

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 168

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 168

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday
6 June 2024

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi
6 juin 2024

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 June 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 juin 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANCER SCREENING
DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning. I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should assess the Ontario lung cancer screening program to determine whether expansion is warranted and more sites are necessary to better serve Ontario patients and to look at broadening the eligibility criteria for access to the lung screening program.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Kusendova-Bashta has moved private member's notice of motion number 77.

I'll recognize the member to lead off the debate.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning. It is an honour and privilege to rise in this chamber to speak to my private member's motion. Motion 77 calls on the Ontario government to expand the Ontario Lung Screening Program by including a site in Peel region to serve its 1.5 million residents in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, and if more sites are necessary to better serve Ontario patients, and to look at broadening the eligibility criteria for access to the lung screening program.

This is a cause close to my heart because, as a nurse who still works at Etobicoke General Hospital, I see the devastating impact that lung cancer has on individuals and their families. A diagnosis is devastating. I know that our government is committed to increasing access to health care, but there's always more work to be done.

Lung cancer impacts your ability to breath. As much as we can manage symptoms, there's nothing worse that a patient can be going through than when their ability to breath is restricted. Speaker, 11,000 people across Ontario are diagnosed with lung cancer each and every year, with the average age being 44 years old to 50 years old. I wonder how many members fit in that range. That's a pretty scary number, 44 years old to 50 years old. That's the average age of diagnosis. And it is the most common cancer diagnosis in the country. It claims the lives of close to 7,000 Ontarian residents each year.

Most lung cancers are caused by tobacco smoking, with the more years you smoke, the greater the risk. This also

includes exposure to second-hand smoke. The most recent data from 2020 shows that the smoking prevalence in Ontario is 9.9%, which is lower than the national average of 11.6%. That has been on a decline over the last several years, which is a good trend that we would like to see and support.

But let's not forget that lung cancer is not always linked to smoking. Close to 15% of lung cancer patients never smoked, and 35% stopped smoking long before their diagnosis. Other causes include family history, previous radiation therapy, exposure to carcinogens such as asbestos or exposure to radon gas. This fact about radon gas is not one that is widely known by the Ontario public.

Speaker, Ontarians should know about radon gas and its dangers. It is an invisible and odourless radioactive gas that is naturally released by the breakdown of uranium in soil, rocks and water. It can get into homes and buildings through cracks and holes, and eventually build up to unsafe levels. There are many things Ontarians can do to protect themselves and their loved ones from radon gas. The first is to buy a testing kit at their local hardware store, and if levels are detected, they can seal cracks in their home's foundation, use a heat recovery ventilator or allow for natural ventilation.

Speaker, I would also like to touch on the growing problem of vaping among our young people. As you know, my colleague the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler has done incredible work advocating for keeping vapes, tobacco and cannabis out of schools. In a way, both of our motions intersect on this vital issue. While vaping hasn't been around long enough for scientists to conclusively know if vaping causes lung cancer, we do know that vapes contain dangerous chemicals that no child should ingest. These include, of course, nicotine, a highly addictive substance that negatively affects developing brains, and harmful carcinogens like formaldehyde. Another chemical found is diacetyl, which is linked to a lung disease known as "popcorn lung," which is damage to the lung's small airways. Speaker, while we don't know if vaping causes lung cancer, there is a chance that it might, and keeping these devices out of kid's hands could prevent a potential health crisis that we may not even see coming.

I also want to bring attention to asbestos, a carcinogen with a strong link to lung cancer and diseases such as mesothelioma and chronic pulmonary disease. It is a fibrous mineral that is known for its durability and heat resistance, and exposure is most commonly experienced by those who work in the manufacturing sector. Before 1990, it was commonly used to insulate apartment buildings and homes from cold weather and was used for

fireproofing. Inhaling its tiny fibres is painless but can cause severe problems in the future. It takes decades after exposure, ranging from 10 to 40 years, to develop cancer, depending greatly on how long your exposure was.

In 2018, Canada banned the manufacturing, import, sale and use of asbestos; however, it is still our country's leading cause of workplace death. Across Canada, nearly 2,000 cases of lung cancer are linked to asbestos exposure. Speaker, it is a myth that asbestos is a settled issue. There are still people in our communities who have been exposed prior to the ban, and it can be found in older buildings.

Avoir un cancer du poumon peut être une expérience très douloureuse et inconfortable. Il peut entraîner de nombreuses complications, telles qu'un essoufflement, des crachats de sang, des douleurs dans la région de la poitrine et la présence de liquide dans la poitrine, appelée épanchement pleural.

There are many things that Ontarians can do to reduce their risk of lung cancer, which includes, of course, avoiding tobacco, avoiding second-hand smoke, testing your home for radon gas and wearing a mask to avoid breathing in carcinogens in the workplace and keeping a healthy diet and active lifestyle.

This past November was Lung Cancer Awareness Month, and we had receptions from a number of incredible groups that advocate for this cause, such as the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, the lung cancer foundation and Lung Cancer Canada, all united under one campaign entitled Right2Survive. I had the chance to meet cancer survivors whose stories of hardship and resilience inspired me to take action. And today, we also have a guest from the Canadian Cancer Society, Hillary, who has been a staunch advocate for putting this motion forward. These organizations work hard to advocate for both prevention and for Canadians living with lung cancer, and for that, I strongly commend their efforts and support.

Speaker, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for people in Ontario. It kills more people than colon, breast and prostate cancers combined, because lung cancer is usually detected late, when symptoms can already be noticed. In Ontario, 70% of lung cancers are diagnosed at advanced stages, and as a result, survival rates are reduced. In fact, in Canada, five-year survival rates depend greatly on what stage the cancer was diagnosed. Those diagnosed at stage 1 have a five-year survival rate of 60%, but those diagnosed at stage 4 have only a 5% rate of survival. This is why early screening and increasing eligibility criteria are essential. And let's not forget that lung cancer can spread to other body parts, including the brain and bones.

0910

Speaker, let's look at the facts. When you have earlier cancer detection, you have better treatment outcomes. This can only be done by expanding the eligibility criteria and the number of sites across Ontario.

Selon les critères d'admissibilité actuels de notre gouvernement, seules les personnes âgées de 55 à 74 ans qui sont des fumeurs quotidiens peuvent faire l'objet d'un dépistage. Or, il y a en Ontario des personnes qui n'ont

jamais fumé de leur vie et qui finissent par contracter ce cancer du poumon, ce qui consiste d'une minorité.

Furthermore, while the Ontario Lung Screening Program currently operates in Oshawa, Sudbury, Ottawa and Toronto, there is no location in Peel region, a high-growth region home to 1.5 million residents. That is why I am calling on our Ministry of Health to assess this program and to determine if expansion is warranted and if eligibility should be broadened. Through screenings, we can change the lives of individuals and families across Ontario.

Speaker, we have done significant strides to broaden screening access for women at risk of breast cancer. We recently lowered the eligibility criteria for self-referral into the Ontario Breast Screening Program to 40 years old. I think we should also assess the lung cancer screening program eligibility because right now it is limited to persons aged 55 to 74, and if the average age of diagnosis is from 40 to 55, that means we really need to look at broadening this eligibility criteria.

Recently, a fellow member shared with me that his sister-in-law passed away from breast cancer at age 40. She was diagnosed with stage 3 cancer and passed away within weeks. That is devastating news. It made me think about all of us here in this House. It is a huge privilege to come in here and serve, but this job also comes with a huge level of stress, and stress can contribute to all chronic diseases, including that it can cause cancer.

So I want to just take this time to encourage all of my fellow members, as we head into the summer break—and we call it a break, but we all know we'll be working very hard, attending many events, barbecues, meeting with our constituents—please take the time to take care of yourself. Please go get your annual health checkup. Go get your blood work done. Go get your screenings done. Because you can't take care of your constituents and your family and all the people that rely on you if you don't take care of yourself. So please, I implore every single one of you to do that over the summer break.

I just want to conclude with a quote from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network: "Evidence shows that lung cancer caught at an earlier stage has better treatment outcomes. With lung cancer continuing to have the highest mortality rate among all types of cancer, it is more important than ever to ensure that everyone who may be at risk of developing lung cancer has access to the screening programs that could be the difference between life and death."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I really enjoyed the speech from my colleague this morning.

The motion in itself is very timid. It basically asks that the government assess the lung cancer screening program that she described, determine whether expansion is warranted, if more sites are necessary and if the criteria need to be changed. I would say yes to all of this. Don't ask the government to assess. You are part of the government. You have the power to do those things right here, right now.

The Ontario lung cancer screening program, I can tell you, has been a godsend. We have one in Sudbury. There are only five sites in Ontario that have such a program: Ottawa, Sudbury, Oshawa, Hamilton and Toronto. Are there people at risk of lung cancer throughout Ontario? Yes, absolutely. I look at northwestern Ontario, where the rate of smoking is way higher, in the 20s, when the average Ontario rate is about 12%. In my riding, we're at 28% smokers. That continues in northern Ontario. These programs should be available to us in northern Ontario—and to everybody else. There are smokers throughout the province.

This program saves lives. We know that lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Ontario. The reason so many people die of lung cancer is that by the time you are diagnosed, the cancer has grown too large, has spread to other parts of the body. There are very few indications that you have lung cancer until it has reached stage 3 or stage 4, at which point there are very few treatments available, and your five-year survival rate is about 5%—not very good.

But all of this changes if your cancer is detected early and there are treatments available. The five-year survival rate is over 60%. Things change for the better. But the way we have it now in only five hospitals, with very rigid criteria: you must be between the ages of 55 and 74; you must be a smoker or a former smoker; you have to have smoked daily for 20 years. And the person, the screening investigator—that's how we call the person who does the screening. They're quite rigid as to who gets to do that screening and who doesn't. It should be changed for all of the reasons that the MPP has listed. It has to be done. If we agree to this, let's not just assess; let's actually go.

The program is more than just screening. Sure, they establish if you are eligible for the screening, but they also do a lot of very important teaching as to why they should be participating. They provide a lot of very good smoking cessation support for people who are addicted to nicotine and have a hard time stopping smoking, and if you have any nodules on your lungs, they will do the follow-up. They do a lot of navigation with the participants to help them, to make sure that they do not develop lung cancer and, if they do, that they know the treatment options and act upon them as quickly as possible.

Basically, what the detection is, is a low-dose CT scan. That's it; that's all. It takes minutes and you're done. You will be informed of the results of your scan. There will be people explaining to you what has been seen—if you have stage 1 cancer, or 2 or 3, sometimes 4, depending on what they find—and they will support you.

This is a program that has been piloted in the five sites for years now. It has saved lives. It has diagnosed a lot of people. I can speak for the people of the northeast who have been diagnosed with early stages of lung cancer through this program. It needs to be expanded.

As I said, I agree with everything that is in the motion—just get it done. Don't assess if it needs to be done. Get working on it. Get it done.

The member talked about the changes that have been done for self-referral screening for breast cancer,

something we support 100%. I would say the same thing needs to be done for colorectal cancer. Right now, the age is at 50, yet not a day goes by that we don't have dozens of people diagnosed with colorectal cancer at age 30, at age 40. Bishop Brigante, if you don't know, who's a very well-known artist in Ontario, somebody we can all be proud of, is in his thirties. He's fighting advanced colorectal cancer. He had to work and fight really hard, and thank God his wife is a nurse and pushed for him to have a colonoscopy. This is how they diagnosed his colorectal cancer. It shouldn't have to be that difficult. It should be available.

0920

I would add to this: The stats that we keep have to be race-based data. There are diseases that manifest themselves in populations—in Black, Indigenous, people of colour—differently from white. We have to start to collect race-based data so that the decisions that we make are not made for the entire population of Ontario but are made specifically as to what makes Ontario strong, and this is our diversity. But when our health care system does not collect race-based data—very few of them do this. There are some community health centres who do a good job. There's one hospital that has started to do it and does a good job, but there are other provinces where it's done automatically.

I had the misfortune of breaking my arm in British Columbia, had to go to the hospital. They collected race-based data right away, and they do it in a way that is not threatening at all. Why don't we do that in Ontario when it is done in other provinces and could really change the way that we provide access to care in this province?

Having lung cancer usually will mean a hospital stay. This week, we debated my bill for nurse-to-patient ratios. I can tell you that if you are undergoing cancer treatment, stage 4, you are sick enough to be admitted into the hospital, and there are only three nurses for 36 patients, it makes no sense.

The NDP government in British Columbia brought a patient-to-nurse ratio so that, first, it's better for the patients; there's better care. It decreases mortality. It makes sure that the length of stay of the patient is shorter, the readmission rate is shorter. It's a big win for the patient. It's a big win for the nurses. So many of them are facing burnout right now. To have a caseload that a human being can handle makes all the difference for many of them who are not working in health care right now, who would come back to the bedside if we promised them nursing ratios, and it's—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes—and it's a cost-saving for the hospital as well.

All of this Ontario is ready to work upon. We will support the motion. It's going in the right direction. It is something that needs to be looked at. But the member is a member of the government who could go from looking at it to actually getting it done. The sooner that we do that, the better.

I also want to comment on the vaping. We are spending \$30 million to put vape detectors in our schools when we

have a bill on the docket right now called Vaping is not for Kids. Let's look at what other jurisdictions are doing so that we prevent our kids from vaping. One of the major reasons kids vape is because it tastes really good. There is no reason to have bubble-gum-flavoured vapes. No smoker who wants to quit smoking wants a bubble gum vape; they want something that tastes like tobacco. They only reason the vape industry is doing this is because they want kids to start vaping. Some of the vapes: You do it once, you're hooked. There's such a high concentration of nicotine that the kids will be addicted instantly.

And then, because we put the buying age at 18—there's always an 18-year-old in a high school that will go and buy a list of vapes for all of his friends at the high school. Put it at age 21. Put it at age 25, like other provinces have done. There are no 25-year-olds in high schools. Nobody will be able to go and buy the vapes, and you won't need to spend \$30 million on vape detectors in bathrooms because kids won't be vaping. But no. When was the last time we saw any health promotion, disease prevention initiative coming from the government? Zip, nothing.

The member did talk about the determinants of cancer, stress being one of them. But really, if you stop smoking, drink in moderation, eat healthy food, have a healthy weight and exercise regularly, 60% of all cancers go away. Should I repeat that? If you stop smoking, drink in moderation, eat healthy food, have a healthy weight and exercise regularly, 60% of all cancers disappear.

Have you heard anything from this government to help 60% of all cancers disappear? No, absolutely not. There is so much more that this government could do, but so far, we haven't seen any.

Her comments on asbestos—agree 100%.

She also had comments on use percentage. I forgot if it's 16% or 15% of all lung cancer comes from gases. I live in the middle of the Canadian Shield. Many, many houses in Nickel Belt, including my own, are on a big rock where you have rocks in your basement, and argon gas easily gets into your house. Those detectors should be made available to all and should be free. People should be encouraged to do those things, not having to go to Home Hardware and look at 16 different detectors, not knowing if any of them are accurate or not, if you'll ever get the result or anything like this.

I see the time is running, Speaker. This is a step in the right direction. This is what needs to be done. We have a program.

Le Programme ontarien de dépistage du cancer du poumon est un programme qui a fait ses preuves—un programme qui existe dans cinq hôpitaux seulement en Ontario, mais qui doit être disponible ailleurs. Moi qui viens du Nord, je vous dirai que pour ceux à Timmins, à Sault Ste. Marie, à Thunder Bay, ils ont besoin d'avoir accès à ce programme-là—et bien des communautés du Sud, comme la députée a mentionné. C'est un programme qui a fait ses preuves, qui sauve des vies et qui devrait être—je vous dirai de passer aux actes le plus tôt possible.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Good morning, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak in the House on this topic of paramount importance and which has had profound consequences for so many people here in Ontario and across our country. Of course, I am speaking to the private member's motion calling for an assessment to expand the Ontario lung cancer screening program.

This is an easy one to support. I'm proud to support it. In fact, the Ontario lung cancer screening program began in 2017 under the Ontario Liberal government, so of course I would want to see this not just continue but succeed.

However, I'm going to begin by echoing the comments from the member from Nickel Belt that this motion could go so much further. For example, why is it calling for an assessment of the expansion of the Ontario lung cancer screening program as opposed to demanding an expansion of that? Why is it even a private member's motion, which is strictly symbolic, instead of a private member's bill, which we could all vote on and compel the government to expand the Ontario lung cancer screening program? Why is it that the government member won't walk across to the Minister of Health and just ask her to expand the Ontario lung cancer screening program?

These are all things that could allow us to devote our time in the chamber to things that require a debate. There's no question in anyone's mind in this chamber that all of us agree to the expansion of the Ontario lung cancer screening program. After all, lung cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer in Canada.

And so, I don't think a lot needs to be said about the merits of expanding the program. Every person in this chamber agrees to it, and I certainly do. The medical community would like to see this happen as well.

Instead, I would like to focus on the things that need to happen in order for us to be able to successfully and effectively fight cancer—lung cancer and all other kinds of malignancies here in this province. I also want to address a little bit some of the challenges that we may face in expanding the Ontario lung cancer screening program, because I am hoping that all of us will vote in favour of this.

0930

The first challenge with the Ontario lung cancer screening program, if it were to be expanded, is that the majority of people in the province don't know about it. Physicians may know about it. Nurse practitioners may know about it. But the majority of patients and people who are actually at risk don't know that the program exists. But under this government, we have successive cuts to public health and health promotion activities which could allow people to know that.

Under this government, we have seen the worst health care system performance in our province's history. We have more people in our province's history than ever been who don't have access to primary care: 2.3 million people don't have it right now; 4.4 million won't have it by 2026. If you don't know about the program and can't self-refer, and you're one of a growing number of millions of people

in our province that don't have access to a nurse practitioner or a family doctor, how are you supposed to get referred to the Ontario lung cancer screening program?

But let's say, against all odds, you're able to surmount all of those challenges. The next thing is you've got to be able to find somewhere to get screened. I agree: We do not have enough screening sites. I believe we have five right now. Regrettably, the direction that this government has chosen to go with Bill 60 is to create integrated community diagnostic and surgical service centres. The idea is to be able to increase access to diagnostic and surgical services, but one of the challenges with it that has been brought forward time and time again is that many of the providers for that will be private, for-profit entities that will seek to create these centres in urban centres where the economies of scale and large enough numbers of patients can be generated.

Consequently, people in rural and northern areas will have greater difficulty in being able to access these services. These diagnostic and surgical service centres will draw diagnostic and technological resources away from suburban and rural hospitals and therefore make it more difficult for people to access lung cancer screening in their communities, instead forcing them to make the difficult choice between taking days off from work and travelling—mind you, without adequate funding to the Northern Health Travel Grant, which this government also voted against—and moving to one of these lung cancer referral centres, or not going altogether. So this is something that needs to be addressed if we actually want to expand the Ontario lung cancer screening program and make it a success, and I'm wholeheartedly committed to making it a success along with the member who introduced this motion.

But again, I want to emphasize: If this government was serious about fighting cancer, if this government was serious about detecting malignancies before they become a problem, when they are in a treatable phase, when they haven't even become cancer yet, then they would have also taken a number of other steps. I understand the Canadian Cancer Society is here, so I know that they'll agree with me that we need to bring PSA testing under public funding. This government has repeatedly voted against that. How can this government say they are serious about fighting cancer, about screening for cancer, when they repeatedly, time and time again, in the face of the Canadian Cancer Society, which is sitting right here—how can they vote down funding testing for PSA?

This is a government that, again, has chosen not to fund take-home cancer drugs.

This is a government that has not committed to delivering a family doctor for every single person in this province.

