the pandemic, too many of our kids were forced to put the ball down. They were forced to stop playing. Recess was nonexistent; organized sports were cancelled or seriously watered down. Many kids were stuck indoors, and their physical and mental health suffered.

Coming out of the pandemic, families are facing an affordability crisis not experienced in a generation. With higher grocery prices, higher mortgage payments, higher energy costs, families are tightening their belts. And while we could debate until the cows come home the cause of the affordability crisis, one thing is for certain: It's impacting our kids, and it's making it harder for families to afford many of the extras. Families of all shapes and sizes, of all income levels, are looking for ways to save. For some, this means cutting out the little extras. For too many, it means cutting out essentials. But we must do everything that we can to ensure that our kids' physical and mental health doesn't suffer as a result.

#### 1540

Fee inflation is pushing too many kids out of sports. Too many families can no longer afford to participate in organized sports and extracurricular activities.

Nous devons faire tout ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour que la santé physique et mentale de nos enfants n'en souffre pas. Trop de familles n'ont pas les moyens d'inscrire leurs enfants à des activités sportives et extrascolaires organisées.

In Ontario, the richest province in the country, one in four kids from middle-class families don't participate in any organized activity or sport—one in four. That number gets worse as income levels go down. Think about it: One in four middle-class kids don't participate in any organized activity or sport. What could be more middle class than waking up Saturday morning, getting the kids to the rink with a hockey bag in one hand and your Timmy's in

the other, or heading to the field on Friday night to see the human cluster of kids surrounding a soccer ball as it criss-crosses the field? That, for many, is the Ontario dream, and one in four middle-class kids can't participate. With skyrocketing fees, too many families can't afford to keep their kids playing.

Moreover, in a recent report by ParticipACTION, only 39% of children and youth ages five to 17 in Canada met the recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity of physical activity every day—39%. We need to get more of our kids playing. Making it easier for mom and dad's pocketbook is a great place to start. Giving parents some financial relief, making it financially more viable to put their kids or to keep their kids in sports and extracurricular activities can make a real difference in their lives. It will make our kids healthier. Healthier kids mean healthier adults; healthier adults mean reduced burden on our health care system.

We know the strains that our health care system is facing at the moment. We have 2.2 million Ontarians without a family doctor. That number is going to double in the next three years. We have emergency rooms that are closing, sometimes for a couple of hours, sometimes for a couple of days, sometimes for a couple of weekends, sometimes, we fear, maybe permanently. Everything we can do to create a healthier population we should be doing.

We need to start to view children's sports and physical activity as a critical and integrated part of our health care system, because if we can be healthy and stay healthy, we can stay out of the doctor's offices and we can stay out of the hospital.

Nous proposons de permettre aux parents de choisir plus facilement de faire participer leurs enfants à des activités de loisir. Nous voulons que le choix soit un peu plus facile. Si elle est adoptée, la loi sur la promotion des activités de loisir pour les jeunes créera un crédit d'impôt non remboursable de 1 000 \$ pour les activités extrascolaires pour les enfants.

What does this bill do? This bill proposes to make it a little bit easier for parents to choose to keep their kids in leisure activities. We want the choice to play to be a little bit easier. If passed tonight—and I hope the government will join us in voting for this—the promoting leisure activities for youth act would create a \$1,000 non-refundable tax credit for children's extracurricular activities. We want this to be as inclusive as possible. These activities would range from anything from hockey and football to drama and art. Our goal—and as I mentioned, it's a goal that we hope the government will join us in—is to help families to keep their kids playing.

Over the last number of months, Ontario Liberals have proposed an array of affordability measures to help families. Before Christmas last year, we proposed removing the HST from home heating. That proposal for a common-sense tax break was rejected by the government.

We are debating here tonight a proposal to create a \$1,000 tax credit for families to keep their kids physically fit and engaged in extracurricular activities. We hope the government will join us in that.