And the final thing: I salute the member who introduced this motion for enumerating many of the risk factors for lung cancer and for cancer generally. I agree we don't talk enough and people don't know enough about things like asbestos and radon. We could do more work to help people quit smoking and raise awareness around issues such as vaping and children.

However, one risk factor that she did not mention, a leading risk factor for cancer in our province and in our country, is alcohol. So you can imagine how perplexed I am that this government—with, admittedly, a limited budget in health care and, just provincially, a government that has a record debt and deficit unprecedented in our province's history—rather than investing a billion dollars in health care, in cancer screening, in fighting malignancies, instead chose to commit to invest that \$1 billion in a risk factor for cancer by trying to bring beer to convenience stores a mere one year early. This government is twisted in knots and cannot get its priorities straight.

So I'm going to keep my remarks brief. I think I have made it clear that I entirely and wholeheartedly support expansion of the lung cancer screening program. However, I think and hope that I've also illustrated the folly in the way this motion has been presented. I hope that people will take away from this that this should have been a bill, or even better, it should have been a conversation with the Minister of Health. It should have been not a request for an assessment to expand the lung cancer screening program; it should have been a demand to expand the lung cancer screening program. It should have called for including funding for PSA testing. It should have called for take-home cancer screening.

I don't know which minister brought it in, but it should have called for the government to instead invest their billion dollars not on bringing beer to convenience stores one year early, but to invest it in health care, in getting a family doctor for everyone, in supporting this program. It doesn't.

It's a flawed motion that we'll support nonetheless because I and the people in the House will stand with patients in Ontario. We do want to fight cancer, and we're committed to showing this government the right way to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Good morning, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to join the debate this morning on the last day of the Legislature before the summer break, and especially to speak in support of private member's motion 77, moved by my friend from Mississauga Centre, on a lung cancer screening program.

I want to thank her for her advocacy on this issue, which is a very personal issue for me as well. My father worked as a welder at the Texaco refinery in Port Credit. Every day, he was exposed to asbestos in the gaskets and the welding blankets, and he passed away from asbestosis and lung cancer over 40 years ago, on December 12, 1985. Obviously, we did not have screening available at the time, but today, proper screening can catch hundreds or even thousands of cases of lung cancer at early stages every year, giving people across Ontario a better chance to recover and more years together with their loved ones.

This is the same reason that I introduced Bill 66 to promote stethoscope checks to detect heart valve disease early, when it can be treated efficiently. I want to thank all members for their support for my bill, as well, as we move towards third reading.

But returning to today's motion: As the member from Mississauga Centre said, lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in Ontario, with over 11,000 cases diagnosed each year. It is also the leading cause of cancer death in Ontario, with over 7,000 deaths every year.

In a majority of cases, lung cancer is only diagnosed at stage 4, after the cancer has already spread outside the lungs. Unfortunately, at that point, the chances of recovery are very low. On the other hand, according to Stats Canada, the five-year survival rate for patients diagnosed early at stage 1 is over 60%. Lung cancer screening with a low-dose CT scan is the best way to detect lung cancer early, when it can be treated most effectively.

Ontario is the leading supplier of medical isotopes that help detect and fight cancer right across the world. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, I was proud to join the member and our former colleague Bill Walker in Bowmanville two weeks ago for the launch of the Central and Eastern Ontario Isotope Alliance, which will help to expand medical isotope production from our nuclear sector, with a huge win for cancer patients here in Ontario and around the world.

Screening for lung cancer has been available since 2017 in Ontario for patients at high-risk, including patients from 55 to 74 years who have smoked for 20 years. This is in line with the guidelines of the American Cancer Society. But last November, the society released an update to recommend scanning for smokers from 50 to 80 years old. I agree with my friend that the Ministry of Health should look at these new guidelines to determine if Ontario's lung cancer screening program should be expanded as well for younger and older patients, and beyond the four current locations in Oshawa, Ottawa, Sudbury and the University Health Network here in Toronto.

Speaker, it is also critical that young patients and non-smokers who do not qualify continue to have the clear pathway for lung cancer screening when they develop symptoms that are associated with lung cancer.

0940

Speaker, I also want to take a moment to thank the Minister of Labour and former minister Monte McNaughton for their work on Bill 149 and Bill 190, our latest Working for Workers bills.

Firefighters are often exposed to toxic chemicals—like my father—and they are at least four times more likely to be diagnosed with cancer. This bill will help to ensure they have fast and easy access to the compensation they deserve for work-related diseases.

And as I said here last month, the Minister of Labour is working to include asbestos in the Occupational Exposure Registry, beginning next year, which will also help identify workers who are most at risk for lung cancer and asbestosis.

It is great to share our time today with the member from Milton. I just want to take the opportunity to congratulate him again on his win last month. I know he's going to be an effective MPP and a great representative for the people of Milton.

I also want to thank my OLIP intern for the spring term, Milena Basciano, for all her great work in my office, and

I want to wish her the very best in everything she does next.

And last, as the House rises for the summer, I want to wish all members and staff a happy, safe and healthy summer.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to speak to motion 77, to look at the possibility of expanding the lung cancer screening program. It's a motion I'll be voting for, and I appreciate the member from Mississauga Centre for bringing it forward.

Speaker, I believe the lung association has already brought forward compelling arguments of why we need to expand the number of screening sites in Ontario—we only have five, far less than other provinces with smaller populations—and why we need to expand the scope beyond smokers. We know smoking is a cause of lung cancer, but increasingly people are being diagnosed with lung cancer who have never smoked. That is where we're seeing the rising number of lung cancer cases. So expanding the scope of the screening is critically important as well.

My hope is that this motion passes today, but I'm hoping the member takes this motion directly to the Minister of Health and says, "We have to put this motion into action." While the member is having that conversation with the minister, I'm hoping the member will say, "Why not expand screening for all cancers?"

Just as I was walking in here, I got a phone call from my doctor with the results of my latest PSA test. It would be great if all men could get a PSA test covered under OHIP. I'm lucky I have insurance coverage on it, but a lot of people don't. But it should be all cancers, because we know that the earlier we detect—and I know the member knows this, as a nurse—the more likely we are to cure. As the member opposite just stated, 11,000 cases of lung cancer, 7,000 deaths—and most of the time, they're detected at stage four. The earlier we can detect, the more likely we know people can survive.

So what is it going to take for early detection? Well, I'm one of those lucky people. I have a family doctor. I'm not one of those 2.3 million Ontarians who don't have access to a family doctor. My access to screening and the information that I need around screening for all types of cancer comes from my family doctor.

I just had my annual physical a couple of weeks ago, and my doctor said, "You might be at risk for colon, you might be at risk for prostate, you might"—he just listed it off and said, "Here is where you go. I am going to give you the requisition form for the blood work and other screening that you need." Not everyone has that. So, if we're going to look at early screening of lung cancer and all forms of cancer, then we need to make sure everyone has access to a family doctor, who is a gateway to that screening.

Then of course, when it comes to lung cancer, we have so few sites around the province that even if your doctor says, "Hey, you're eligible for screening. We'll sign the requisition forms for you to do that," it becomes very

challenging for people to access screening because they don't live near a place where they can access screening. So, I wanted to put that on the record.

I want to close—and I'm not going to use all of my time—on a few important notes that came out of my last meeting with the lung association, because one thing that hasn't been talked about enough, I believe, is how do we prevent lung cancer in the first place and what are some of the growing threats to lung cancer that could possibly help explain why we're seeing such growth in lung cancer from people who don't smoke. Some of those have been mentioned today, and I appreciate the member opposite talking about it.

One is radon testing, ensuring that we have radon testing for homes, easily accessible and available, for people and in workplaces.

Second is looking at air pollution. When I met with the lung association, they had three key recommendations around reducing air pollution. One was better testing, especially of traffic-related air pollution, which historically affects more vulnerable and low-income neighbourhoods. We know from some testing that the University of Toronto did in the city of Toronto that neighbourhoods that are located closer to Highway 427, the Gardiner Expressway, the Don Valley Parkway and larger boulevards like Steeles Avenue, for example, have higher levels of air pollution, which contribute to lung cancer.

The other one is people who live in close proximity to gas plants. So the Portlands gas plant, for example, in the Beaches in Toronto, is the largest single source of air pollution in the city of Toronto. And you're seeing that in other places. In Halton, for example, people who live around the Halton gas plant—for those of you like myself, I travel between Guelph and Toronto all the time, and I drive right by it on the 401—one, minimizing the use of those gas plants in the first place to minimize the toxic air pollution, but two, making sure we have air screening in place to make sure the pollution levels are not at elevated levels, affecting human health and potentially affecting people with lung cancer.

The second area they talked about with me was the importance of indoor air quality and ensuring that we have proper filtration and filters like HEPA filters in buildings, in homes and especially in schools, where children are incredibly vulnerable, as a way to help mitigate lung cancers.

Then the next one was, interestingly enough, school buses. Most of our school buses are diesel engines. We know the particulate matter from diesel engines negatively affects people's lungs. The sooner we can electrify school buses to reduce that particulate matter, the more protections we provide for children. Because we know that the airborne pollution from diesel engines is particularly dangerous for young people and their lungs.

The final one in this category is forest fires. Last year, a million acres burned in Ontario. During four days in the first week of June, that cost our health care system \$1.28 billion, primarily due to admissions to emergency departments for people with respiratory problems, oftentimes asthma related. But that toxic air affects people's lungs.

We don't know yet what the implications are for lung cancer, but the lung association is deeply concerned about the long-term effects of persistent exposure to forest fires. Obviously, our wildland firefighters are the most at risk; they're the ones on the front lines, and we need to make sure they have the proper PPE and masks and things to protect them, but just average folk walking around our communities are affected, as well.

0950

Making sure that we do everything we can to reduce fire risk and we have firefighting in place—and I think we're going to have to start looking for folks who have had persistent exposure to toxic air from firefighting being part of the screening process, because they are going to be at risk.

And then finally, on the prevention side, I want to just talk a little bit—I know the member from Nickel Belt talked about vaping. I think we're going to need stronger rules to ramp up smoking prevention. Even though we've done a good job, we still aren't there yet. But where we're really having a challenge now is with vaping and with young people. We know the lung association is deeply concerned about the cancer implications of rising rates of vaping, especially among young people—so to make sure we have the rules and regulations in place to prevent that, to reduce vaping and to prevent the long-term implications of that.

I want to close by saying that the lung association said to me, one in five people suffer from lung disease; five in five people breathe. The best way to prevent lung disease, lung cancer is to make sure the air we breathe is clean and healthy. That is something I'm hoping that, if all of us are going to vote for this motion, we can draw inspiration and work across party lines to do everything we can to ensure the air we breathe is clean and healthy.

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

MPP Zee Hamid: I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion. This issue is near and dear to my heart. I lost my grandmother, both my aunts on my father's side and my aunt on my mother's side to cancer. To this day, I believe that if they had access to early screening, their lives could have been prolonged or perhaps saved.

As part of looking into this motion, I was shocked to learn that lung cancer kills more people in Ontario than brain cancer, bladder cancer, leukemia, prostate cancer, breast cancer and stomach cancer combined. In fact, the probability of dying from cancer is highest in the case of lung cancer for both males and females.

The reason for this high probability of dying from lung cancer has to do with the fact that lung cancer survival rates vary significantly depending on the stage of diagnosis. If someone is diagnosed at stage 1, their chance of survival is 60%, and it drops to below 5% if they're diagnosed at stage 4, when many people unfortunately are diagnosed. This underscores the importance of diagnosing lung cancer as early as possible.

One statistic that jumped out was that 70% of lung cancers in Canada are diagnosed at an advanced stage,

unfortunately. That makes a difference between life and death. That means that someone's parent or their brother or their sister or their friend might have survived and gone on to live many years of productive life, many productive years.

Lung Cancer Canada agrees that comprehensive lung cancer screening programs are essential to improving early detection rates and saving lives. While lung cancer continues to have the highest mortality rate among all types of cancer, it is more important than ever to ensure that everyone who may be at risk of developing lung cancer has access to early screening programs.

Speaker, I'm proud to be part of the government that takes health care seriously and is investing \$85 billion in health care, nearly \$25 billion more than the previous government. This is the government that ended hallway health care that plagued the province under the previous government. In the past five years, we've added over 3,500 hospital beds. We're building 50 new hospital projects through our \$50-billion investment to add 3,000 more. Since 2018, 80,000 new nurses and 10,400 new doctors have registered to work in Ontario. We were the first province in Canada to introduce as-of-right rules to allow health care workers to move to Ontario from other provinces to start working immediately.

Our government provides an organized screening program, the Ontario Lung Screening Program, that helps screen people at high risk of getting lung cancer. This program is open to people between the ages of 55 and 74 years old who have smoked cigarettes every day for 20 years and not necessarily 20 years in a row. As the House is aware, currently this program operates at four main sites: Oshawa, Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa.

Looking into broadening the eligibility criteria for access to the lung screening program might catch cancer at earlier stages for a lot of people who today don't have access to the screening programs. Adding another site in or around the Peel region may also provide access to people who currently don't have access to one of the four sites.

This private member's motion will help us determine whether an expansion to the screening program is warranted and whether we should broaden the eligibility criteria for access to the lung screening program.

While my riding is not in the Peel region, it is adjacent to Peel, and residents of my riding and other residents of Halton travel routinely to Peel for their health care needs.

In fact, my father is in Trillium hospital right now in the Peel region, as I speak, for his angiography. My uncle was recently admitted to Credit Valley Hospital, also in the Peel region, for his cardiovascular disease.

Should Peel be selected as one of the sites for the expansion of the lung screening program, it would not only help the 1.5 million residents of Peel region but also over 600,000 people in the Halton region.

As the House is aware, both Peel and Halton are among the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. Under the provincial growth plan, the Halton region is projected to grow to

1.1 million people by 2051, and the Peel region is projected to grow to 2.28 million people.

While it is common for people in my riding and the rest of Halton region to travel to Peel for complex health care needs, the same cannot be said about travelling to Ottawa, Sudbury, Oshawa or Toronto, where lung cancer screening centres are currently. I fear that many might forgo screening that might have caught the cancer for them at an earlier stage and could have saved their lives.

Speaker, I thank the member from Mississauga Centre for her motion as well as her advocacy on this very important issue. I support this motion and urge my colleagues to do the same because better access to lung cancer screening can help find lung cancer early, which is when the treatment has the best chance of working. I'm looking forward to seeing my colleagues support this motion.

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

Ms. Kusendova-Bashta has moved private members' notice of motion number 77. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day.

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Madam Speaker, no further business at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:15.
The House recessed from 0958 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LOIS FAIRLEY NURSING AWARD

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's truly a privilege to rise in celebration of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario Windsor-Essex chapter's Lois Fairley Nursing Award. It holds a special significance in Windsor and Essex county, honouring nurses who embody the values of compassion, professionalism and dedication to patient care.

And so, I celebrate this year's recipient of the 2024 RNAO Lois Fairley Nursing Award, Anna Dudok. Her remarkable legacy of service to our community is truly deserving of this award. Anna's dedication and impact as a nurse at Huron Lodge in Windsor since 1991 has not only earned her this prestigious honour, but it has also left an indelible mark on the lives of countless patients and their families.

Her unwavering commitment to resident-centred care, her vast knowledge honed over years of service and her

compassionate approach to every interaction exemplifies the epitome of nursing excellence. Anna's willingness to go above and beyond, from advocating for her residents' needs to providing comfort and support during challenging times, embodies the true spirit of nursing.

Anna's influence extends far beyond her immediate surroundings. Her dedication to mentoring and guiding new hires ensures that her legacy of compassionate care will continue to thrive at Huron Lodge for years to come.

To Anna, thank you for your tireless dedication and for exemplifying the very best of nursing. The lives that you impacted and all those that you care about has been immeasurable and your legacy will continue to inspire us all.

FOOD BANKS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I hold an annual member's statement writing competition for high school students in my riding. Students are welcome to submit a statement on any issue they feel passionate about. It's designed to empower young people and foster youth participation in politics by bringing their voice directly to Queen's Park and speaking to issues in their own words.

The winner for 2024, as selected by an independent committee, is Shivani Saravanan from HumberSide Collegiate. Here is Shivani's statement:

"Food prices are rapidly increasing in Toronto, and many residents are unable to afford healthy nutritious foods and have become dependent on food banks.

"In the past year, three additional food banks have opened in Toronto to meet the city's rapidly growing demand, which has increased by approximately one million visits.

"Food banks are playing an essential role by assisting those who are unable to afford essentials due to price inflation.

"While food banks provide the necessities, they do not solve the fact that many residents will not be able to afford food if prices continue to rise. They are only a temporary solution that disguises the true issue causing this situation.

"Many families struggle to make ends meet as housing prices and interest rates have inflated at a higher rate than salaries.

"With rising food prices, residents are having to sacrifice nutritious groceries for processed foods, as they are more affordable.

"At the forefront of this crisis comes human health."

Thank you, Shivani. Congratulations.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Matthew Rae: It is a pleasure to rise today to share with this House some important investments our government has made in my riding of Perth-Wellington.

Last week, I was joined by the Minister of Education to announce a brand new Catholic elementary school in Drayton, Ontario. This represents \$17.3 million in investment by our government in our rural education system and

will create 222 new student spaces and 64 new child care spaces.

This is a huge investment for Drayton and area because, for too long, local families did not have any affordable child care options locally. But our government is delivering for rural Ontario after years of inaction from the previous Liberal government.

Speaker, the good news doesn't stop there. I also had the pleasure of announcing that our government is funding a major expansion of St. Mary's Catholic School in Listowel. This investment of \$5.8 million will help build an additional 150 student spaces and 98 child care spaces. These two projects are part of our larger \$1.3-billion plan that more than doubles the funding to build new schools and expands child care spaces across Ontario.

1020

Since 2018, our provincial government has invested over \$34 million in communities across Perth-Wellington to build 250 new child care spaces and 470 new student spaces. While the previous Liberal government closed 600 rural schools, our government will continue to invest in rural Ontario.

HALAL FINANCING

Ms. Catherine Fife: When it comes to accessing housing financing, some Muslim Canadians are facing significant barriers because traditional financing restricts some from entering the housing market. Under Islamic law, paying and receiving interest is prohibited.

Halal financing offers an alternative to interest-based mortgages. There is an overwhelming demand for these products, with over 12,000 families on a wait-list. Financially, this amounts to \$6 billion of financing, growing by \$100 million per month.

It is worth noting that Canada is the only G7 country that does not accommodate halal mortgages. We have fallen behind, forgoing billions of dollars in the process. However, the 2024 federal budget indicated that the government would be exploring halal mortgages.

Speaker, it is important that Ontario is prepared to respond to this change. The Muslim population is being excluded from the housing market simply because they cannot access services that align with their religious beliefs. This is a missed financial opportunity for Ontario and another barrier to housing. Halal financing opens up mortgage options for thousands of Ontarians and millions of Canadians. By extent, it also offers a solution to the housing crisis, and everyone benefits from this.

The question remains: When will Ontario provide access to home ownership for the underserved Islamic community? We are prepared to work with the community to ensure that housing is a possibility for every Ontarian.

RIDING OF LANARK- FRONTENAC-KINGSTON

Mr. John Jordan: Before the House rises for the summer, I'd like to acknowledge all my fellow MPPs for

your continued dedication to your constituents and connecting with them over the summer months.

I'd also like to invite you to my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. Experience one of our festivals, like the world-renowned Stewart Park Festival in Perth, or the Blue Skies Music Festival in Clarendon. Both received funding through the Experience Ontario grant. My thanks to Minister Lumsden and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

We have beautiful museums, including the Heritage House Museum in Smiths Falls, which I had the pleasure of attending on Saturday. It received funding from this government to set up an exhibit to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the pressing of Beatles records in the RCA building in Smiths Falls, where my constituency office is located today. Smiths Falls was the birthplace of Beatles records in North America, with the RCA building employing hundreds of people, 75% of which were women. Some of you may remember the Ed Sullivan Show back in 1964—well, some of you may remember.

These investments from the province will encourage Ontarians to explore all that our communities have to offer, staying in local accommodations, eating in restaurants and supporting small businesses. Tourism makes significant contributions to Ontario's economy, supporting approximately 360,000 jobs and generating over \$33 billion of economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy summer. If you're thinking about a day trip or a multiday adventure, I encourage you to visit Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

PRIDE MONTH

Ms. Jennifer K. French: June is Pride Month. Today, we are joined at Queen's Park by Paul and Cherie Weaver, who live in Oshawa, and whose proud daughter Erin wrote to tell me they have a beautiful flagpole in their beautiful garden where they proudly fly both the Canadian flag and the Pride flag.

Erin wrote that they have had strangers reach out to them about how important it has been for them to see the Pride flag flying in their neighbourhood. One instance in particular was that a teenaged boy knocked on their door and shared that seeing their Pride flag flying as he walked by each day made him feel safe and seen, and that it was just so important to him.

Last year, Paul and Cherie's Pride flag was stolen: ripped and cut from the flagpole and taken. Paul replaced the flag. Unfortunately, on the long weekend, the entire flagpole was stolen, flags and all.

Speaker, across communities, there are ugly and hate-motivated harms happening to our friends, families and neighbours in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. But there are more moments of magic and acts of kindness, and I am glad to share the rest of the story today.

A man who lives not too far from Paul and Cherie saw a flagpole lying hidden near his fence, and the flagpole was returned with the flags. Paul has been able to get it back up and flying proudly.

As their daughter shared with me, "My parents will never let the misguided energy of others prevent them from contributing to the creation of safe spaces and communities."

Oshawa is a community made up of great neighbours, but there is still work to be done to ensure that everyone feels welcome. Thank you, Paul and Cherie, for joining us here today at Queen's Park and for choosing to be wonderful neighbours—flying the Pride flag is a message to your neighbourhood that everyone belongs. And to everyone in Oshawa, happy Pride.

DESI MANDI

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Last weekend, I had the pleasure of attending a community event at Desi Mandi, a South Asian supermarket located in my riding, to celebrate their third anniversary of doing business in Burlington.

I met with the owners, Raj and Sara, a lovely couple who opened their store during the pandemic. With the support of the community, they've grown their grocery store into a thriving business that sells thousands of different Asian offerings. Whether you're looking for fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, as well as favourites like rice, flour, spices, pickles or frozen food, Desi Mandi has what you need. They also have a butcher shop, along with a hot food table offering delicious South Asian meals. And if you don't find what you're looking for, Raj and Sara will bring it in to serve you better.

Desi Mandi also supports local initiatives in the Burlington community, donating food to organizations across our community, including charities such as the Compassion Society, Food for Life, and religious organizations that provide hot meals for people who are going without. Proceeds raised at their event were donated to the local Joseph Brant Hospital.

Congratulations once again to Raj and Sara on the third anniversary of Desi Mandi, and I look forward to visiting again soon.

MARY ANN NEARY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Today, I am so proud to speak about a dynamic resident of beautiful Beaches–East York named marvellous Mary Ann Neary. It is very fitting to speak about this wonderful woman on Bike to Work Day because of her strong advocacy to keep people safe in this city and beyond. Mary Ann believed streets were for everyone—for pedestrians, for transit riders, for cars and for cyclists.

I first met Mary Ann at one of our monthly Ward 32 Spokes cycling meetings in the famous Feathers pub on Kingston Road. We are a motley crew, with half-baked ideas and endless energy, and I'm actually not sure why this meticulously organized and detailed individual did not turn on her heels the moment she spied us. But from then on, she was our true leader, whipping us into shape with strategic plans, community outreach and educational events. We never looked back.

Whether it was door-knocking, speaking at city hall or organizing bike tune-ups at East Lynn Park, Mary Ann was there, helping people understand the benefits of cycling, especially the health advantages. After all, she was a legend in the health care sector, wowing everyone at the University Health Network with her tremendous skills in speech pathology and, later, as senior clinical director of surgical services.

Mary Ann loved helping people and never stopping giving back to society. Mary Ann passed away unexpectedly, but peacefully, in her sleep on May 12, 2024—a big loss for Ontario. Rest in peace, lovely Mary Ann.

D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Today, I rise to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, a pivotal moment in our history that took place on June 6, today, but in 1944. On this day, brave soldiers from Canada and their Allies stormed the beaches of Normandy, marking the beginning of the end of World War II.

We remember the immense courage and sacrifice of those who participated in Operation Overlord. Among them were thousands of Canadians who played a critical role in securing the freedoms we enjoy today.

1030

In Richmond Hill, we honour members of the local Legion: Bill Renwick, who served with the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, and Angus MacDonald of the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, who both landed on June 6, 1944. We also remember Bill Aird of the 48th Royal Marine Commandos, who was attached to the 3rd Canadian Division at Juno Beach.

I also remember my father-in-law, Mr. K.C. Wai, for his contribution in the Second World War.

Mr. Speaker, on this solemn anniversary, let us commit to never forgetting the valour of the D-Day soldiers. Let us ensure that their stories are told, their sacrifices are remembered, and their legacy is preserved for future generations.

EVENTS IN LAMBTON– KENT–MIDDLESEX

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Ladies and gentlemen, as we eagerly approach the vibrant summer season, I am thrilled to highlight the array of exciting events taking place in our beloved riding. From cultural festivals to community gatherings, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Picture the roar of the engines at the Pain Court tractor pull, the savoury aroma of barbecue at Strathroy Ribfest, and the vintage cars at the Bothwell car show and the Wallaceburg WAMBO. There are plenty of Ontario-style events for every community across Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. From the Lucan Summerfest and the Thamesville Threshing Festival to the historic significance of Emancipation Day in Dresden, as well as the bustling night market, these events are not just about entertainment; they're a celebration of our communities and traditions.

Furthermore, these events serve as a testament to the resilience and vitality of our community.

By supporting local initiatives, we bolster our economy and foster a sense of pride in our shared identity. Let's not just attend; let's actively participate, volunteer and support these events.

As your representative, I am committed to promoting and enhancing the quality of life in our riding. Together, let's make this summer one to remember, filled with joy, laughter and a deep appreciation for all that our community has to offer.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to seeing you at these upcoming events.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to give a very warm welcome to Shivani Saravanan. She is the winner of my 2024 member's statement writing competition. She's joined by her dad, Saravanan Rathinavel. Welcome.

I would also like to welcome my staff Spencer Higdon-McGreal. He's joined by his mom, Allyson McGreal; his dad, Patrick Higdon; and friend Clare Doyle.

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Spencer. We've been a team from the time I decided to seek the NDP nomination for Parkdale–High Park. He has been such a big and important part of my work as an MPP for the last six years. He's moving to France soon.

Spencer, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I'm going to miss you. Au revoir, my friend.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to welcome my executive assistant from the constituency office, Jacqueline Bayley, who has brought her sister Suzanne Board to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to welcome Paul and Cherie Weaver, neighbours in Oshawa who have a wonderful flagpole. Welcome to Queen's Park, and happy Pride.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Dr. Charlene Doak-Gebauer—she's the producer of the documentary *Vulnerable Innocence*, which inspired my PMB to be debated this afternoon—as well as her husband, Michael Gebauer; also, Mark Kaluski, from my office in Ottawa; David Nightingale, my EA here at Queen's Park; and Razan Akiba, my OLIP intern. I look forward to welcoming you in Ottawa–Vanier.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's my great honour to introduce two great people from my riding, the constituency of Pickering–Uxbridge: first off, page Emily Naassan and her father, Anthony, who's up here. Welcome to our House.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to say a special thank you to the OLIP intern who served in my office this year. Steffi Burgi did an amazing job. I'm so excited to see where she's going to end up. It's an amazing program, and

I'm all ready for my next OLIP intern next year. Let the games begin.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to wish a warm welcome to Chris Johnson, senior pastor at the Kitchener-Waterloo Seventh-Day Adventist Church, as well as my great friend Joseph Richards, also from the Seventh-day Adventist church. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jess Dixon: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the family of our page captain, Jasnoor Kaur from Oak Creek Public School, today. Joining us are her family members Hardeep Kaur, Randhir Singh and Prabhjot Singh. Thank you so much for coming and supporting your wonderful, wonderful daughter.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to extend to several members of the community—Mitusaan Kugathanan, student trustee for York region; Hishane Kugathanan, who's a great volunteer from Markham—Thornhill and Markham—Stouffville; and also Sivarathy Subramaniam. Thank you for coming and for all the hard work you do for our community. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Good morning. I have in the members' gallery an Oakville resident I'd like to introduce: Andrei Adam.

Mr. Mike Harris: I just got a note from a good friend of ours who is watching the last proceedings of this session, Barbara Stevens. Hello. It's good to see you in TV land today.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to the House a friend, Holy Trinity high school student Adam Chambers. Enjoy your day today, Adam. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today two constituents of mine, Jake Deacon and Albert Schultz, from Northumberland—Peterborough South and specifically Port Hope. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: She's a little late coming in, but I would like to welcome Regional Councillor Haley Bateman from the city of St. Catharines. Welcome to your House.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Out in TV land there—the member from Kitchener—Conestoga reminded me—there's a Mrs. Given who watches question period every day from out in Brampton. Hello, Mrs. Given. I'm here today.

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

I think the member for Peterborough—Kawartha has a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I know my parents are watching today. It is the last sessional day. I just want to wish my mother a happy 80th birthday on Saturday.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2023-24.

ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACK IN LONDON

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

MPP Zee Hamid: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of London's Afzaal family, the four members—Salman, Madiha, Talat, and Yumnah—who three years ago today lost their lives to a tragic and senseless act of Islamophobia-inspired terrorism.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): MPP Hamid is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the four members of London's Afzaal family—Salman, Talat, Madiha and Yumnah—who lost their lives three years ago today to a tragic and senseless act of Islamophobia-inspired terrorism. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

1040

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. Looking back on the past few months, I am struck by the fact that, on so many issues, whether it's health care or housing or making life more affordable, the government has let people down. They've shown that in their priorities. People are struggling to find a family doctor and rural emergency rooms are closing while this government subsidizes a private luxury spa in downtown Toronto. While the price of housing ballooned and housing starts dropped, this government spent the season reversing their own legislation and blocking new housing.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier admit that he has lost touch with the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, look, when we came to office in 2018, we inherited a province of Ontario that was in deep trouble, a province that had out-of-control taxes, a province that had out-of-control red tape, a province that had lost 300,000 jobs. Our manufacturers were being hollowed out. We had communities fighting each other with respect to energy in the province of Ontario. People were having to make the choice between heating or eating.

What we have now is a province that has created over 700,000 jobs. Some \$40 billion worth of economic activity is coming back. Our manufacturers are creating jobs like never before. Eight billion dollars of costs to those job creators has been removed. We have removed red tape from them, Mr. Speaker. We've lowered taxes for the

people of the province of Ontario. We're building hospitals and long-term-care homes. We're rebuilding our education system.

The job isn't done, Mr. Speaker, but we are going to continue on the path of rebuilding the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, no wonder they can't get out of here fast enough, right? They should be rolling up their sleeves right now to address the priorities of Ontarians. Serving the people as government is a privilege and it can be gone sooner than you think.

People expect their Premier to be working hard every day to make their lives better. But what they've got instead is somebody who puts his interests and his friends first every single time. Instead of hiring more doctors or building more housing or strengthening our local schools, we've got backroom deals, RCMP criminal investigations and hundreds of millions of dollars wasted breaking contracts.

What does the Premier have to say to hard-working Ontarians who feel like they have taken a back seat to his pet projects?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member opposite: Ontarians know all too well how quickly the gains of the last number of years can be lost. We're seeing that play out in Ottawa.

The people of the province of Ontario understand that in 2018, when we came to office, we had a province that was bleeding jobs to other provinces and to the United States. Some 300,000 jobs were lost. The manufacturing sector in this province was hollowed out, Mr. Speaker. Our students were not achieving the results that they should be. Our hospitals were not at the height of what they could be for the people of the province of Ontario. The health care advantage that we'd had, we had lost.

Fast-forward to today, and I will admit that the job is not done. We have created the conditions for over 700,000 jobs; \$40 billion worth of economic activity is coming back to the province of Ontario, and we're doing that while removing costs for the people of the province of Ontario, lowering taxes, cutting red tape, building a bigger, better, stronger, safer Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the session might be ending, but people's problems aren't. And six years in, I would challenge you to find a person out there who is not a personal friend of the Premier whose life has gotten better under this government. We have emergency rooms closing. We have construction stopped. You could have kick-started the construction of real affordable housing options so that young people can build a home, but the government said no. We could have connected 2.4 million people with a family doctor, but the government said no.

We could have reduced congestion on the 401 by lifting the tolls on the 407 for truckers so that people could get home to their families faster, and this government said no.

When will this government start saying yes to real solutions for real people?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: What we have said no to are the exact same policies that brought the province of Ontario to its knees in 2018. We inherited a province that was overly regulated—one of the most heavily regulated provinces, jurisdictions in the world. We inherited a province where its people were overtaxed, where people had to decide between heating their home or putting food on the table. We inherited a province where communities were fighting each other. We inherited a province that was not building long-term care. We inherited a province whose hospitals needed to be rebuilt. We inherited a province where our roads, infrastructure were so sorely undervalued by the previous NDP-Liberal government.

What we have done since then is reinvest in the people of the province of Ontario. We've lowered taxes. We've brought back investments.

She talks about the friends of the government. The people I consider friends are the 700,000 Ontarians who have the dignity of a job, who have hope and opportunity and a bigger, better, stronger—

Interjections.

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

MINISTRY SPENDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd remind the minister that today in Ontario people are dying in the streets. Parents are going to turn up at emergency rooms which are closed with their sick child. That is the Ontario we are living in today.

Yesterday, the Financial Accountability Office released its report into the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. For millions of Ontarians, it should be pretty clear today that they are not this government's priority. Leaping from the page is the FAO's projection that there's going to be an overall shortfall of \$3.7 billion. That's the difference between what the government has allocated and what's needed to maintain program funding levels.

Speaker, can the Premier explain this discrepancy?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: As I said yesterday, the FAO's opinions don't reflect actual government spending and investments.

And I'll make it very clear, Mr. Speaker. Again, the opposition sometimes struggles with facts, so I'll say it as slowly as I can: Investments in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services increased by more than \$630 million this year. Every single program under our ministry has seen an increase of investment.

The year before, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services received an investment of more than \$900 million, \$1.2 billion the year before.

Now, what has the opposition done? Voted against every single measure to make life more affordable, make the services more accessible for Ontarians. So of course Ontarians are seeing it. That's why they returned two members from two by-elections and the NDP were shut out once again in this province—

Interjections.

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

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister can try to brush off the FAO numbers, but guess who provides the numbers to the FAO? The ministry themselves. It's their own numbers. Even if they—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The member's all over the map.

1050

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, families of kids with autism have been on a roller-coaster ride of changing programs and reversals and overhauls. They deserve a program that works. The FAO's report shows very clearly that, again, social services are going to be underfunded by about \$3.7 billion.

Those families deserve a program that works—one that can deliver for them not only the funding that they desperately need, but also the services to help their kids while they can still make a difference. So I want the Premier to explain to people and families in need why he is underfunding social services by \$3.7 billion.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Once again, I will gladly share some facts with the leader of the official opposition, because they always seem to miss them. You'll see them every quarter, Mr. Speaker—they'll get up and talk about the numbers. When public accounts and actual numbers come out—silence over there, because they have absolutely nothing to say to facts. The cameras are off at that point. You'll never hear the NDP go in front of cameras at that point. The facts speak for themselves.

When it comes to the Ontario Autism Program, I'll say that the FAO assigned an average number to the children and youth in the program. There is no such thing as an average child with autism. The OAP does not treat children and youth as statistics. Support is based on individual needs.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times, we doubled the Ontario Autism Program. It was the community that built this program. This year, we increased the investment by over \$120 million. This isn't even the same—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Only this government could say they doubled the funding and everything gets worse. It's outrageous.

Here's another number for the government: 70,000—70,000 children on the wait-list for autism services.

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The wait-list.

Spending on child and youth services, which includes the autism program, is only expected to grow by 0.2% over the next five years.

Can you imagine, Speaker, that this year, only one in seven of those kids on that wait-list are going to get the services they need—10,000 out of 70,000 kids in need.

I want to ask the Premier, on what planet does he think that that is acceptable to the people of the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Of course, the leader of the official opposition had no problems when 75% of families were languishing on the wait-list under the previous government, when they held the balance of power for three years and could have gone to the Liberals at that time and said, "Bring in more funding or we will bring you down." Of course, it was not a big deal for the NDP at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the program that we have now is nowhere near the program before. The Ontario Autism Program is a world-class, needs-based program that is delivering.

Let's do a compare and contrast, because I know the opposition likes it. Before, families received one service. Today, just the core clinical service—ABA, speech-language pathology, mental health support. On top of that, families have access to free services as soon as they register with AccessOAP: entry to school, family foundational services, urgent response.

We will not leave any child—

Interjections.

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

Do I need to remind the members that the Speaker's responsibility is to maintain order and decorum, and in order to do that, the Speaker has the ability to send people home a little early? Thank you.

Start the clock. The next question.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, today marks three years since the hate-motivated terror attack that took the lives of four members of London's Afzaal family—Salman, Madiha, Talat and 15-year-old Yumnah, who would have been graduating this week from Oakridge Secondary School—leaving a child orphaned, a community grieving and deep wounds that will never fully heal. In this House, we have a duty to honour the Afzaal family with legislation that addresses the alarming rise in racism, hate and Islamophobia.

My question is, what immediate steps will this government take to make sure that we never see another family and another community devastated by Islamophobic hate?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that important question.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: Islamophobia or any form of racism and hate are completely unacceptable—no place in Ontario; Mr. Speaker, only place in Ontario for love and harmony.

Our government has taken strong action and made considerable investments to build safer communities and protect the rights of all Ontarians to practise their faith safely and without any fear or fear of persecution. In August, the minister released the Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Ontario action plan. This comprehensive plan outlines over 49 initiatives from 40 partners and ministries and millions in investments from our government to combat racism and hate, dismantle barriers and empower communities.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the community partners and municipalities across the government to build a stronger, safer, more inclusive Ontario, where differences of faith, background and belief are—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this week, the National Council of Canadian Muslims members attended Queen's Park, and they met with all party members. Even the Premier met with Esa, a cousin of 15-year-old Yumnah who was killed on this day three years ago, alongside with her parents and grandmother.

The Afzaal family was a target of hate just because they were Muslim. Racism and hate against the Muslim community has been getting worse. The Muslim community has gone through so much, and the terrorist attack on the Afzaal family has left the Muslim community asking, when will the members of this Legislature put words into action and address rising hate and Islamophobia?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that question. The minister has made it a priority during his time in the role to make many trips to the London Muslim Mosque, where he has personally met with the imam, community leaders and Mayor Morgan.

Mr. Speaker, last spring the ministry announced a \$500,000 investment to support the city of London in launching a new public education campaign along with a digital library of anti-hate resources. In August, the minister and Premier Ford were joined by Muslim community leaders and the London Muslim Mosque for a round-table discussion on how we can work together to fight Islamophobia and make Ontario a safer place to live for all.