Earlier this week, we proposed a massive tax cut to small businesses, a small business tax cut that could save those businesses up to \$18,000 a year—over \$1,000 a month, Madam Speaker, to help small businesses, which are the heart of our economy, to continue to invest in their communities, to continue to invest in human resources and skills development in our communities across the province, to ensure that we have that workforce that we need to ensure that those services are being provided in our communities, and to ensure that the economic benefits are achieved from all of their hard work and their creativity as entrepreneurs.

Ontario Liberals are proposing common-sense tax measures to help Ontarians during these difficult economic times, and we hope that the government will join us in that common sense approach. Cost, Madam Speaker, should not be the barrier to the academic, the mental health, the physical health and the social benefits that extracurricular activities provide.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** It's always a great opportunity to be able to speak here to private members' business. I'd like to begin my remarks with a little bit of background on the current economic situation we're seeing here in Ontario and, frankly, all of Canada.

We're here to discuss the issue of affordability, perhaps the most pressing issue facing Ontarians today. Much like the rest of the world, Ontario continues to face economic uncertainty, high interest rates from the Bank of Canada, high inflation, the federal carbon tax—which, of course, the Ontario Liberals and their leader, the queen of the carbon tax herself, are so fond of. These challenges are putting very real pressures on the household budgets of every family in this province—so much so, Speaker, that the average Ontarian will tell you they feel like they are living in the middle of a recession, even though we aren't technically in one. This is all too telling of the difficulty that people, especially families, are dealing with right now.

In the face of these difficulties, our government was left to make a choice. We could either raise taxes, cut back on spending and put the well-being of our people, families and businesses at risk, or we could take a different approach, one which invests in the successful future of Ontario communities and builds a strong economy that benefits everyone, all while keeping costs down. So we made a clear decision to stick a plan we know is working, a plan that puts people and families first and brings their bright future even closer to the present, all without raising the cost of taxes on people living and working here in Ontario.

That means no new taxes, no new tolls, no new fees, Speaker. The people of our province are being heard when they tell us that is what they want. We are choosing to help the hard-working families of this province through targeted, responsible investments and relief measures that have meaningful and impactful results, which is something that I'm afraid cannot be said about the proposed

measure brought forth by the Liberal member for Orléans here today.

Speaker, for a moment I'd like to address viewers watching today's debate from home to make something very clear: The proposal by the Liberals does not mean that you or your family will receive \$1,000 back in tax returns. This is a terrible misconception that I sincerely hope my colleagues on the Liberal side of the House are not trying to take advantage of. In reality, Speaker, this so-called support would only give families a small percentage that they wouldn't even see for up to 16 months in the next tax return in the following year. When you take into consideration that the Liberals want to impose a carbon tax in Ontario, this simply does not make sense.

With this bill, Liberals are proposing to hand out an insignificant pittance to families, only to take even more money from them later at the gas pump, the grocery store, paying their bills and everywhere in between. At every turn, the Liberals want to find a new tax to impose on the hard-working families and people of this province.

This proposal seems to make an insincere attempt to mislead Ontarians into thinking they won't make life more expensive than it already is, if given the chance—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I just want to caution the member about language. You need to withdraw.

1550

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Withdraw.

But you don't have to take it from me; take it from the Liberals themselves, Speaker. When they were in power in 2010, they introduced a similar measure called the Ontario Children's Activity Tax Credit, only to scrap it in 2017—

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the member. I recognize the member from Don Valley East.

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** The member across didn't withdraw his remarks.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I did hear him say "withdraw." He can continue with—

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I did say "withdraw." Obviously, you weren't paying attention.

Speaker, do you know why they decided to scrap it? Because it turns out that it ended up benefiting higher-income families who were less likely to actually need the money in supporting their kids in extracurricular activities. Their plan completely backfired, Speaker, just as I fear this proposal would backfire again if this proposal were to go through. But this time, it won't be the Liberals paying the price for their own mistakes, Speaker; the only ones who would end up paying more would be the Ontario families who simply can't afford any more of the Liberals' expensive and bad ideas.