We know our work doesn't end here. Our government will continue to take action and make the critical investments needed to defend the right of every Ontarian to practise their faith peacefully, with dignity and respect. Mr. Speaker, together we will continue to ensure the

Afzaal family legacy inspires for a better, brighter and more inclusive Ontario for all.

TAXATION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Constituents in my riding of Niagara West have come to me now for several years sharing their concerns about the pinch of the federal carbon tax. Each and every April, we've seen this job-killing, expensive carbon tax increase, putting more and more pressures and costs on the people of Ontario.

1100

My question to the Minister of Energy: As our government looks at the increase in the carbon tax that is impacting families, and as we head into a summer season where we know families are hoping to get out on a road trip, visit places like Niagara region and experience some of the best that this province has to offer, what is our government doing to ensure that we are fighting this job-killing, expensive carbon tax and putting more money back into the pockets of the hard-working people in Niagara West?

From corner to corner of my riding, from lake to lake, people are telling me that it's too expensive to pay the carbon tax and they want to see a government here in Ontario that is standing up for them. So my question to the Minister of Energy: How is this government defending the hard-working people of this province and fighting the job-killing carbon—

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

The parliamentary assistant, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the great member from Niagara. It's just wonderful to hear his concern for the people in that area, and everybody across this province, with regard to the carbon tax.

The carbon tax increases the cost of everything, from the farmer's field to the fork, everything between and everything that goes into it. And this summer, whether it's the cost of a hotel or a campsite or the propane to cook on that barbecue, it's going to cost more, and the fuel to get there is going to cost more.

We're reducing the cost of living for people in Ontario by reducing the gas tax by over 10 cents a litre, removing the cost of licence plate stickers, removing the tolls on Highways 412 and 418, and, of course, the One Fare, which is going to save people \$1,600 per year.

While the carbon tax caucus over there and their leader, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, wants to raise the cost of living, we're lowering it, making it better for families. We're doing it without that punishing carbon tax.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for his response. I can tell that this is a government that is focused on cutting costs for the people of Ontario and cutting costs for the people of Niagara West.

But when I'm in my constituency and I speak with local farmers, entrepreneurs and also tourism operators, they are flabbergasted that queen Crombie is committed to bringing forward yet another carbon tax. We saw the Liberals and the NDP work together in a coalition to bring in the cap-and-trade carbon tax, and it had a hugely detrimental impact to the people of this province. When our government came in and cut that tax, we put real money back into the hard-working pockets of the people of this province. The local farmers, the local entrepreneurs, the local drivers in my riding who are counting on this government to stand up to the job-killing carbon tax that the federal Liberals are pushing down the throats of the people of Ontario want to know that we're on their side.

My question to the member and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy is, how can we continue to take a strong step to make sure that the federal government realizes it's time to kill the job-killing carbon tax?

Mr. John Yakubuski: One of the things that we're doing is, we've got our Powering Ontario's Growth plan. We brought 700,000 jobs back to this province; we've got to have the energy to support those jobs and those families.

We've got shovels in the ground on projects across the province: nuclear refurbishment going on at Darlington, at the Bruce, and soon to be at Pickering, to make sure on that energy; new build nuclear is going to be happening at Bruce; refurbishments at the Niagara Falls and in Cornwall for our great hydroelectric power—the basis, where it started; and, just recently, the largest procurement of battery storage in history, almost 1,800 megawatts. That's enough to power 1.8 million homes.

Speaker, we're making sure that the Ontario of the future has the power it needs to generate, to support those families, and we can do that without a job-killing carbon tax. The Crombie caucus over there has to stand with us, stand against the federal Liberals. This is the last day we're going to be here. Call them. Tell them to—

Interjections.

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

The next question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. Spending an unnecessary \$225 million to get out of the Beer Store agreement early, ending the waste water surveillance program: These are just some of the recent careless and irresponsible decisions of this Conservative government. Tell me how the party that prides itself on fiscal responsibility is running a \$9.8-billion deficit. Let's also not forget about the \$6.9 million that it costs to staff the Premier's office.

Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Why does the government insist on making reckless decisions and using taxpayers' money to do so?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Finance can respond.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's an honour to rise in this House every single day, and it's a privilege to have this role and to serve the people of Ontario.

I stand today because for the first time since 2006, the credit rating agency DBRS upgraded Ontario's rating to AA. Ladies and gentlemen, that is what fiscal responsibility looks like.

We are proving that we can reverse the trends of the previous 15 years, where we saw jobs leaving the red tape capital of North America, no fiscal plan whatsoever, credit downgrades. But we've been able to reverse that trend in six short years. Now, jobs are flocking back to Ontario. The conditions for economic prosperity—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, let's continue with the reckless decisions. How about the 2.4 million Ontarians who do not have access to primary health care, and the 70,000 kids on a wait-list for autism programs? On education funding: \$1,500 less per student and \$426 million in cuts to colleges and universities. For this government, it is always private profits over people.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: When will this government take responsibility for their actions and reprioritize the needs of Ontarians, the very people that we're elected to serve? Never in the history of this province has a government spent so much so irresponsibly and got so little for the people that we serve.

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I thank the member opposite for that question—the finance critic in this House. Of course, she's able to read the budget—which unfortunately she did not vote for, along with her party—which increased health care investments by \$10 billion over the last two years, which increased education funding by \$4 billion over the last two years, which increased social services by over \$2 billion. That's what real investment in the people of Ontario looks like.

But do you know what this credit upgrade will allow us to do? It will help lower the province's borrowing costs—what a concept. It will also protect taxpayers and support more investment in Ontario, creating more jobs and financing the province's historic infrastructure plan. That's what real government looks like. That's what a plan in the bill for the people of Ontario—all 16 million people—looks like, and it's this party that's doing it for the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Patrice Barnes: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We disagree with the Liberals about a lot of things, but one fundamental difference is when it comes to taxes. Liberals believe they know how to spend money better than the

hard-working people who earn it. They think a dollar in their pocket is better than in the pocket of the worker who earned it.

We have seen that every time we act to lower costs, the federal government steps in place with a new tax hike and tries to offset it. That is why we're so firm in our opposition to the carbon tax. We will never support an inflationary tax that makes it harder for people to fill up their tanks at the pump and put food on their table.

Can the minister please explain how our government's approach is different from the Liberals' approach?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The difference between our government's approach and the Liberal approach could not be more clear. We cut the gas tax to save families at the pump; they raise the carbon tax to add 23 cents a litre at the pump, to make it more expensive.

We allow businesses to accelerate in-year equipment write-offs, saving them a billion dollars; the Liberals' plan to get rid of their in-year equipment write-off allowance is costing businesses more money.

Now, I spoke with an Ontario manufacturer who said to me—last night, as a matter of fact—“Every dollar I spend on the carbon tax is a dollar I can't invest to reduce my carbon footprint.” The Liberal carbon tax does not work. We need them to follow our lead: Scrap the carbon tax today.

1110

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

Ms. Patrice Barnes: The minister is right: The difference between our approach and the Liberals' approach could not be clearer. We're the party of lower taxes while the Liberals will always be the party of higher taxes. Just look at their leader, Bonnie Crombie, who has supported every single Liberal tax hike over the last 20 years. She watched as her friends in the previous Liberal government sought to crush our manufacturing sector with their higher taxes, and now she won't even stand up to the Prime Minister, to tell him to scrap that terrible tax.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how the Liberals need to follow our lead and scrap the tax today?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In the first four months of this year, more than 80,000 good-paying jobs have been created in Ontario. Last month alone, we added 25,000 jobs, including 5,800 in manufacturing. By lowering costs across the board, our government has created the conditions for job growth across the province. We have cut 500 pieces of red tape that the Liberals imposed to stifle economic growth, and we've reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion in the province every single year.

Now, we cannot let the Liberal carbon tax lose Ontario's momentum. We have shown the Liberals the way: Lower taxes create jobs; lower taxes create wealth in Ontario. We ask the Liberals to scrap the carbon tax today.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

MPP Jamie West: Hope Air provides free flights and services for patients living in underserved and remote communities in northern Ontario, and without it, a lot of

northerners wouldn't be able to access essential medical care. Darlene Sargent from my riding said, “When I needed help getting to medical appointments, Hope Air arranged everything, free of charge. What would I have done without them?”

Speaker, tomorrow is Hope Air Day in Sudbury. My question is, instead of funding for-profit clinics, will the Premier provide sustainable funding to Hope Air?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I am very familiar with Hope Air and completely appreciate and understand the very valuable service they provide, offering free-of-charge flights for families and young people who need to have access. But we as a government have made a commitment to enhance the northern Ontario travel grant, and those enhancements are going to greatly assist when individuals need to travel further than 100 kilometres. They are going to get additional service through a number of pathways and the mileage, of course, starting at kilometre 1 instead of 100 and expansion of the program, including simplifying some of the forms that have to be filled out as part of the program.

We're going to invest, but we're also going to invest in community services so that people don't have to travel as far.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

MPP Jamie West: Back to the Premier: When he needs to bring his kids to SickKids in Toronto, my constituent Chas struggles to cover the costs. Chas has to pay upfront for hotel, gas and food, and then he applies for the Northern Health Travel Grant, and then he has to hope he'll get some of that money back. I say “some” because the medical rate for hotel rooms has increased to \$250 a night. That means that it's more expensive, and Chas won't get all of his money back. The Northern Health Travel Grant, even with the changes, won't pay him back the money out of his pocket. This is unfair to northerners.

When will the Conservative government finally fix the Northern Health Travel Grant?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: When I made the announcement of the enhancements to the northern travel grant in Thunder Bay, I have to say that there was a lot of excitement and appreciation for the enhancements that we've made, and I want to thank my colleagues who came forward with suggestions and ideas on how to improve the process. Clearly, we need to ensure that people who qualify can quickly get their money from the provincial government, which is why we have allowed online submissions, allowed direct-to-bank deposits.

We will continue to make enhancements, but the fact that this NDP party continues to speak against enhancements for local community diagnostic and surgical centres speaks to their interest in keeping the status quo while we do the improvements that are necessary and needed.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Many Ontarians have lost trust in the ability of the Licence Appeal Tribunal to fairly

adjudicate homeowner warranty disputes with Tarion. Homeowners' success rate at the LAT is very low, with Canadians for Properly Built Homes reporting that homeowners have lost around 84% of appeals since 2006. In recent years, the number of appeals made by homeowners has dropped dramatically, with 208 issues appealed in 2006 and only four in 2023.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers suggest that homeowners no longer trust the LAT to fairly adjudicate their appeals of Tarion warranty decisions, and I need to ask the Attorney General, will he commit to reviewing the effectiveness of the LAT in handling homeowner appeals of Tarion warranty decisions?

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to have the chance to talk about the LAT, because it was one of the first tribunals that we brought back into the balance, hitting all of their marks in terms of filing the hearing dates. The LAT was a tremendous success—and under the leadership of Sara Mintz, who did a phenomenal job getting the LAT back on track so that it was so effective that sometimes the lawyers were saying, "You're moving too fast." But, in fact, we have moved fast. We have come back to balance, and I'm quite proud of the work that the LAT is doing.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: There's clear evidence that the LAT lacks the ability to be an impartial arbiter of disputes between homeowners and Tarion. CPBH has identified that the adjudicators who are hearing appeals to the LAT often do not have the expertise in new home construction required to effectively adjudicate these cases and that the criteria they are using to evaluate the cases are often Tarion's own construction performance guidelines. Additionally, the LAT has not had Tarion's guidelines independently reviewed by a third party to assess their appropriateness.

With only four appeals by homeowners to the LAT in 2023, homeowners are clearly choosing not to go to the tribunal anymore, and something is obviously wrong.

Will the Attorney General commit to implementing a third-party review of Tarion's construction performance guidelines and to ensuring that the adjudicators hearing these appeals have the training and expertise required to make informed decisions?

Hon. Doug Downey: We'll start with the Licence Appeal Tribunal and the fact that it's an independent tribunal. It's part of Tribunals Ontario, and the excellent work they're doing under the leadership of Sean Weir.

There's continuous training. There's training when the adjudicators are onboarded. There's rigorous review of those that are appointed to the tribunal. So I can commit to continued training and excellence and that there is continuous review, but they are an independent unit. So I don't plan to meddle in the independence of the tribunals, but I do look forward to their continued improvement.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. People in the

riding of Oxford have repeatedly expressed concerns over the rising cost of living and how the Liberal carbon tax is making their lives more difficult. But instead of helping Ontario families, the federal government increased the disastrous carbon tax by 23%, and they will continue to hike it every year until it's tripled. That's just not right. No one in this province deserves to be punished by a useless tax that does nothing for the environment and takes away people's hard-earned paycheques.

Our government will not stop calling on the federal Liberals to finally do the right thing and scrap this tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is mitigating the negative effects of the Liberal carbon tax?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the excellent member for Oxford for that timely question. Indeed it is true that the Liberal carbon tax increases the cost of goods and services that have the most direct impact on the day-to-day lives of Ontarians. Whether at the gas pump, the grocery store or shopping for everyday essentials, the Liberal carbon tax affects each and every one of us negatively.

1120

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, this government will never stop looking for ways to save money for the hard-working people of Ontario.

Our government understands that Ontarians should not face financial burden when interacting with government. That is why we have delivered ways for Ontarians to save time and money when engaging with ServiceOntario in person or online—more options, more service, more convenience, and of course, we include with that the removal of licence plate sticker fees and renewals.

So while the Liberals work to make life less affordable, we have the backs of Ontarians, making life more—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the minister for the response.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been very clear that the majority of us will pay more in carbon taxes than we will get back in rebates. Ontarians will not be fooled. They know the carbon tax is just another Liberal tax grab.

Speaker, families across the province are looking to our government for support. We must continue to find ways to reduce costs across the board and ensure that people are not facing any additional burdens.

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is delivering real affordability to Ontarians by keeping costs down for essential services?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I again thank the member for Oxford for that question. Our government believes that reducing the time and money it takes to interact with government is essential. At ServiceOntario, we've simplified online renewals for drivers' licences and health cards, we've permanently waived fees for delayed death registration for Indigenous peoples, and we've made registering newborns faster and more affordable.

I must add that just yesterday, we saw a tremendous act of bipartisanship as this House came together to unanimously pass Bill 200, the protecting homeowners act. It passed unanimously at third reading so that, upon royal assent, all those who have been victims of the insidious NOSI scams can breathe a sigh of relief. Help, indeed, has arrived. I would like to thank all of the honourable members of this House who supported that bill and who chose to send a clear message. They support legislation that reduces burdens for Ontarian, especially as the federal Liberals continue to fail this—

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

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We cannot take clean air for granted, especially as the climate emergency fuels more and more wildfires in our province. We just need to look back to last summer's unprecedented wildfire season. In our communities, we all saw the smoky skies, felt it burn our lungs. We even smelled it right in this chamber.

Wildfire smoke is toxic. It contains ultra-fine particulate that penetrates deep into our body. Ontario has an Air Quality Health Index, but this ministry does not track that ultra-fine particulate, which is completely negligent; almost all other provinces do so, but Ontario hasn't acted.

My question: When will you update the Air Quality Health Index so people have the information that they need to keep themselves and their families safe?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: This government, under the leadership of this Premier, is taking swift action when it comes to climate change resiliency and adaptation. Just look at the results, Speaker. If you just look at what we've done to build resiliency, whether it's Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy, our community wildfire protection plans, our climate risk and resilience assessments—92%, we've increased wildfire funding.

Wetland conservation partnerships—we've dedicated \$30 million in funding. We've protected thousands of hectares of wetlands.

Speaker, every step of the way, when this government tries to build up Ontario, create great jobs, create green jobs, invest in our manufacturing sector, while creating EVs, fighting climate change every step of the way, unfortunately, we have no support from the opposition, because their only plan is a carbon tax and a tax plan.

On this side of the House, we know that a carbon tax is a tax plan, not an environment plan.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, this is a government that doesn't even have a climate plan and that has an abysmal reputation when it comes to the environment.

This government is also failing the people of Aamjiwnaang First Nation. Aamjiwnaang First Nation

declared a state of emergency last month because of its high level of benzene pollution in the air. This government continues to ignore Aamjiwnaang's air quality recommendations and failed to consult—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Brampton North, come to order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'll repeat it again: failed to consult the First Nation on this government's new regulations for the INEOS plant in Sarnia.

To the Premier or to the environment minister: Please explain why, in a First Nations community, you are allowing benzene to be emitted at concentrations that, hourly, would trigger a shutdown in California and are 10 times the annual amount that is allowed by any other emitter in the province? Please try and explain that.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Since our government learned of the issue around benzene at INEOS, we've taken swift action. After multiple orders, in addition to that, we've been working with everyone, whether it's the First Nations community, the municipality of Sarnia, the first responders and other involved stakeholders to find the source of the leak and hold the plant accountable—a plant which, may I add, Speaker, is currently closed.

In addition to this, we have introduced penalties per violation: \$100,000 per violation will now apply to this company. This regulation is part of a larger coordinated response that is under way to include regular site visits, multiple provincial orders, suspension of the company's environmental compliance approvals and enhanced, 24/7 benzene monitoring. These are actions that will ensure the facility, currently shut down for maintenance, will fully address the causes and sources of the emissions before resuming operations.

We take the health and safety of the residents of Sarnia and the entire community very seriously and we'll continue to use every tool necessary to get to the bottom of this.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. Ontarians have observed a growing number of media reports about cyber security breaches occurring worldwide. As our information technology systems progress, cyber criminals are also becoming increasingly sophisticated. Governments must be prepared to combat cyber crime in all its forms. It is our responsibility to find ways to protect the integrity and security of our digital infrastructure while safeguarding citizens' privacy and rights.

This objective extends beyond the Ontario government. Collaboration with our partners across the broader public sector is crucial to ensuring everyone's safety. Could the minister please explain how Bill 194, if passed, will enhance cyber security and promote collaboration with the Ontario government's partners?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the excellent member for Mississauga East–Cooksville, through you, Mr. Speaker.

As that member well knows—and I hope all members know—in today’s digital landscape, it’s essential for our government to address cyber crimes and protect our digital infrastructure. We have implemented a comprehensive, Ontario public-service-wide cyber security program to safeguard public data. This strategy was refreshed in 2023 to enhance cyber protection across the Ontario public sector and strengthen broader public sector resilience. We’ve worked closely with our BPS partners to bolster the province’s cyber resilience and the security of public services. Our focus includes enhancing cyber threat prevention, monitoring and intelligence capabilities.

Our government is committed to implementing secure protocols to protect against large-scale cyber attacks and personal information theft, especially in our hospitals and our schools. This is why our government is leading unprecedented—

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

And the supplementary question.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the minister for the response. The minister highlighted the crucial work being done in collaboration with the broader public sector. Partnering with these entities is vital as their impact touches all Ontarians across the province.

Speaker, in recent months, hospitals, schools and municipalities have fallen victim to cyber crimes by bad actors. The personal information of citizens has been compromised and could be exploited for further criminal activities. Protecting private information is paramount, especially when it concerns children and society’s most vulnerable.

Could the minister please elaborate on the specific efforts undertaken to protect hospitals, schools and municipalities from these criminal activities and the steps that will be implemented under Bill 194, if passed?

1130

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member again for a very timely question. Our government takes immense pride in safeguarding our broader public sector partners. We continually work with them, incorporating their feedback to implement appropriate safeguards and adjustments in the realm of cyber security.

Let me be clear: These costs to public sector institutions due to cyber attacks from bad actors are utterly unacceptable. We must protect all of our hospitals, our schools and our municipalities from cyber attacks at all costs. The financial burden of cyber attacks on these institutions is staggering—as much as \$7 million just to recover from one.

If Bill 194 is passed, we will advance our government’s mandate to protect all Ontarians from cyber crime in a safe manner, and we will particularly protect our children.

We are modernizing for the future to embrace the digital era, and it’s this Premier and this government that are doing everything possible—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. My riding of Simcoe–Grey is home to thousands of small businesses that provide goods and services to the residents of Ontario and good-paying jobs. The Liberal carbon tax is hurting those businesses dramatically. Not only is it driving up inflation, it is increasing the cost of essential goods and services that small business owners and their customers rely on, from groceries to gas and utilities.

Ontarians have had enough of this costly tax. They know that it is nothing more than another tax grab by the Liberal government. Unlike the opposition NDP and independent Liberals, our government remains steadfast in standing up for the people of this province. We will continue to call on the federal government to put an end to this regressive measure.

Mr. Speaker, can the associate minister please explain to this House why the federal carbon tax must be terminated and why it is killing jobs?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member from Simcoe–Grey for raising a very important issue. I have had the opportunity to hold numerous industry-specific round tables with entrepreneurs across the province, and do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The message has been loud and clear: This carbon tax is crippling small businesses and hurting the people of Ontario. They shared how it’s driving up the costs of everyday necessities, from the cost of supplies from convenience stores and farmers’ markets, to the gas needed to fuel delivery services and heavy machinery, to the high energy costs of cooling and warehousing, and logistics.

Speaker, this is putting immense pressure on their businesses and making it increasingly difficult for them to keep their doors open and serve their customers. That’s why this Premier and this government have strongly opposed the carbon tax while the opposition NDP and independent Liberals have been siding with their Liberal allies.

Today, in the strongest possible—

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the associate minister for her response. These are tough economic times, and the Liberal carbon tax is further stretching the already tight budgets of Ontarians. The opposition are out of touch when they expect our economy to keep growing while people’s savings and disposable income get eaten away by more taxes.

We know that the NDP and Liberals have no intention of standing up for the people of this great province. In fact, they support the federal government’s plan to triple the carbon tax to \$170 per tonne by 2030. This is completely at odds with the priorities of this government as we stay committed to protecting Ontarians, workers, families from these rising costs.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell the House what measures our government is taking to keep costs down for small businesses and households in the face of this disastrous tax?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the member for his question. Unlike the tax-a-lot Bonnie Crombie and her loyal federal Liberal counterparts, our government understands the very real concerns that Ontario families and small businesses have about the impacts of the federal carbon tax. We have such a diverse caucus filled with former entrepreneurs who can speak from experience when we stand in this House and say that this tax represents a serious hurdle that stands in the way of Ontario being the entrepreneurial powerhouse we've worked so hard to make it.

From day one, our Premier has been laser-focused on making life more affordable for the people of Ontario. Whether it's measures providing tax relief for families, lowering gas taxes, reducing beer and wine taxes, cancelling cap-and-trade and ensuring industrial electricity rates remain nationally competitive, our government is squarely on the side of Ontario workers, families and job creators.

We will continue fighting the federal carbon tax every step of the way. Enough is enough. Scrap the tax.

WASTE WATER MONITORING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Yesterday, it was announced that Ontario is terminating the waste water surveillance program designed to monitor infectious diseases. Dr. Thomas Piggott, the medical officer of health and CEO of Peterborough Public Health, responded on X, stating, "Deeply disappointed to learn that funding has been cancelled for the waste water surveillance program in Ontario."

"This has been critical information not only for COVID-19, but other infectious disease threats (influenza, RSV, Mpox, polio & now H5N1) in Ontario."

Speaker, with a serious gap in the federal government's current ability to test waste water in Ontario, why would this government abruptly cut this extremely low-cost but highly valuable program?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, let me be clear, the program will continue as Canada does water surveillance, and Canada will continue to do that. Ontario is simply getting rid of a duplication. The federal government conducts waste water surveillance across Canada and is actually moving to expand the sampling processes with additional sites here in Ontario. So moving forward, what we're doing is, the Ministry of Health will be working with the Public Health Agency of Canada on data-sharing agreements to ensure that the province can continue to analyze Ontario's specific waste water data.

Speaker, we'll also work with the federal government to propose sampling sites that provide quality data for public health across the province. The program will con-

tinue to collect and analyze samples and will collaborate with Public Health Ontario.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, that's against the advice of government's own advisory committee. In September 2023, the Ontario Public Health Emergencies Science Advisory Committee released a report that stated, "We recommend that the government of Ontario continue waste water-based surveillance for SARS-CoV-2, and evaluate its role for influenza and RSV, for early virus detection and identification of variants of concern, to reduce existing inequities in clinical surveillance."

Speaker, if this government is potentially wasting a billion dollars to put beer in corner stores a year earlier than it would have otherwise happened, surely they can spare less than 1% of that to continue this vital public health program. With this program's usefulness extending beyond COVID, why would the government ignore medical expert advice and scrap this advanced program?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, the program is continuing through an expanded option with the federal government. Let me quote you a doctor who's actually on the Ontario COVID-9 Science Advisory Table who did an interview as early as this morning:

"I don't see any reason why it should be provincially managed, as opposed to federally managed," said Dr. Razak. He goes on to say, "It is not unreasonable for the federal government to take over a centralized approach to testing. I would say from a public health and a scientific perspective—and I think what the public should want—is the availability of the information still remains timely and comprehensive."

Speaker, this information will still be timely and comprehensive. The only difference is we're removing a duplication because the federal government is expanding the surveillance program to continue expansion here in Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This week, we're celebrating Local Food Week in Ontario. It's an opportunity to promote farmers while also recognizing the important role of food processors, restaurants, retail and others across the local food supply chain.

Ontario has a robust food industry that contributes over \$48 billion to our province's GDP and economy, representing more than 860,000 jobs. This vital sector must continue to grow and produce more food for Ontario's growing population and our export market. Unfortunately, the carbon tax not only places a heavy economic burden on our farmers, it also impacts the global standing of the whole agricultural sector.

Speaker, can the minister please explain to the House why the Liberals must roll back this punitive tax?

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: I thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington for the question. The members of this House have heard many times from the minister and from the constituents at home: The Liberal carbon tax takes a serious toll on farmers, both financially and emotionally. It's a competitive business.

The carbon tax is a direct and indirect cost to all sectors and consumer goods. In a time when affordability is a major concern for all Ontarians, the carbon tax is nothing more than a tax grab, adding no additional support or services to the people in this province.

Think about it: Ontario's greenhouse growers would charge \$16 million in carbon tax in 2023. The Grain Farmers of Ontario estimate that, by 2030, grain and oil seed farmers will have paid \$2.7 billion in carbon tax.

We have heard the Minister of Transportation inform this House that the long-haul truckers are paying an average of \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year in carbon tax. That's a direct cost—

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

And the supplementary question?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that response. Ontario food-processing businesses like Weil's in Wheatley and Highbury Canco Corp. in Leamington and others across Chatham–Kent–Leamington are global leaders in safe, fresh, healthy food production and distribution. In fact, 56% of products produced in Ontario farms end up at one of our province's 4,900 food processors. But this carbon tax hinders the competitive edge our food processors need: their ability to sell products to markets locally and around the world. We need the federal Liberals to finally listen. Terminate the carbon tax today.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please explain to the House how the carbon tax is impacting food processing businesses across our province?

Mr. John Jordan: Last week, I had the privilege to attend the Food and Beverage Ontario conference, which brings together processors from across the province to discuss priorities to the sector. One of the top priorities, when I spoke to them, was the business-busting carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, it's simple economics: The higher the cost of agricultural production and transportation, the higher the cost of our processed foods. Processed foods, like many other goods, compete with imports like in any other market economy. When we have imported products coming in from jurisdictions that aren't subject to the carbon tax, they have a competitive advantage.

The Premier, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction—they've all worked. This government has all worked to create the right conditions for businesses to succeed—700,00 jobs coming into this province. The

carbon tax works against this, and therefore, it works against all Ontarians—in fact, all Canadians.

Like the member from Pembroke–Nipissing has just said passionately, we need to axe the tax.

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

SUMMER GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A number of members have informed me they wish to raise points of order. I'll start with the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: As is tradition in here—we're heading into the summer break. On behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, to all of our colleagues here in the assembly, I hope for you a safe summer, some time with your families and—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we're like a big family here—a bit of a dysfunctional family, but we're a family.

On that note, I've always thought of the Premier as the little brother that I never really wanted. What I'm going to miss is our daily back-and-forths. So when you come to Ottawa, Premier, you don't have to stay in the mayor's basement; you can come stay upstairs at our house.

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

The member for Guelph on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to take a moment—as rumour has it, we'll be rising for the summer—to thank all the staff who work here at Queen's Park, who help keep us doing the people's business. Thank you all, no matter what you do, especially those who help clean my office.

On behalf of the Ontario Green caucus, I want to wish all MPPs a safe summer, safe travels home. I know you'll all be working hard over the summer, meeting with constituents, attending events, and I want to wish you well.

VISITOR

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just want to welcome my lovely mother to the Ontario Legislature, Sara Hooshiyarfard. I love you, Mom. Welcome.

BIRTHDAY OF MEMBER'S SON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Because we won't be here on Monday, I would like to wish my first-born, my son Malik, a happy 20th birthday.

D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Kevin Holland: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for a moment of silence in recognition of the anniversary of D-Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan is seeking the unanimous consent

of the House for a moment's silence in recognition of the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment of silence.

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

SUMMER GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the Premier might have a point of order. Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. As my colleagues mentioned—and I'm glad you said your younger brother, not your older brother. Anyways, you're right. You're 100% right: We go back and forth, but we always want the best health and the very best for your constituents in your ridings. I just want to wish everyone a very safe summer.

The misnomer out there—and I think all parties will agree—is that everyone is sitting on the beach for the next few months. That's the furthest from the truth. We're still going—at least, I'm going—from 6 in the morning to midnight every single day. I know each and every one of you will be out in your ridings and your constituencies, and visiting events within your ridings, answering the calls, answering the questions. When we're in here, yes, we're going back and forth, but it doesn't mean we stop working. Actually, it allows us to work even harder within our constituencies.

I just want to thank each and every one of you for the incredible work you do in your ridings. It's greatly appreciated. I always make sure, if I come into your ridings—I know that we always invite you; we really do. I know, Wayne, you're always there.

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: Sorry; I shouldn't call him by his first name. But you do. Everyone shows up and everyone's welcome to every single announcement we have.

Thank you so much. I wish everyone a safe holiday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Before the session apparently ends, I really did want to take a moment to thank all the people that keep us going here. First of all, I want to thank my caucus, my incredible team here; our House team in particular; and all of the staff in the NDP caucus, the official opposition, who are so essential to helping us hold the government to account, to do the work that we do here and serve the people who we represent.

I really want to thank the hard-working assembly staff, the Clerks and broadcast and recording services and counsel. Let's give them all a big round of applause. They do extraordinary work every day.

Applause.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And the journalists, who hold us all to account—sucking up as good as I can there—and the stakeholders who met with us this session to discuss the issues of interest in the economy, in health care, in education, in housing and transportation and on and on.

I do want to wish everybody in this room a very happy and a very safe and a very productive summer. The work does not stop; that is true. We are going to continue to work hard over the summer to offer real solutions to real people in the province of Ontario—to the real problems that people are facing. I hope everybody, again, has a safe, productive and wonderful summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our points of order, I think.

DEFERRED VOTES

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 109.

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

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1155.

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

MPP French has moved private member's notice of motion number 109.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutlala	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike	

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie
Babikian, Aris	Hamid, Zee	Pinsonneault, Steve
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Barnes, Patrice	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Dixon, Jess	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.

Dunlop, Jill
Fedeli, Victor
Flack, Rob
Ford, Doug

Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David

Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 66.

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

Motion negatived.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I must ask our pages to assemble.

It's never too early to say a word of thanks to our legislative pages. Our pages are smart, trustworthy and hard-working, and they're indispensable to the effective functioning of the chamber. 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 will go home now and continue your studies, and no doubt will contribute to your communities, your province and your country in important ways. We expect great things from all of you. Who knows? Maybe some of you someday will take your seats in this House as members or work here as staff. No matter where your path leads you, we wish you well.

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

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Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Speaker. Her Honour awaits.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

Hon. Edith Dumont (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated. Veuillez vous asseoir.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

An Act to provide for safety measures respecting movable soccer goals / Loi prévoyant des mesures de sécurité pour les buts de soccer mobiles.

An Act to amend the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux.

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

An Act to amend various Acts / Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

An Act to amend various Acts with respect to homebuyers and homeowners, properties of cultural heritage value or interest and certain planning matters / Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les acquéreurs de logements et les propriétaires de logements, les biens ayant une valeur ou un caractère sur le plan du patrimoine culturel et d'autres questions liées à l'aménagement du territoire.

An Act to revive 1828469 Ontario Inc.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): In His Majesty's name, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor assents to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur la lieutenant-gouverneure sanctionne ces projets de loi.

Hon. Edith Dumont (Lieutenant Governor): Mr. Speaker, would you allow me to say a few words?

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Absolument.

Hon. Edith Dumont (Lieutenant Governor): Okay. I will sit.

Since my installation last fall, I have begun travelling our amazing province, and I have witnessed first-hand your dedication and your hard work. Alors, au nom des citoyens et des citoyennes de l'Ontario, je tenais à vous dire merci du fond du coeur.

Also, as the representative of the crown, I wanted to share with you how proud I am, and I am filled with gratitude. Also, I am deeply moved by the warmth and the hospitality that has been extended to me. Alors, merci. Meegwetch. Thank you.

Je sais que vous serez très occupés, que vous aurez de nombreuses activités, beaucoup de rencontres. Au-delà de toutes vos activités, je tenais à vous souhaiter de nombreux moments de repos avec la famille, les amis et les gens que vous aimez.

Thank you. Meegwetch. Merci beaucoup.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

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

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

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 June 6, 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 BILLS

POULAK AND RACHAR LIMITED ACT, 2024

Ms. Brady moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr48, An Act to revive Poulak and Rachar Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

THE OAKVILLE PLAYERS ACT, 2024

Mr. Crawford moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr50, An Act to revive The Oakville Players.

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

First reading agreed to.

STOPPING ILLEGAL HANDGUN SMUGGLING ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À STOPPER LA CONTREBANDE D'ARMES DE POING ILLÉGALES

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 210, An Act to enact the Stopping Illegal Handgun Smuggling Act, 2024 / Projet de loi 210, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à stopper la contrebande d'armes de poing illégales.

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 invite the member for Toronto–Danforth to briefly introduce his bill if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This is a reintroduction of an act to follow the example of Mexico, which has investigated gun manufacturers in the United States and alleges that they are facilitating the flow of illegal handguns into Mexico. I think the evidence is such that one can make such allegations for handguns coming into Canada. This bill would direct the government to make those investigations,

substantiate them, and should they be substantiated, initiate legal action to protect Canadians.

PERSONS DAY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 PROCLAMANT LA JOURNÉE DE L'AFFAIRE « PERSONNE »

Ms. McMahon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 211, An Act to proclaim Persons Day / Projet de loi 211, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'affaire « personne »

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 from Beaches–East York like to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I would love to do that, Mr. Speaker. The bill proclaims October 18 in each year as Persons Day.

MOTIONS

HOUSE AND COMMITTEE SITTINGS

SÉANCES DE LA CHAMBRE ET DES COMITÉS

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, I move that, when the House adjourns today it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 21, 2024; and

That in addition to any other committee meetings authorized by the House, the standing committees be authorized to meet for the purpose of the consideration of the estimates during the 2024 summer adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent–Leamington, has moved that, when the House adjourns today it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 21, 2024; and

That in addition to any other committee meetings authorized by the House, the standing committees be authorized to meet for the purpose of the consideration of the estimates during the 2024 summer adjournment of the House.

I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's very concerning to hear about this eleventh-hour motion to extend the amount of time that we will be in summer session to October 21. People in Ontario expect us to be legislators in this building at the assigned times, which means, after Labour Day, we are here debating legislation to improve the lives of people in Ontario. It's very concerning that there is this sudden announcement that instead we are going to be coming back on October 21—wow. School has started, people are back from their vacation, and what's this government going to be doing? You want an extra month off; is that it? Is that

what's motivating you? You want an extra month off? That's very concerning.

The reason why I think it's concerning is because things are not okay in Ontario today. We just debated a housing bill where, it's safe to say, it was at best mediocre. It's not going to be doing anything to fix the housing crisis that we're experiencing, where rent has never been more expensive and owning a home has never been more expensive. We should be here in the Legislature debating solutions to the housing crisis. What we shouldn't be doing is extending the amount of time that the government is on summer break—summer break in the fall, when people expect us to be doing our jobs here at that time. I don't understand it.

I think about the issues that I've been raising or that we've been raising over the last few weeks. The issue of auto theft: I spoke to the minister just briefly beforehand. People want us to take action on auto theft. We agree there is a federal piece to this, where we need to properly regulate the outflow of products from ports, but there's also a provincial element to this too: It boggles my mind that an individual can take a stolen car to ServiceOntario and get it re-licensed and back on the roads. That's a provincial issue. Why aren't we dealing with that? Why don't we deal with that in September? Nope. Instead, this government wants to extend their summer vacation into fall—into fall—for another four weeks. I think that's a shame.

The last few weeks, we've also brought up the issue of the court backlogs. And we're hearing that in our riding, too: People want their cases to be heard in court and tribunals, from landlords to tenants, to small claims court, to people who have filed assault charges or have had assault charges filed against their perpetrator. They want our court system to be functioning as you would expect a court system to be functioning in a province as wealthy as ours, in a democracy in the western world. But it's not.

1310

Court cases are being thrown out every week, court cases with evidence, because the courts are not able to meet the Jordan principle and they're not able to ensure that someone is tried within 18 months or two years. That's what we should be trying or working to solve in September instead of this government choosing to extend their summer vacation into the fall. It doesn't make sense.

I think about the growing issue of poverty in our riding. On the way here, I walk down College Street. College Street has changed a lot in the last six years where I've been the MPP. As I walk down College Street, I pass an encampment outside St. Stephen's church. People are desperate. They have got nowhere to go. No one wants to sleep in a tent in the heat of summer on concrete. No one wants to do that, but people do it because they have no where to go.

In September, I would much prefer to be debating legislation. We could be debating the fall economic statement, where we present solutions to the homelessness crisis that isn't just in downtown Toronto anymore; it's in towns and cities all across Ontario, as well as the mental

health crisis, the drug addiction issues that we're seeing, the opioid crisis. No, instead, this government is choosing to extend summer vacation by four weeks. I think that is a shame.

And then as I walk College Street, you've got the encampment on one side, and on the other side you've got the excellent Fort York Food Bank. They do an amazing job. Our riding association has organized fundraisers for them. We attend their events. We organize food drives for them, as well. And when I speak to the organizers of the Fort York Food Bank, they tell me that need has never been higher. It has never been higher. People who are coming are not just people on social assistance; they are people who are working full-time, who have children that they are looking after. There are seniors in the line because it is too expensive to live in our city. It is just too expensive. And when I walked by there today, the line was so long. It's so long: 80 or 90 people were waiting there this morning, sometimes for hours, just to get basic food supplies. We're talking cans, milk, cereal, vegetables and basic stuff because they cannot afford to pay their rent and go to the supermarket and pay their bills.

I would prefer if this government spent their time in September debating legislation with us, debating the fall economic statement, to address the growing inequality in our city and the fact that hundreds of thousands of people do not have enough to survive. We could be talking about increasing social assistance. It's horribly low. It puts people in legislated poverty.

We could be talking about what we should be doing to ensure seniors aren't evicted into homelessness, which is happening in my riding more and more frequently. It's very concerning.

We could be debating increasing the minimum wage, so when someone works full-time, they have enough money to afford to live an okay life in Ontario. And it is very difficult to do that on the current minimum wage right now. It's very concerning.