Now, if that isn't convincing enough, Speaker, all you need to do is take a closer look at the federal Liberals, their cousins in Ottawa, and the legacy of scrapping a similar policy, in fact just like this one. From 2017 onwards, the Trudeau federal Liberals, the cousins of the provincial

Liberals here, eliminated the children's fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit.

Speaker, do you care to ask why they eliminated it? For the same reason that the Liberals under Kathleen Wynne decided to scrap their own program: Because it disproportionately benefited high-income families that didn't need this help—so much so, in fact, that the Department of Finance Canada released a report in 2017 that found there was very little evidence to support the idea that these tax credits were effective at all. Not only does the report indicate that these programs were disproportionately helping families with higher incomes; it showed that the programs failed to get even more kids enrolled in extra-curricular activities.

I simply don't understand, Speaker. If the Liberals here at Queen's Park and Ottawa discontinued these failed programs themselves, why are they trying to déjà vu and bring them back? All I see here, Speaker, is the same old policies, same old mistakes and same old Liberals. Speaker, they just don't get it. They'll cost Ontarians more and they know it.

I'd like to put our differences aside for a minute here. Myself, as a father of four children, I understand how important it is to have children in extracurricular and sports activities for their well-being. I know that many colleagues from all political stripes in this House who are also parents understand the importance of having kids in all these extracurricular activities. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: that is, to give our kids the best childhood they could possibly have.

As I said in my remarks, these are difficult and challenging times for parents and families in the province. Life is getting more expensive, and families across the province are paying more and more for their bills. But what if they didn't have to, Speaker? What if, instead of having to choose between filling up gas to drive their kids to hockey practice and making a fresh, nutritious lunch for school, they could afford both? It was with this question in mind that our government set out to build our plan to keep costs down for families in Ontario.

The results of our actions speak for themselves, Speaker. Our government's efforts to keep costs down will total \$8.4 billion—that's "billion," not "million"—in relief for Ontario families and individuals in 2023-24 alone, savings for Ontario families. These are real dollars saved by real families, and these savings can be seen across the province.

I have a simple proposal to make for my Liberal colleagues in opposition, Speaker: If Bonnie Crombie and the rest of her team wanted to truly help parents who are struggling with the high cost of living, all they had to do was vote in favour of our government's 2024 budget today. But instead, they voted against giving parents relief.

The budget contained real cost-saving measures to help Ontario families. For starters, there's an extension to the gas and fuel tax cuts which we implemented in 2022. That's a saving of 10 cents per litre every single time you go to the pump and fill up your tank, go to work and take your kids to hockey practice.

Then, there are our protections from any future Liberal or NDP carbon taxes here in the province of Ontario. That gives confidence and certainty to families who need it right now that they won't have to pay more to heat their homes or buy groceries.

Also, how about our new One Fare program, Speaker? Talk about the so-called \$1,000 Liberal tax credit? One Fare is saving riders across the entire GTA \$1,600 a year. No more paying a double fare if you want to take the GO train down to see the Jays or the Leafs or go away with your family on the weekend to Niagara.

For the parents whose kids are all grown up and starting to save in the next chapter of their lives at college or university, our government is extending the tuition freeze for publicly assisted post-secondary schools here in the province for three more years. That's another \$1,600 in savings per year if you go to university and \$350 if you go to college—real dollars for real people.

I haven't even talked about the \$23 billion we're investing to build more schools and child care spaces here in the province or about our ban on new road tolls on 400-series highways and our freeze on driver's licence and photo card fees that is saving drivers \$66 million over the next five years—like I said, more relief and cost-saving measures than I have time to count.

To wrap up, I'd just like to thank my colleagues who joined our Premier, our Minister of Finance and our government in voting for the 2024 budget. I wish the members opposite could say the same.

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

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to congratulate and thank the member from Orléans for tabling this motion today. I must say that his debate here is always well researched, thoughtful and often very sharp-witted, which we need here.