That's what we should be debating, but instead, this government wants to go on a summer vacation in the fall. I think that is an absolute shame.

I think about some other issues that have come up this week, where we had a tragedy in a school, where an individual was left alone in a room when he never should have been left alone—a child—and he died. That is a tragedy that should never happen. The member for Hamilton Mountain talked about the mother and when she received a text and then a phone call that her child had died at school—that is a parent's worst nightmare. I can't even fathom how horrible what would be. That is a life-altering event. We should and could be debating legislation to talk about how we can assure that that never, ever, ever happens again in any school in Ontario.

The other kinds of issues that Ontarians want us to be debating and solving in here, they don't—that's what they want us to be doing in September. That's what they expect. People come back from vacation in August, they go to work in September, and so should we. It's very concerning to hear about that—

Hon. Nina Tangri: We work in our ridings.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I hear the Associate Minister of Small Business—Mississauga—Streetsville. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville has a very serious issue in her riding. If the member from Mississauga—Streetsville introduced legislation to tackle the growing issue of seniors being summarily evicted from retirement homes, we would be very excited to debate that legislation in September, because those seniors—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): I'm going to ask the Associate Minister of Small Business to come to order, the member for Niagara Falls to come to order, and the member for Spadina—Fort York to come to order. Yes, yes.

The member for University—Rosedale has the floor.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I would be interested in debating legislation like that.

We had a similar issue in our riding, at 877 Yonge, Davenport. That building was very well-maintained. It was a very nice retirement home. People loved it. It was sold. The owner of the property is doing something very similar to what I believe Chartwell is doing in the riding of Mississauga—Streetsville. They announced to all the residents, "You have to leave." The residents were not informed of their rights—which is that only the Landlord and Tenant Board can evict you, but that your ability to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board and contest an eviction is taken away if you accept any offer of help from Chartwell, or the retirement home provider, and these providers know that full well. When they come in to a 75-year-old or 80-year-old individual's room and say, "Get on this bus, and we'll give you a tour of other retirement homes, but just sign this document here that we're able to assist you," then it's very difficult for you to contest an eviction, and it is very difficult for you to receive the compensation that you, as a renter, should be entitled to. It is a shame, and the retirement home operators know that full well.

That is the kind of legislation that we should be debating in September.

We will be voting against this motion. It is not what we should be doing in September. We should be here doing our job.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): Any further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I sadly am up to debate this particular motion.

I certainly understand why the government might want to leave a week early. We all do go back to our ridings in the summer and we work hard—each and every one of us do, across all party lines. It's important to spend time with our constituents to hear their concerns and bring those concerns back to Queen's Park. I was hoping to bring those concerns back to Queen's Park in September, but now I'm finding out that we're not going to be able to bring those concerns back to Queen's Park until October 21, at a time when we are facing an unprecedented housing affordability crisis that is leading to an unprecedented affordability crisis for people.

We could be passing legislation to actually legalize housing so we can quickly build homes that people can

afford in the communities they love. We could be passing legislation that would allow us to legalize six-to-11-storey buildings. That is not going to happen, because we won't be sitting in September to debate that legislation.

We're facing an unprecedented health care crisis. Last summer, there were more emergency department closures in health care than we've ever seen in Ontario's history. We could be actually debating legislation to fix the health care system so we don't have such an unprecedented level of closures in our emergency departments—2.3 million Ontarians don't have access to a doctor, Speaker. Maybe we should be passing legislation to provide them access to a doctor, because we know that access to primary health care helps keep people healthy, which would take pressure off of our health care system.

1320

Speaker, we are likely going to face the hottest summer we've ever had in Ontario. We've already been experiencing unprecedented heat. We could be debating a heat preparedness plan to ensure that we actually set maximum temperatures for congregate settings so people in long-term care don't experience extreme heat this summer, so that people living unhoused on our streets have cooling centres to go to, in the same way we have heating centres in the winter. Over 600 people died in British Columbia during their major, extreme heatwave in 2021. Ontario has no preparedness plan in place to deal with that. We could be debating that and passing legislation on it.

Likewise with forest fires: We could be actually debating legislation and passing legislation to ensure that we're ready for the forest fire season this summer, when we already have 94 fires burning in the province of Ontario, and we're not prepared or ready.

Speaker, we could be debating legislation to address what the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation brought to Queen's Park today on the heels of what the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario brought a couple of weeks ago: the alarming increase of violence in our schools and the fact that we need legislation to protect educators, to ensure that we have enough educational assistants and adults in our schools and our classrooms to help prevent violence in schools, to ensure the safety of educators and students, to ensure a good learning environment. But no, we won't be around to deal with that.

We could be debating legislation about the greedy gouging that's happening in our grocery stores, driving up food prices. We could pass legislation on that. Actually, it would be great to pass legislation on that before Thanksgiving, but we won't be meeting until after Thanksgiving, so that's not going to happen either, Speaker.

We could be addressing the fact that people living in legislated poverty simply cannot survive—\$1,300 a month when the average rent is over \$2,000 a month. The math doesn't add up. We know poverty costs the province \$33 billion a year. We could actually put forward legislation to help lower the cost that poverty places on society and improve the well-being of people in our communities. That's not going to happen.

Some 16,000 people will be unhoused tonight in Ontario. We could pass legislation to start building more

non-profit co-op and permanent supportive housing. That's not going to happen—or at least not until after Thanksgiving.

So, Speaker, the members opposite oftentimes talk about how government needs to be run more like a business, and I can tell you, as a long-time small business owner, I don't know of any business that shuts down—literally shuts down for months—and says, “Hey, we're just going to shut down for a few months.” I don't know of any business that can't tell its employees what's happening day to day and the schedule keeps changing all the time. How does a business function in that kind of environment? If the government wants to run government more like a business, maybe we could actually have a schedule that the people trying to run this place could adhere to and have some predictability and some stability and some consistency so we can actually do the people's business. But that's not happening today, and we won't have enough time to talk about it until after Thanksgiving this fall.

I don't know what's driving this, if it's politics that's driving this, but all I want to say to the people of Ontario is, let's put people before politics. Let's put what's good for the people of Ontario—and let's do the people's business. So I will be spending the summer, like everyone else, I'm sure, of all parties, working hard, listening to people. And I wish I could come back in September and bring their voice into this chamber to address the issues they're concerned about—the affordability crisis they are facing. That's why I'm opposed to this motion, Speaker.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Toute une annonce qu'ils nous annoncent aujourd'hui avec la motion. On pensait qu'on revenait au mois de septembre; mais non, on va revenir le 21 octobre. Ça, ça veut dire qu'on est parti, de 13 semaines à 19 semaines, sans revenir en Chambre, sans revenir débattre. Les « issues » que nos comtés ont—tout l'été, on va passer avec nos concitoyens pour se préparer pour ramener leurs « issues » en septembre, pour représenter nos comtés. Là, ils viennent de nous annoncer—comme un cheveu sur la soupe, comme on dit en français—qu'on revient le 21 octobre.

Après ça, on se demande pourquoi la population est sarcastique avec les politiciens. Ce sont des motions comme ça qui rendent que le monde, les concitoyens, disent : « Cela a-t-il du bon sens? »

Moi, je le sais; j'ai négocié toute ma vie. J'ai négocié des conventions collectives. J'ai négocié des vacances. Je sais que mes collègues vont parler, probablement, de ça aussi. Mais on a négocié des vacances.

Quand tu commences à travailler, tu as deux semaines de vacances, et avec les années, tu accumules une autre semaine puis une autre semaine. Si tu es chanceux, tu peux te rendre jusqu'à huit semaines, mais c'est assez rare, on s'entend assez bien, dans une convention collective, mais tu vas voir, normalement, deux, quatre, peut-être six semaines pour ceux que ça fait plus longtemps. Nous autres, on parle de 19 semaines. Ce gouvernement-là, ils ont quoi? C'est quoi le problème, là?

On a été élu pour venir représenter nos concitoyens en Chambre, pour amener les « concernés » de nos concitoyens, pour essayer d'améliorer la vie en Ontario. Puis, tout d'un coup, on est parti 19 semaines. Le 21 octobre—on s'entend-tu? C'est du temps loin de la Chambre pour essayer de faire des changements pour nos comtés et nos concitoyens.

C'est quoi que le gouvernement a à cacher? C'est quoi la transparence? On ne comprend pas. On part une semaine avant. On était supposé de finir le 15; là, on part une semaine avant et on va revenir le 21 octobre—le 21 octobre. Ce ne sont pas des farces, là.

On est supposé travailler comme tout le monde. On est ici pour représenter nos concitoyens. C'est une vraie honte. Mon collègue de Niagara l'a dit : « It's shameful. » On devrait avoir honte.

Je ne sais pas pourquoi l'idée de faire ça—c'est-tu pour faire encore plus de cabales? Vous avez battu les babines pendant quelques mois. Ce sont les rumeurs : va-t-il y avoir des élections prématurées? Est-ce que c'est juste pour ramasser encore plus d'argent et encore faire la cabale plus longtemps?

On dit comment la province va mal. C'est drôle, mais sur votre bord, tout va bien en province. Il n'y a pas de problèmes en Ontario. Tout va bien. On sait que vos campagnes à la télé, à la radio, disent que tout va bien, mais en réalité, tout ne va pas bien.

Moi, je peux vous dire, dans mon comté, quand j'ai une ville comme Hearst où 65 % à 70 % du monde n'ont pas de médecin de famille, ça ne va pas bien. Quand je vais sur la baie James, il y a du monde qui n'a pas de maison. Ils n'ont pas d'eau potable. Tu es obligé de prendre une douche de quelques minutes parce qu'il y a trop de chimiques dans ton eau. Tu viens avec des rougeurs sur le corps. Il y a des maisons qui sont pleines de moisissures, et on demande une extension à la réserve pour être capable de répondre aux besoins de la communauté. Les chefs et les conseils de bande sont arrivés en quêteux devant le gouvernement, et pourtant ils sont sur leurs terres ancestrales et c'est leur droit. Mais non, nous autres, on prend 19 semaines à ne pas s'asseoir pour débattre de ces projets de loi-là ou de ces demandes qui viennent de nos concitoyens.

Je pense, avec l'éducation—on a des problèmes en éducation. Je ne sais pas. Moi, j'ai ma femme et j'ai ma fille qui travaillent comme aides-enseignantes. Ma fille est qualifiée pour restreindre les enfants en crise. Elle arrive à la maison pleine de bleus parce qu'elle est obligée de s'occuper de plusieurs enfants à la fois.

1330

Je vais vous dire une expérience qu'elle a vécue. Elle s'est tournée une seconde parce qu'un autre de ses enfants avait besoin d'elle—une seconde. Elle s'est virée de bord puis l'enfant lui a donné un bon coup de poing dans le ventre. Elle a perdu une journée d'ouvrage. Imagine-toi si elle avait été enceinte.

L'enfant est en crise. Ce n'est pas la faute de l'enfant. Mais c'est la faute d'un gouvernement qui ne donne pas assez d'argent aux conseils qu'ils sont obligés de donner

plus d'enfants de qui s'occuper. On a appris qu'il y un jeune enfant de 16 ans qui est décédé. Puis ils disent qu'on politise ça? On ne politise pas ça; c'est la situation. C'est qu'on sous-finance l'éducation. On sous-finance la santé. On sous-finance plein de choses en Ontario, puis ils disent que ça va bien?

Moi, je peux vous dire, dans mon comté, je parle aux directeurs des hôpitaux. Ils nous disent que l'élastique est au bout. Il est à la veille de péter, à 4 %—puisqu'ils ont dit que c'est 4 % qu'ils ont donné aux hôpitaux. Pourtant, l'inflation est bien plus haute que ça. Fait que, ils sont sous-financés, puis qui paye pour ça? Ce sont encore les patients.

Mais non : « Tout va bien. On revient dans 19 semaines. »

On pourrait débattre des projets de loi à faire avancer pour améliorer notre système de santé. Parce que dans le Nord, là, je peux vous dire, ça ne va pas bien. C'est facile quand tu viens du Sud; tu as accès à des services. Qu'est-ce que tu fais des familles autistes qui n'ont pas les services? Qu'est-ce que tu fais—on a besoin de maisons pour les personnes qui ont des troubles de santé mentale. On n'a pas de place à rester. C'est deux, trois, cinq ans d'attente. Ça, ce n'est pas mentionné, les soins de longue durée.

Mais tout va bien en Ontario, assez pour qu'on puisse se permettre de rentrer le 21 octobre. On est élu pour travailler. On travaille tout l'été, on rencontre nos concitoyens, on parle, puis quand arrive septembre, on amène les « concernes » qu'ils nous demandent. C'est ça, notre travail.

Mais non, il y a un bord du gouvernement—le gouvernement, dans sa grande sagesse, vient de dire le 21 octobre. Pourtant, tous les travailleurs de cette province-ci, la plupart ont deux semaines de vacances, quatre semaines de vacances. Puis nous autres on va en avoir—on va as être obligés de ne pas revenir ici pour adresser les « concernes » de ce monde-là qui vient nous voir puis qui vous [*inaudible*].

Je suis convaincu que vos concitoyens vous disent la même chose qu'ils nous disent à nous autres : « Vous êtes là pour nous représenter. » On devrait être là, en temps et lieu, pour représenter nos concitoyens. On devrait être ici, comme d'habitude, au mois de septembre. Mais le gouvernement encore—19 semaines. Moi, je n'en reviens pas.

C'est une atteinte à la démocratie. On dirait que vous vous foutez de la démocratie. C'est parce que vous avez juste une grosse majorité, vous êtes blindés, et tout ce qu'on amène ou qu'on veut discuter ou qu'on amène pour amender des projets de loi, ce n'est jamais assez bon. Pourtant, ça vient des mêmes concitoyens, ça vient des mêmes agences, ça vient de toutes les personnes qu'on consulte, qui sont les mêmes que les vôtres. Vous êtes dans les comités. Vous les entendez comme nous autres.

Pourtant, ces recommandations viennent de ce monde-là. Mais non : « On s'en fout de la démocratie. On est majoritaire. » Ça, c'est une honte. Ça, c'est un affront à la démocratie.

Encore pire, quand je vois le premier ministre rentrer à moitié, dans le milieu d'une période de questions, c'est un

manque de respect envers notre chef, mais c'est aussi un manque de respect de la démocratie. Il devrait être assis là puis prendre les questions puis y répondre aussi.

En tout cas, comme vous pouvez le voir, moi, je ne suis pas un gars qui a l'habitude de manger mes mots. Mais on est ici pour faire un travail. Moi, je pense encore comme un travailleur. J'ai été mécanicien industriel. J'ai représenté les travailleurs pendant 21 ans de ma vie. J'ai négocié des bonnes conventions. Il y a des conventions que, quand ça commence, on travaille fort pour améliorer constamment les conditions de travail—

Interjection: Say you're sharing your time—

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ah, je partage mon temps avec ma collègue—

Interjection: Windsor.

M. Guy Bourgouin: —de Windsor.

Mais c'est juste pour vous dire que c'est décevant de voir un gouvernement qui nous annonce cet après-midi qu'on va revenir le 21 octobre. Moi, je peux dire à mes concitoyens : « Moi, je suis prêt à travailler. Je suis prêt à amener vos “issues”. Je ne suis pas sûr si le gouvernement est prêt à faire la même chose. A cause qu'ils sont majoritaires, ils sont capables de se permettre de bafouer la démocratie, comme on le fait là.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I came in here this afternoon. I had petitions that I was going to read from constituents that are calling on this government, as we are seeing, from May 26 to June 1 of this year, actually, 15 opioid overdoses reported among emergency department visits in my community alone. We've heard a similar story from my colleagues in Toronto, from those in the north. It's happening in every single community. It's happening in every single Conservative riding too.

Instead of being able to come in and read those petitions calling on this government to reopen the SafePoint consumption and treatment site in Windsor, or reopen The Spot, in Sudbury, and provide ongoing funding for these treatment centres where people go in and lives are saved and they're getting connected with the supports and services they need, they're getting connected with hospital care and they go through withdrawal management and rehab—these are our loved ones. These are our community members. Instead of being able to talk about that and read that petition, this government has brought forward a motion to shut down this House from today, June 6, until October 21. While people are dying—just walk out the doors from Queen's Park and look around you; open your damn eyes. People are dying on the streets, and you want to shut the Legislature down until October 21 because you don't want to be held accountable. You don't want to bring legislation forward or entertain legislation that would actually save lives, to reopen these important health care services. It's absolutely shameful.

I have petitions from people in my community and all over the province—and I hope my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh is listening because it's his community too—people who are living in legislated poverty. I

was going to read a petition from people in my community and around Ontario, saying that you need to double ODSP and OW rates. The government pulled this stunt, so we don't get to read those petitions now. They're shutting down the voices of people in my community and their own communities and communities all over the province.

Speaker, I had tabled a bill, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act. Right now there is a pretrial under way into the murder of Sahra Bulle in my community, who was murdered by her ex-partner. This government played games with it and they're continuing to play games with it, because now we don't have a chance to actually bring that back into the House for third reading and get it passed until at least October 21.

Just two weeks ago, I believe, there was a young nurse, Shannan Hickey, 26 years old, brutally murdered by her ex-partner. I raised that in this House, and you know what the government's response is to it? "We're going to shut this place down until October 21 because we don't want to talk about it. We don't want to do anything about it. We don't want to be held accountable while women are dying in this province"—absolutely shameful.

How many women have to die? That's my question. How many women have to die before you take action? How many women have to die before you act on the 75 recommendations from the Renfrew county coroner's inquest that were directed to your government, that you could implement? But instead of sitting next week, like we're supposed to, you're shutting the House down and not bringing us back until October 21. How many women have to die? How many is enough for you?

My colleague from Waterloo tabled Lydia's Law. You didn't even give it the consideration of allowing it to be debated. You shut it down when you knew there were hundreds of people coming from around this province to try and be heard—survivors, victims' families—and you shut it down and sent it to committee before that debate could happen, without even consulting or giving a heads-up to the woman that tabled that bill. Then the government House leader had the nerve to stand out there and say to the media that it was theatrics—theatrics that my colleague was upset that that happened, theatrics that those families and those survivors were upset that you did that. Now we're not going to get to debate that until October 21. Because—why? Why would we want to talk about women, about sexual assault survivors who are being failed by the justice system that you refuse to do anything about?

1340

We had women here today—Speaker, I want to be clear; sorry. I'm going to share my time with the member from Kiiwetinoong.

We had women here today, elected officials, who have asked this government to bring in legislation to hold elected officials accountable for harassing and abusing other elected officials, their staff members, those who work in municipalities, municipal staff. This government promised over a year ago they were going to act on that. You've done nothing. You've done nothing, but you're

going to shut this Legislature down a week early and not come back until October 21, with no action—absolutely no action.

We see an increase in homelessness encampments. We have an over 40% increase in people accessing food banks between 2022 and 2023. That number is 101% more than it was pre-pandemic. That's all under your watch, and you can't get out of here fast enough, because you don't want to be held accountable—absolutely shameful.

These are the people you're supposed to represent. These are the people who you're supposed to bring in policies for and make decisions for to make life better for them, not these wealthy developers that you're putting ahead of everybody else, not your donors that you're putting ahead of everyone else—people in this province who are struggling. And you're shutting the Legislature down a week early and not bringing us back until October 21—absolutely shameful.

The wait times for people for hospital care continue to climb. We have emergency departments and urgent care centres that are literally closing in communities all over this province, including in yours. We heard a heart-breaking story from one of my colleagues around the Minden ER, where a man was in cardiac arrest, and because they couldn't take him to the hospital that was in his community because you have underfunded it and the emergency department—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but I'm going to remind her to make her comments through the Chair.