We heard a government response that wasn't so much sharp-witted as it was sharp. Upon listening—and I must digress. The amount of times the carbon tax is mentioned in the chamber—I actually believe that they may not, in fact, be interested in removing it because I don't think they'd have anything else to talk about if the carbon tax was actually removed. I have a sneaking suspicion about that.

But on returning to the substance of this motion, I'm proud to stand and rise and speak on behalf of any measure to support our children and our youth here in the province of Ontario. It's very important. I know, coming out of the pandemic, where many, many programs did not have the opportunity to even run—coming out of that, we are looking at ways to incentivize and to bring kids and youth back into programming, not just sports, not just music. There are countless ways in which this is possible. Certainly, this motion here is an attempt to do that. I know that it's here in good faith.

I have to say, as a father of two young sons, having a child is truly a moment in your life where you could measure everything that has happened before and after. It changes you as a person into something you can only

realize when you have that child. What would you not be willing to do for your own children? Certainly, programs that we send them to, extracurriculars, are not just important but they are essential for our children. We must remove any form of barrier that exists.

Certainly, there are many ways of doing it. Yes, you can invest in programming and find many different ways to do that. Yes, you can put more money in general into parents' pockets. But incentivizing it in this way is also an important way and a way that will have children go out there.

Many parents face barriers of time and certainly finances to be able to put their children in important programs like this. We don't want to see financial barriers. Many parents don't have the time or money to be able to enrol them. But for those who do, it's an average of \$2,500 a year that parents spend. They spend to be able to give important opportunities for their children to reach their best potential, not just in learning skills and sports and new talents, but some of these extracurriculars may point them in a new direction that could change their lives.

Skills, friendships, social skills, motivation: The list goes on and on, and one could sit here an entire day explaining why this is a good idea and why it's important to incentivize, give the parents the help they need and do the best for our children. Because after all, what could be more important than supporting our children, for they are our future?

We all say it, but once in a while we're offered the opportunity to actually make it a reality. I believe this is one of those days. I'm proud to stand in support of this measure, and I thank the member for tabling the bill today.

1600

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I'm pleased to rise today to debate Bill 178, the Promoting Leisure Activities for Youth Act, the PLAY Act, especially since I was not given the opportunity yesterday to debate Bill 180, the budget act. Thank you to my colleague from Orléans for his excellent debate and presentation on this very important bill.

Speaker, this government promised during the 2018 election to give middle-income families a tax break, a promise that remains broken six long years later. Bill 178 is an opportunity to help fulfill that promise by supporting children and their families to make extracurricular activities for kids more affordable.

This government has shirked their responsibilities and spent much of the last six months talking about what more the federal government should do to make life more affordable, because this Conservative government cancelled cap-and-trade. By the way, under this government's non-existent plan to protect the environment, the amount of green energy in our grid had decreased from 92% under the Liberal government to 86% under this one—and oh, by the way, the Liberal government eliminated smog days, which still benefits the health of all Ontarians, including the kids we're talking about today in Bill 178.

What this government does not talk about are all the things the federal government has done to make life more

affordable, like introducing \$10-a-day child care, the rollout of which has been completely bungled by this government; or the Canada child benefit, which has lifted over 400,000 children, many of them here in Ontario, out of poverty; or the Housing Accelerator Fund, which granted Ontario municipalities hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to expedite the development of affordable housing. So today we're here to talk about something this government could do that was not done in their budget, which I was not allowed to debate yesterday, that would help them keep their broken promise to give middle-income families a tax break right here at home in Ontario.

Speaker, we know that extracurricular activities are important for children's development. We know that children suffered during the COVID pandemic from a lack of in-person learning, and also a lack of access to friends and learning opportunities at their extracurricular activities. So supporting kids by helping more families access extracurricular activities is even more important now, as more and more kids are struggling with mental health challenges. This bill is a fantastic opportunity for this government to support Ontario families by making their kids' activities more affordable. Whether it's a sport, music, arts or STEM programs, Bill 178 will help make those activities more accessible to kids and families by making them more affordable. That will help kids develop and grow, and it will support their mental health.