Member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker.

Because this government is underfunding the health care system, this man could not go to the emergency department in his own community because it's now closed, and by the time they got him to the neighbouring emergency department, he died. He died. This is what you don't want to talk about and what you don't want to be held accountable for.

Speaker, the education system: We just had the story of Landyn. My colleague raised it here in the House, but it has been all over the news. Landyn was a student with a disability who died at school because they were under-resourced, because there was nobody there to provide care for him—nothing. What we get from the education minister are thoughts and prayers, and we trust that things will be better. How many more Landyns do there need to be?

There's 70,000 kids on the wait-list for autism services, and the minister responsible stood in this House this morning and said that things were fantastic, that they're doing great. That's the longest wait-list there has been under any government.

Again, I will state how incredibly shameful and irresponsible it is for this government to not only shut us down a week early but not bring us back until October 21.

I will ask the final question: How many people need to go hungry in this province to be enough for you? How many people in this province have to be homeless to be

enough for you? How many women in this province have to die to be enough for you? How many of our loved ones do we have to lose to addiction for it to be enough for you? Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. October 21, 2024, 10:15, is what I heard, when we will be coming back. I know when I come to this place, any leadership that we have—I know, at the community level, at the council level, there's always opportunity for leadership to meet to talk about the issues that we face, to address, to try to help the people that are living in that community, and it's important to have that dialogue. It's important to bring up the issues to the place where leadership is. There's a time to respond to the crises that are happening. Even though I'm talking about at the community level, but I think, it's at the same—when I think about the Legislature. This place, this Legislature, is a place where we debate, where we bring the issues. It's a place of democracy, where we bring the issues of the people that are living in Ontario.

I know that when we talk about democracy, when we talk about democratic law-making, it needs debate. We cannot be part-time legislators; we need to be here. Democratic law-making needs hearings. We need to be able to have the voices of the people all over Ontario on any specific issues that are happening. Democratic law-making also needs committee meetings to be able to move the agenda forward, to bring the issues to light so people do not continue to suffer across Ontario.

I'm just thinking about—if we aren't here, how does the debate happen? How are we going to be able to debate the issues that matter to the people not just in Kiiwetinoong but also across Ontario?

I'm a believer that our role here at the Legislature, at Queen's Park, is to bring the voice of our constituents forward, and that's what I do. I mean, when we talk about Kiiwetinoong, there's so many issues, so many matters in Kiiwetinoong that require the attention of this government, the attention of this assembly. I can go down the list of some of the issues that we face. When we talk about health care in northern Ontario, in the riding of Kiiwetinoong—unnecessary suffering, needless deaths become a norm, and then status quo sometimes is construed as normal and acceptable in Kiiwetinoong, especially on First Nation reserves. That would not be acceptable anywhere else in Ontario—in fact, not anywhere else in Canada.

I know that the facilities that we have—there's our example—Ornge is a medevac service that we have in the north. In Kiiwetinoong, I can probably say eight to 10 flights per day—that's the health care system that we have, and we have one hospital where everybody goes, in Sioux Lookout. These are the issues, these are the realities that we face.

1350

A couple of weeks ago, I was in the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay's riding. I went to one of his First Nations that was there, and they're struggling. When

you actually land in the community, the community is right by the airport. The gravel runway is right by the community, and they're so full. They're at full capacity of their reserve status that they have. There is a whole reserve that they have, and they're trying to get more land. They're trying to get more reserve land, but the process is that the federal government has to talk to the provincial government to access that land. The federal government will have to buy that land from the province and then give it to the community as a First Nation. How messed up is that? They're actually begging for land, on their own land. It's kind of messed up in that way.

But I talk about that because they cannot build. They cannot build homes. They're over capacity. They have a lot of suicide attempts, suicides in the community. At that time when I visited, they had a boil-water advisory. There were people actually carrying their jugs to where they get the water and then taking it to their home. That is Ontario. That is the Ontario that I know. That is the Canada that I know.

I know when we talk about access to housing, there's certainly a lot of people who are couch-surfing, even in First Nations. When there's overcrowding in First Nations reserves in the north, they come down south and they become homeless in communities such as Thunder Bay, such as Dryden, such as Kenora, such as Sioux Lookout. They become a provincial issue.

Again, that's how oppression works. That's how colonialism works. I think it's not right to be able to continue on that road.

I know another thing that's happening up north quite a bit is resource development, lots of mining. I see these announcements down here that there are these investments in EV factories. But one thing I know is they haven't done the work of free, prior and informed consent. In order to do any work on the traditional territories, the treaty lands up where you're going to try to get the minerals, there has to be a process of free, prior and informed consent.

I feel that this government is moving too fast, which means if you're trying to mine over there on our traditional lands, on treaty territories, that development will not happen if you move too fast. I think those are the things that we need to be able to talk about. But right now, the approach that this government is doing with regard to resource development and mining, it is very colonial.

I would want to talk some more—but for this reason, I cannot support this motion. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm going to be sharing my time with the members from Ottawa South and Kingston and the Islands.

C'est un peu ridicule que le gouvernement a décidé d'annuler la session d'été une semaine avant le « schedule ». Puis, maintenant, on ne retourne pas à la législature qu'après la journée de l'Action de grâce en octobre. Cela veut dire qu'on a une vacance d'été plus longue que nos étudiants, que nos enseignants; que la législature est fermée plus longtemps que nos écoles ici en Ontario, et qu'on n'a pas la possibilité d'avoir un débat ou

une discussion pour améliorer la qualité de notre système d'éducation pour nos enfants qui retournent en septembre à des écoles qui agrandissent, à des écoles sans le système de chauffage nécessaire pour une bonne qualité d'éducation.

It's a little ridiculous that this government has chosen to not only end the spring session a week early, but now, not return the Legislature into session until after Thanksgiving. This, of course, means that the Legislature will be closed for almost 50% longer than our schools. We'll have a summer vacation that is significantly longer than our kids and teachers—teachers this government far too often decries for not having the same kind of work ethic that they do. And yet, they're extending their own summer vacation by months—not just weeks, but by months. Of course, this is time that Ontario's elected officials, the members of this place who are chosen by the people, could have used to debate important issues that are before us.

I'm reminded that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is also the House leader, promised us legislation this session on improving integrity issues across our 400-plus municipalities across the province. As we know and we've heard far too often, staff members in our cities and our towns, elected officials in our cities and our towns are going to work at city halls and town halls across Ontario and facing really egregious levels of harassment and abuse. We've had serious cases in Ottawa, in Brampton, in Barrie, in Mississauga, and undoubtedly in communities right across the province. This is a government that said they were going to address this issue. They've had legislation drafted for almost two and a half years. We have a minister who promised to bring this legislation forward before the end of this session. Of course, this session is ending a week early, and no such legislation has been tabled. I fear it hasn't been tabled because a week after the minister said he would bring legislation forward this summer, the Premier was in Ottawa saying that he would never support that kind of legislation at all. So I have to question who is actually in charge. Is it the Premier or is it the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing?

Of course, we could have been using this next week and the six weeks in the fall that we're going to miss to talk about the doctor shortage across the province. We have over two million Ontarians, two million of our neighbours and our friends, who don't have a family doctor or a front-line health professional. This is a number that is getting worse and worse, and it has gotten particularly worse in the last six years under this government.

Just yesterday, I was speaking to a constituent of mine, Christie, who, like many parents this spring, received the thrilling news that their child has been accepted to university and their child is going to be going away to university. It is a thrill for many families to get to that stage in their life. As a result of being accepted to university, as a result of going away to school in the fall, her daughter was dropped by her family doctor. Her family doctor dropped her from her list of patients because she thought that she would be too far away to provide adequate con-

tinuing care. That's ridiculous. If we allow our kids to be dropped by their family physician simply for being accepted and deciding to go away for college or university, we are going to have a tsunami of students who are going to be losing out on primary health care. That is an issue that is worth discussing and debating in this place, and it's an issue we won't be able to talk about again now until after the Thanksgiving break.

1400

Small businesses in Ontario are suffering. They've been suffering for years as a result of the pandemic, and they continue to suffer. So this would have been a perfect opportunity to debate my colleague from Don Valley West's proposal to cut small business taxes in half, saving small business owners up to \$18,000 a year. That's real money—real money that they could reinvest into their business, real money that they could use to pay off some of the lingering debts from COVID, real money that they could use maybe even just to keep the lights on and doors open and ensure that small business continues in their communities to serve their neighbours, friends and residents, and that's a debate that we won't be able to have now until after Thanksgiving.

Of course, as the largest city in the province, as the largest city in the country, which is in the midst of a potential devastating and crippling transit strike, we could have spent six or seven weeks we're not going to be sitting here talking about adequately funding transit operations in Ontario. It's possible that while the Premier and his cabinet are taking a summer vacation that transit in the largest city in the country might actually shut down the city. That is something that we could be debating, that we could be discussing. We could be sharing stories of those who are going to go through that pain and suffering as a result of a potential transit strike, but unfortunately, we won't be here to do that, because, I presume, the Premier is going to be at his multi-million-dollar cottage in the Muskokas.

So, there is absolutely no need to extend the summer vacation well past Thanksgiving. It's going to simply take away the opportunity to share stories from our constituents. It's going to take away the opportunity to debate important legislation. It's frankly going to take away the opportunity from the government to introduce important legislation. We know that they haven't used the opportunity so far this year to introduce a heck of a lot of important legislation. I presume that's why they don't think they need these five or six weeks, is because they're just bereft of ideas and don't have anything else to bring forward.

So, with that, I can't support this motion. We need to be here in the fall to debate these important issues.

And now, I'm glad to pass it on to my friend from Ottawa South.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I didn't think that we'd be debating the non-prorogation prorogation today, because essentially there's so little on the order paper, you could fit about half a dozen prorogations in what this non-prorogation is.

So, you have to ask yourself, why are we closing this place down for an extra six weeks? Is there not important people's business? Does anybody have an answer? Maybe you can get up over there and say something, tell us why it's right. I haven't heard anything yet.

So, two reasons that I can think of: to avoid the scrutiny of this House, to avoid the scrutiny of what happens here every day during question period and during debate, to avoid the scrums that are in the hall, to try and take the steam out of politics in Ontario.

I also have to say, there's so little on the order paper, and I think, "What are we doing this session? What's the government's great accomplishment?" Well, I'll be fair, and I'll say something good: We got Bill 200 done, but, you know, we did that on a Wednesday afternoon. It was like lightning speed. It was incredible. It's important to get done. That's good.

What's this government's signature piece in this session? It didn't happen in here; it happened outside of here. What's their signature piece? It's a billion dollars to get beer and wine in the corner store a little more than a year earlier. What I don't understand is, what is this obsession with booze? Ever since this Premier has come here, that's all he likes to talk about. Remember that show, "Men, men, men, men"? It's like "Beer, beer, beer, beer." That's what it is.

There are so many other things that are so much more important, like the 2.3 million Ontarians who don't have a family doctor, and that number's growing. What about our kids at school, those kids who have exceptional needs? They're not getting what they need. How about their schools? Their schools are crumbling, some of them. How come that's not that important? Why is there no sense of urgency around that?

We have ERs closing. We're going to have more this summer. We have rural hospitals closing. This government's promised legislation around private nursing agencies for two years; it's done nothing, zip. They promised harassment legislation for municipalities. What have they done? Zip. They can't get it done. I don't understand why the government thinks this is okay.

Private members' legislation: It's going to back it all up by six weeks. That includes all of you, right? Your bills are going to be delayed. I've got a bill that I just put it on the order paper; it's called Sacred Spaces, Safe Places Act. It's bubble-zone legislation, and it's modelled after what we do at abortion clinics, to make sure that people can go their places of worship without being harassed. It's creating a safe zone. It's going to sit on the order paper, and we won't even be able to talk about it around here. We won't be in a place where we can gather where we can talk about it—because I think all of us should do this. All of us should figure out a way to send the message that, those places where people worship, we have to consider them differently because people are very vulnerable. So we're not going to be able to talk about that.

I'm going to say one last thing in the session, and I hope it doesn't come across the wrong way. I did mention that the Premier's office had tripled its six-figure salaries in

five years—tripled the number of people making six figures. That's pretty incredible. When you take the average of those salaries, an average of those salaries, well, they make more than any of you on the other side, including ministers.

I asked somebody the other day—I won't say who it was, but somebody who knows the Premier pretty well, and the Premier said to that person, "If you want good people, you gotta pay them." My question is: too bad for all of you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

M. Ted Hsu: Cette motion vise à échapper—échapper pendant six semaines—le devoir de ce gouvernement conservateur de répondre aux demandes de comptes dans l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, dans cette Chambre. Pourquoi?

Why is the government trying to evade the ability of the opposition to hold it to account in this chamber?

Speaker, I want to give you an example of the kind of question that we should be asking. This government is fast-tracking beer and wine in the corner store and paying a billion dollars for it. A billion dollars would go a long way in my riding and, no surprise, the people of Kingston and the Islands have other priorities. They want family doctors. They want to fight addictions and fight violence in schools. They want affordable housing. They want ferries that work. No beer on that list.

A billion dollars would go a long way elsewhere, too. In Prince Edward county, one of the worst roads in Ontario—County Road 49 has been one of the worst roads in Ontario as ranked by the CAA year after year. The province could re-upload County Road 49, making it provincial highway 49 again. My question would be: Does the energy minister care about his riding where this road—if you've ever driven on it, has just got slabs that kind of go up and down. It's used by a lot of industry, by a lot of tourists and really should be taken care of.

Last week, the finance minister on AM640 conceded that for this move to put beer and wine in convenience stores just a year earlier, there was no cost-benefit analysis for this \$1 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Hsu: No. So the finance minister in fact made fun of "pointy-headed economists" on the radio.

1410

So how do we know we're getting a fair shake? How do we know that this is a good plan? Why the hurry? Why can't we just wait a year and save a billion dollars to tackle real crises?

Speaker, people in my riding want funding for Queen's University and St. Lawrence College. They want smaller class sizes and more EAs so classrooms aren't disrupted by violence. They want support for affordable, licensed child care. They want relief for those struggling on ODSP and OW. They want rural economic development for local farmers who have farms near urban boundaries. They want our local public health lab to stay open.

These are the real priorities—no beer on this list either. It seems like a lot to ask this government to do what's

sensible: wait one year and invest the billion dollars where it's needed most. So, Speaker, I would want to ask this government, what is the real reason they are fast-tracking beer and wine in the corner store at the expense of Ontarians' priorities?

By delaying the return of this Legislature by six weeks, they are avoiding scrutiny by the opposition, the attention that question period brings, the attention that debate brings, the attention that the scrums bring to the actions that unveil things like moving ServiceOntario from small business, private contractors to big-box, corporate contracts without any proper scrutiny, at least by this Legislature. Fortunately, my colleague from Don Valley West has gotten the FAO to investigate that.

It's these sorts of things. It's the fact that in the Premier's office, the cost of funding the Premier's office has gone up by so much. That theme and this picture of a gravy train and the ability of us to add cars to this gravy train, it seems every couple of weeks, whenever something else is revealed about the government—these are things that happen when the Legislature is in session. We help communicate and find out what this government is doing. We help communicate it to our constituents, and we help bring the concerns of our constituents into this riding.

For example, I have a constituent who is on ODSP who did a calculation. She told me, "You know what? It would be cheaper for me to drive next door to Napanee to get dentures rather than have ODSP pay for dentures from students at Georgian College but then also have to pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars for the transportation costs instead of my just going to Napanee and paying more for the local procedure." These kinds of things we are able to bring to the Legislature and bring to the attention of the government, the attention of the press and the attention of fellow MPPs across the province, because maybe they've heard the same problem, and then a consensus builds.

This is what happens when the Legislature sits, and the government should not be avoiding—you know, we pay probably about a million dollars a day to run this Legislature. The Legislature should not be avoiding the scrutiny that the presence of members here and the proceedings bring to the government.

So I oppose this motion, and I urge all of my colleagues to oppose this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to share my time with the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane and Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

I came here this afternoon, quite frankly, because I was upset that you were going to not meet next week. Then, I get here, and I hear a motion come forward that we're not going to sit now until October 21. That's absolutely disgraceful.

Every one of you that are sitting here today and the two over here that are sitting should be ashamed of yourselves. How do you go back to your constituents and say, "Everything is wonderful in the province of Ontario; we don't need to sit, we don't need to hear from the opposition and

we don't need to hear from the Liberals or the Green Party?"

You know what? In the province of Ontario, everything isn't wonderful. Today, right here in the province of Ontario—and you guys have been in power for six years, six years too long. But you know what? Just outside these doors, not far from here, there are homeless encampments that have families right there under your watch. When I got here 10 years ago, do you know how many encampments there were? None. In six years, they are everywhere. They're in Niagara Falls—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Northern Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Gates:—northern Ontario, Windsor, Toronto, Hamilton. And what are we doing? When we have an opportunity to debate and try to come up with solutions for people who are living in homelessness—maybe rent controls that aren't on new builds. What do you guys do?

I went to the St. Catharines Collegiate. I was in a four-year course and I stayed six years just because I liked the place. But you know what? We had a saying: When the going gets tough, the tough get going. And what is this government doing? When the going gets tough, what are you guys doing? You're running out of this Legislature, not only a week early, but you're now filing out until October 21.

I'm going to look right into that camera right there: How many people today are suffering to pay their groceries, suffering to raise their families, suffering to pay for their rent and for their housing—that don't have a house? I'm looking right at you and I'm going to say that it's happening all over the province of Ontario. And the reason why we sit here—because we have a little media up here—they get, at least, a message out. And you guys, what do you do? We're not going to sit until October 21.

I came today for one reason. I was mad about—I'll tell you, I was pissed off about losing a week to challenge you guys—sorry, I'll retract; I apologize.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I wanted to come here and say, "What are you guys doing?"

In my own riding of Niagara Falls, the tourist capital of the world, we have high homelessness. We have homeless encampments just down from the tourist sector in Fort Erie. My urgent care centre, which used to go 24/7, is now only operating 12 hours a day—or 10 hours a day, because in the last two hours, they don't take new patients. That's happening not only in Fort Erie, it's happening in the north, it's happening in London—it's happening everywhere. We're shutting down rural hospitals. Everything is not wonderful, so how couldn't you guys support it?

Because you're all sitting here—not all of them, by the way; some aren't here, but I won't mention who's not here because I can't do that. But the ones that are sitting here: You've got to go back to your ridings and you say, "Oh, we don't need to sit. We don't need to have question period. We don't need to have debate on bills that are important." I brought a motion forward just the other day.

You talk to the Minister for Seniors—he's here—and I talked about a caregiver bill, that we should have a direct payment for caregivers to take care of our loved ones—most of them are seniors; some are kids. We should be having those debates. Instead, what do you guys do? We're going to shut the Legislature down. It's absolutely terrible.

And what's going on in the province of Ontario, as you guys stand up and you blame everything on the carbon tax? Let's talk about groceries. Put your hands up on that side—even on this side—if you guys are listening over here, put your hands up: Who is having trouble paying for your groceries? I am. How many of your kids and your grandkids are having trouble buying groceries because they're being gouged by the Weston family? How many are having trouble paying their rent?

In Niagara Falls, the average rent is \$2,200 a month. What young person, having their first job, can afford to pay \$2,200 for rent and then pay for groceries? Who can do that? And in Toronto, where a lot of you guys are from—not all of you, but a lot of you are from Toronto—do you know what the average rent is? It's \$3,400. Yet, you know what? Let's just shut down for almost six months because there are no issues out here in the province of Ontario.