Bill 178 would encourage extracurricular activities and the well-being of children at a time when so many children are struggling with mental health, in an environment where digital fatigue and social media burnout are becoming increasingly common, because phone usage is up post-pandemic, impacting their ability to engage meaningfully with the world and their peers.

Regardless of party, I believe all members want the children of Ontario to thrive and be healthy, mentally and physically. Research has found that engaging in extracurricular activities helps reduce stress, improve mood and provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment for students. It develops students' cultural and social capital, says the People for Education of Ontario.

With the affordability challenges our province is facing post-COVID, we must not neglect extracurriculars for children. This bill will provide an incentive for families and allow children to participate in the activities they want to participate in. Giving up to \$1,000 back to families would help offset the fees that may prevent them from being entered into sports, arts or outside opportunities.

The education minister proposed measures relating to restrictions on cellphone use and vaping. Bill 178 complements these efforts to reduce distraction in classrooms by giving kids more opportunity for positive activities to engage in. I encourage all members to support Bill 178, to support our kids and families by making extracurricular activities more affordable. Where the budget failed to support kids with after-school programs, this bill steps up to do just that.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It is my honour to rise to speak to this bill, promoting leisure activities for youth. I didn't realize the acronym: PLAY. It's pretty clever. I think that a good bill needs a good acronym.

Before I address the merits of this bill, I want to just talk to the MPP for Burlington, who talked about his government's fiscal record. I think I would like to remind the member that this government, this provincial government, this Ford government is the most indebted—in debt, in deficit—in the history of Ontario, and they've increased that every year since they took office. But at the same time, when it comes to spending per person on the things that are important, especially to low-income families like this bill is addressing, this government is last when it comes to per capita spending in the province. And so he did say that his—

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies. I recognize the member from Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Just a point of order. Perhaps the member could correct for the record the riding, and get all her facts correct.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** On a point of order, the member can get up to correct their own mistake.

It is the member from Oakville—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you, Speaker. Yes, the member from Oakville, I guess, was wanting to make clear that, on his behalf, I shared that this government has the biggest debt and deficit in the history of Ontario.

The member from Oakville did also say that your government's record speaks for itself; I couldn't agree more. Because under your government's watch, more families than ever before are living in poverty. Under your government's watch, 2.4 million people don't have access to a doctor—and that includes kids. There are more food bank users in this province than ever before, and the vast majority of people that use food banks are children.

So it's very disappointing to see a government that has failed children in this province and continues to fail families in this province not supporting a bill that was trying to give parents that are already struggling the ability to look after their kids and do right for their kids.

This private member's bill does propose a new non-refundable tax credit to allow Ontario families to help cover the cost of enrolling their kids in physical activities, arts programming, tutoring, camps, all the things that kids need. And we know, during the COVID pandemic our kids suffered greatly. They lost many years. They've lost out on schools and graduations. Their families are struggling. So we should all join in this House to support anything—anything—that can help kids in this province. I don't understand why the government wouldn't want to support a bill that's aimed to help children in this province.

We know there's an affordability crisis in this province. I stood here in my place the other day and asked the government what they were going to do about families that cannot afford baby formula in this province—baby

formula. Do you know what they talked about, Andrea? Carbon tax.

I don't think they get it. I don't think they understand that parents are doing everything they can to give this advantage that's very important to families. They're cash-strapped. They can hardly afford to keep a roof over their house or afford groceries, but they still want to do right by their kids. You would think this government would want to support a bill like this that does that.

I mean, we did have a tax credit like this. Unfortunately, the Progressive Conservative government failed to renew the children's activity tax. Reinstating this would have allowed us to pick up where we left off in making kids' extracurriculars more affordable and accessible.

We all know—parents, grandparents—that we need to make it easier for kids to get active through extracurriculars like sports, music, arts and other programs. We know that there is a mental health crisis in our province. We know that there's a two-year waiting list for kids to be seen when they have mental health concerns, under this government. These kinds of programs support kids and help kids feel healthier, both physically and mentally. I don't understand why this government wouldn't want to support that.

This provides for families that are stretched thin, as I described. They, just like all of us, want enriching experiences for their kids. Extracurricular activities teach vital skills, and I agree with what the MPP from Orléans said about the importance of these activities.

I also want to address the fact that newcomers in our province struggle not only financially but also to integrate their kids in programs that provide connections and community, and that's what extracurricular activities provide. By voting against this, this government is choosing to turn their backs on newcomers who are trying to integrate into our communities and provide their kids with an opportunity.

**1610**

I would just like to say that, in Hamilton, we had a program called Skate the Dream. We know that hockey has got to be one of the most expensive sports for parents. We had a low-income neighbourhood in Hamilton where they almost had to close the hockey program there because parents couldn't afford the enrolment fees. They couldn't afford the equipment. It's really expensive. We had a program called Skate the Dream that we fundraised for and volunteers to help make sure that kids in that low-income neighbourhood who loved to play hockey, who showed up—kids, on their own, showed up with their hockey equipment over their shoulder, on the bus, to play. That's how much they wanted to do it. So we wanted to help them out.

Parents, volunteers, community groups, they're playing their part to help kids. Why is this government not playing their part in showing that they care? By passing this bill, we'll be investing in the health and development of the next generation. We know and we've heard that this fosters community engagement and an active lifestyle, and we know we need to do that at an early age. The early years are so important, zero to five. Those are fundamental for

kids' well-being and for positive outcomes in later years. It's about healthy childhood development, and this extra-curricular activity plays a critical role in that. Why are we limiting these enriching experiences to children whose parents can afford this? We know that, as a community, we want all children to have this opportunity.

So I appreciate the member bringing this forward. I think it's an important bill. It addresses a gap where children are being left behind and ignored by this government. I hope, despite what the member from Oakville said, that the government will change their mind and support this important bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Further debate? Further debate? Seeing none, the member has two minutes for a response.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I'd like to thank my colleagues from Humber River–Black Creek, from Don Valley West and from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for their remarks this evening.

I think it's clear that the academic, the mental health and the physical health benefits of playing sports, of participating in extracurricular activities, are clear. The opportunities to improve academic results and test scores as a result of kids being more active after school, whether that's in sports or other extracurricular activities, is clear. The health benefits of kids who play sports, who become adults who play sports and stay active, should be abundantly clear. When we're trying to deal with a health crisis, when we're trying to deal with a crisis in our schools, when we're trying to ensure that we have the workforce that we need for the future, everything that we can do to enhance academic success, everything that we can do to enhance health outcomes and health benefits, should be a no-brainer.

The member from Oakville criticized the bill because not everyone will benefit, or it won't be exactly \$1,000. Well, if the litmus test to legislation in this place was that it was perfect, nothing would ever pass. I would like to propose a refundable tax credit. The rules of Parliament don't allow me to do that. I would prefer to have the

government create a fund to directly help parents pay for sports registration so you can get those families that can't afford to pay it on the front end into sports. But I'm not allowed to do that, Madam Speaker.

I would encourage the government to consider those kinds of options for their budget next year. And if they actually had real measures in next year's budget that would provide real relief for middle-class families, that would provide opportunities for families of all income levels to put their kids in more sports, then maybe they would get my support.

But tonight, I'm asking for their support to help some families keep more of their kids and put more of their—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you for the enthusiasm from the supporting gallery.

Just before we finish, I just want to thank the pages that are still in the chamber. Thank you for all you have done. Wishing you guys all the very best as you go forward.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Blais has moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to encourage children's extracurricular activities.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 27, at 10:15 a.m.

Wishing all the members a successful constituency week, and to all the pages, goodbye.

*The House adjourned at 1616.*







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Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
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Vacant	Milton	