And then you go and take a look at gas prices. People can't afford to pay their gas. They can't afford their rent. Why don't we have rent control? I'm telling you guys, come and tell me what you hear over the next six months, by the way—it's close to six months that we're shutting down: six months. When I ran here, and it's been four terms, at no time did I say, "Do you know what? Is there any way you could shut the Legislature down from June until October? Is there any way you could do that?" How many people out there are working every day? I came out of the General Motors plant, where I worked for over 30 years. And do you know what I got? Three or four weeks of vacation as seniority grew. The company didn't say we were going to shut down for six months because we don't want to listen to the customers.

What are you guys doing? What are you thinking? Who came up with this idea? Was it all you guys? Put your hand up who had a vote on it. You'll have a vote pretty soon and you're going to have to defend it in your ridings. You can't defend it. It's undefendable. It's absolutely disgusting, what you're trying to do here to democracy in the province of Ontario.

1420

I mentioned health care. I was at the hospital just two days ago, and the doctor told me he was dealing with patients who had been sitting in that emergency for over eight, nine and 10 hours as he came on shift at 6 in the morning. He told me that they're short-staffed. They don't have enough nurses, they don't have enough people to take care of us. But what is this government doing? "We're going to shut down health care. We're going to shut down the Legislature. Everything is wonderful in the province of Ontario." I can tell you it's not.

I want to talk about our food banks. We have more people using food banks today than at any time in our

history—in our history. And what are we going to do? "Oh, we don't need to meet until October 21, from today, June 6." It's absolutely terrible.

Do you know what the hard part about the food banks is? Listen to this—25% of that is kids going to food banks right here in the province of Ontario. What people don't talk about is that we are the richest province in the country and we've got kids going to bed hungry, going to food banks.

We have homeless encampments just outside these halls here—I got a note. My time is up.

Anyway, I'm going to close by saying—and I'll try to keep this—yes, even the Clerk is giving me that eye. I'm going to tell you, you guys have to go back to your ridings—it's undefendable, what you're trying to do here this afternoon. Every one of you should be ashamed of yourselves for what you're doing this afternoon—not just for the week that we're going to close here early, but to stay there until October 21 and not come back here and be held accountable, when we know we've got all these crises, in health care, education—everything. It's absolutely terrible. You should all be ashamed of yourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I share my colleague's complete disgust that we will not be sitting for 19 weeks.

There are so many things that have been described that people are facing: housing issues; homelessness; no family doctors; long, long emergency waits.

I particularly want to say that people also won't have their voices heard in this House because we are ending this so early—petitions like the ones that I have here, that were signed by almost 1,000 people in six days, who are very upset with the suspension of programs at Fleming College, including programs that address environmental studies. That's something this government could use—some lessons on environmental studies. We currently have a climate emergency, and this is a government with absolutely no climate plan. So that would have been a good petition for the government to have been able to hear.

I also would have been able to talk about the folks in Dresden who have a petition. They are concerned about the potential damaging impacts to Sydenham River by the Dresden landfill. You should have heard about that.

Finally, I have to say I'm absolutely horrified that in my riding there's a for-profit blood plasma clinic setting up shop. They will pay for blood plasma, and they're allowed to sell it internationally. The concern is that this is a company that's going to prey on people who are already vulnerable, who already need income and would be prepared to sell their blood products for profit. That is a shame, and that's something that this government should stay and hear about.

What I want to focus on is a very shocking report that has just been published, and it comes from the University of Toronto's Investigative Journalism Bureau. This concerns our children in schools. We've already been hearing about how underfunded our schools are and the conditions that our kids are going to school in. We have the absolute

tragedy of Landyn dying in an isolation room in a school because there were no resources, no staff there to support. That's on this government.

This report from the University of Toronto's Investigative Journalism Bureau is showing that toxic lead in Ontario schools is a significant and serious health risk. In fact, in the past four years, nearly half of the province's schools have had at least one test for toxic lead fail. That lead-laced water has impacted more than 800,000 students and roughly 2,300 elementary and high schools all across the province. Our children are going to school and if they drink the water, they are drinking lead, and I am sure that the government is aware of this, because we know that the schools have an infrastructure backlog of billions. But the very fact that this government knows that our children could be exposed to lead and they continue to underfund infrastructure and upgrades is completely shameful. We should be here over the course of the summer and into the fall to talk about the findings of this report and to come up with plans to address these shocking findings, to come up with plans that will put the minds of parents ease who know that their kids are going to school in classrooms where the water is toxic because of lead.

And finally, it's shocking to see that this study will impact not only just schools, but it also impacts daycares. In a really shocking example, the Assikinack childcare centre in Barrie—the Minister of the Environment's own riding—had among the highest rates of troubling tests among daycares. So daycares are failing these tests: 12 out of 16 tests in these daycares in Barrie failed. Another shocking example is Fort Frances, a high school in northwestern Ontario. The number of tests they failed there is a shocking example of how this government continues to underfund. We already know that First Nations across Canada have an infrastructure deficit in the billions. This is an example of how it impacts them and where we see it.

The minister was emailed a statement or was asked to respond to this—that's the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. She didn't respond to questions about the province's decision not to adopt the federal safety guidelines for lead. Why are they allowing the lower lead limits? And what did the minister say? Rather than responding—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Shame on the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know, I am really shocked that the member from Brampton North would think that talking about toxic lead water in our schools is a shameful example. You are a shameful example—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order, order. The member for Brampton North will come to order.

The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, are you finished?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know what, Speaker, I'm going to end there, because I am so appalled by the government's behaviour that I will end and pass my time—

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

Sharing your time with the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: In the couple of minutes I have left, I've got to be honest, I am shocked that the government is doing this. They claim to be the people to represent the people who are in Tim Hortons. I'm sure that the people in Tim Hortons are going to be quite disappointed when you say, "Yeah, yeah, we decided that we would just take a few more weeks off, or a month and a half off." And "it's not really off," they'll say, "but we're working hard."

It's actually—I've heard the words "travesty to democracy." Why is it a travesty? This government is afraid of questions to transparency. They're just trying to avoid question period. But if you really think it through, it has a bit of a silver lining, because this government, some of their legislation is so terrible they've had to rescind six major pieces of legislation. This government is so terrible, perhaps six weeks less of them is a good thing. The fact is, all they're trying to do is avoid questions and avoid scrutiny.

One of the questions that hasn't been asked, and somebody could maybe give me the timeline: What is coming back first, beer to corner stores or the Ford government? Because they really seem to be concerned about that.

We've got emergency rooms closing across the province, yet the government says, "Oh, health care is great." But when people go to emergency rooms, they're closed. People looking for doctors—less and less people have doctors. It's not getting better, it's getting worse, and the government's solution is, let's stop—

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

Pursuant to standing order 32(b), the time allotted for the afternoon routine has expired. I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent—Leamington, has moved that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 21, 2024; and

That, in addition to any other committee meetings authorized by the House, the standing committees be authorized to meet for the purpose of the consideration of the estimates during the 2024 summer adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1430 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent—Leamington, has moved that, when the House adjourns today it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 21, 2024; and

That, in addition to any other committee meetings authorized by the House, the standing committees be authorized to meet for the purpose of the consideration of the estimates during the 2024 summer adjournment of the House.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hamid, Zee	Pierre, Natalie
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Pinsonneault, Steve
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Quinn, Nolan
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Breseee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Khanjin, Andrea	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Mulrone, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Shamji, Adil
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutla	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	Mamakwa, Sol	Vaugeois, Lise
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	
Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 60; the nays are 25.

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

Motion agreed to.

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask for the attention of the House for one moment. As some members have done earlier today, I would also like to take a moment to thank our legislative interns. The Ontario Legislature Internship Program, or OLIP, has a rich history at the Legislative Assembly, and its alumni can be found around Queen's Park, across the province and, indeed, filling important positions in varied sectors across the country.

Thank you, Razan, Milena, Steffi, Evan, Bridget, Olivia, Kaitlin, Astrid, Taylor and Rhea, for your contributions to our Legislature this year. All the best as you wrap up your OLIP year, and we look forward to

seeing the important contributions you will go on to make in the future.

Applause.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

It is therefore 6 o'clock.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

KIDS' ONLINE SAFETY AND PRIVACY MONTH ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE DES ENFANTS EN LIGNE

Madame Collard moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month / Projet de loi 133, Loi proclamant le mois de septembre Mois de la sécurité et de la protection de la vie privée des enfants en ligne.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It is an honour to rise today on this last day of our spring session for second reading of Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month. If passed, the act would help raise awareness and provide opportunities to discuss the dangers that children face online, including cyberbullying, online grooming, sexual exploitation and, yes, human trafficking.

Between 2018 and 2022, online sexual luring of children escalated by 815%. That's just in a five-year period. Imagine that. Statistics Canada also reported that the rate of child pornography increased by 290% between 2014 and 2022, with underage girls being overrepresented.

The addictive qualities of the Internet and digital technology also pose a risk to kids' mental health. It is our responsibility as parents, educators, legislators and members of the wider community to protect children in a growing online environment. By declaring September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month, we can use that opportunity to equip children with the tools to protect themselves from the dangers of the Internet, and we can highlight the importance of digital supervision, education and responsibility.

While I've always been interested in the matter, at least since having kids, I want to recognize that this bill was inspired by Dr. Charlene Doak-Gebauer, founder of the

charity called Internet Sense First and producer of the documentary *Vulnerable Innocence*. I encourage everybody here and everybody abroad to view this documentary for your own education. When I viewed the documentary myself, I was right away convinced that it was very much worth my time and effort to bring this issue to the Legislature.

1510

Vulnerable Innocence features valuable information from experts and provides solutions to online safety for parents, professionals and caregivers. Dr. Doak-Gebauer's advocacy emphasizes the lead for digital supervision because leaving our children unmonitored as they use the Internet only increases their risk of exploitation.

But I have to admit that when I finally gave in to each of my four kids to have a cellphone, as a parent myself, I was nervous about what they would access, and also, I didn't know how to properly monitor them. After watching the documentary, I was encouraged to see that there was hope for parents to be more confident as to how to guide their kids.

The best place to start to educate children and youth and raise awareness on the warning signs is in our schools. That's why September is the best time to declare Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month, because it coincides with the beginning of the school year. Through proper education initiatives, kids can themselves take preventative measures to limit their risk of harmful exposure on the Internet. Establishing support networks and resources during this month can lead to sustainable practices on Internet safety that extend beyond September, providing tools for children and youth for life that they can, in turn, use to teach their own kids.

Protecting children online also requires a collective effort from parents, educators, legislators and the community. It is our responsibility as a community to ensure that kids can navigate the Internet safely and confidently.

We need to be proactive in how we deal with the safety of our children online. We must educate ourselves and supervise our children's use of digital technology. Parents need to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in supervising their children's online activities. With this bill, the month of September would focus on encouraging parents, guardians, educators, legislators and the community to take steps to keep children safe.

The government is taking some steps to better protect the privacy of children online through their Bill 194 on cyber security, and I believe that Bill 133 is actually an excellent complement to the government's work.

Bill 194 recognizes the need to monitor children and youth's use of digital technology. During his debate on the bill, the Minister of Education said himself that parents "want government to strengthen the regime that protects kids online and in class from the harms—the constant, rising harms online—that can manifest in bullying, in trafficking and in self-harm." What better way to achieve this than to dedicate one month a year to ensuring parents and children are aware of the dangers of online activity and know how to avoid them?

Bill 194 would also set the groundwork for a strong regulatory framework regarding artificial intelligence, and I want to thank the government for taking those steps. AI has brought about a whole host of new challenges and dangers online, and we need to be proactive in shielding our kids. For example, there have been many cases in recent years of AI being used to generate nude photos of children and those photos being circulated among their peers, and that's a reality. Such a situation is absolutely devastating for a child and can have serious repercussions on their mental health. Many kids and parents also do not understand the legal and liability issues associated with producing such content. That's why these conversations need to happen. Educating our kids on the dangers that AI presents and the ways to decipher what is real and what is not is an essential component of protecting your kids, and Bill 133 would help to do that.

A lot of human trafficking also begins online. Traffickers often use social media to recruit their victims, making children and youth particularly vulnerable. Sadly, the average age of recruitment into sex trafficking in Canada is only 13 years old.

Last year, the Legislature joined together to unanimously pass Bill 41, Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act, which will help provide survivors of human trafficking with the financial freedom they need to rebuild their lives. While that was an important step to better supporting survivors, we must do more to prevent human trafficking from occurring in the first place. Bill 133 will help to do that by providing opportunities to educate parents and children about the common tactics that traffickers use online to recruit their victims and how to recognize them so children can avoid falling into those traps.

I hope all members in this House will support this legislation because I firmly believe that awareness and education are essential to addressing the issue of online safety for kids. But I also know that without action this bill will simply remain words on a page. As a result, I strongly encourage each of you to think of ways on how to improve digital supervision in your own communities.

I also urge the Minister of Education to use this legislation as a first step toward implementing real programs in our schools to educate kids about their online world, the dangers that exist and how to avoid them. It is these actions that will make this legislation come to life and have a real impact on improving the online safety of our kids.

It is the responsibility of parents, educators and the government to protect vulnerable populations, including children, from the unique risks posed by the digital age.

By proclaiming September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month, we can together help to reduce instances of online harm through education and awareness and help kids in Ontario stay safe.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: It's a pleasure for me to stand in this chamber and voice my support for Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month.

This legislation, of course, was introduced by my colleague the member for Ottawa–Vanier. While she and I may have our differences of opinion on many of the issues that come up for debate, I applaud her for taking action to keep kids safe from cyberbullying, online grooming and other dangers that they might encounter on the Internet.

There is nothing more important for our party and our government than the safety of Ontario's children. I am proud to support Bill 133 because I believe it complements the many actions we've taken to protect Ontario's children and youth.

In April, we announced that Ontario is explicitly banning vaping devices from schools and school-related settings along with nicotine and tobacco products. We took this action because the rate of vaping among students in grades 7 to 9 has increased in recent years, and the incidence of vaping among Canadian youth ranks among some of the highest in the world. Under our new policy, students found possessing vape products, as well as tobacco and nicotine will be asked to surrender them, and schools will notify their parents.

During that same announcement, we also announced that our government is taking action to heavily restrict the use of mobile devices, including cellphones, smart watches, tablets and laptops by students. Through changes that will come into effect this fall, students in grades 7 and up will be required to turn off their mobile devices or set them to silent mode and keep them out of view when they're in the classroom.

For students in kindergarten to grade 6, we're banning cellphones for the full instructional day. Devices must be turned off or set to silent and stored out of view for the duration of the school day. If a student doesn't put away their phone, the teacher will ask them to place it in a storage area in the classroom for the duration of the lesson.

Additionally, the province is requiring all publicly funded school boards to restrict access to social media on school networks and school devices. Our decision to tighten the rules around students caught using cellphones during class time was primarily about removing distractions from learning, but it was also about protecting the mental health and physical health of Ontario's students. Experts tell us that excessive cellphone and mobile device use have a negative impact on student mental health and well-being. Excessive cellphone and social media use can lead to depression and anxiety, and it puts children at risk of online abuse, cyberbullying and invasion of privacy.

As a mother and as an advocate for mental health, I believe the actions we have taken thus far will make a positive difference, but we're not stopping there. Our government will continue to consult with law enforcement officials as well as social media and tech experts on ways to further crack down on cybercrimes and cyberbullying, and develop age-appropriate Web materials and work-arounds on software exploits in schools.

1520

Just recently, this chamber did a second reading debate for Bill 194. Should it pass, that legislation will provide new tools to prevent and respond to cyber security threats

and safeguard critical public services, including the public education system.

Our government is serious about cyber security, and we believe that students deserve a school environment that is supportive and safe from distractions and peer pressures, where they can focus on learning.

Bill 133 can play a key role in helping our government to keep Ontario's children safe, so once again, I'm proud to offer my full support for its passage.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to rise today, on the day that the Legislature is going to be recessing, to debate declaring September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month, and I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Vanier for bringing this bill forward. In the NDP, we're very supportive of this. I think it will start a conversation, and it's an opportunity to educate parents, children, educators, government officials and concerned citizens about the potential harms that are happening when children are online.

Before becoming an MPP, at one point I was a researcher. Some of my research was on gambling. One of the things that I learned about gambling is that slot machines have an algorithm, and the algorithm is designed to pay out a certain amount. It's usually set at 80%, for example. So if you go in and you gamble \$100 and your luck is totally even—it never would be—you would win \$80. And then if you gamble that \$80, you would win 80% of that, which is \$64. And if you gamble the \$64, you would win 80%, which is \$48. So by the time you've gambled \$500, you've won \$400 and you've lost \$100, and the \$100 that you lost is the \$100 that you walked in with, so you've come out broke, but you've gambled so many times. The lemons and the cherries and everything that keep coming up on the slot machines have nothing to do with the algorithm. The algorithm is just a very simple mathematical function. You could say, "I'm going to play this for an hour. I'm going to punch it 150 times an hour. What is the outcome going to be? Where will I be?" Your calculator or your phone or whatever device you're using would be able to calculate that in a fraction of a second.

What those cherries and lemons and anchors and all those things are designed to do is—they design them, they show them in a way that makes you think that it's going to pay out soon. It creates addictive—and it's called engagement loops. So the idea of the slot machine—it's designed to make players lose track of time so that they keep playing.

In social media, the scrolling is an engagement loop. The scrolling of apps is actually addictive for young people—for all of us, but for young people, in particular.

New York Times reporter Max Fisher wrote in a book called *The Chaos Machine*—and this is what it does. They say that slot machines are the heroin of gambling. It's highly addictive because it gives you a dopamine response. Max Fisher wrote, "Dopamine creates a positive association with whatever behaviours prompted its release, training you to repeat them.... When that

dopamine reward system gets hijacked, it can compel you to repeat self-destructive behaviours. To place one more bet, binge on alcohol—or spend hours on apps even when they make you unhappy.” And it’s not just those notifications that make them addictive; in apps, it’s the positive affirmation—it’s the likes; it’s the followers; it’s the updates from friends; it’s the photos of family and friends. That’s what makes social media apps, in particular, addictive.

The designer of some of these apps, Aza Raskin, who designed, actually, the infinite scroll in 2006—he was also an employee with Mozilla and Jawbone—said, “It’s as if they’re taking behavioural cocaine and just sprinkling it all over your interface and that’s the thing that keeps you ... coming back and back and back.” He said that many designers were driven to create addictive app features by the business models of the big companies that employed them.

“In order to get the next round of funding, in order to get your stock price up, the amount of time that people spend on your app has to go up’....

“So, when you put that much pressure ... you’re going to start trying to invent new ways of getting people ... hooked.”

And that’s what’s happening to our children online. Social media is rewiring their brains. There was a study of university students who used social media for more than three hours each day, and those who did suffered from poor sleep, poor academic performance, much higher rates of depression, substance abuse, stress and suicide.

And the effect is even greater on younger people. Among those ages 10 to 19, that’s when your brain is in a fast development stage. You’re developing your sense of self-worth, and social media, the more you’re on social media, the more negative impact it has on your learning, on your behaviour, on your impulse control, on your emotional regulation.

More often, people who are on social media, young people who are on social media more have a negative body image, and 61% of Canadians aged 12 to 17 engage in social media several times a day, so we’ve got to be careful about what’s happening.

And the MRI scans—like when I said they’re rewiring their brains—MRI scans on teenagers showed that the reward centres in their brains lit up with increased blood flow when they were on social media.

And this is having a real impact on our schools. I spoke with some directors of education, with educators, and they said that kids are acting out. They’re getting up in the middle of class. There’s increased violence in schools. The elementary teachers have reported that violent incidents have increased by 72%, and the vast majority, 80% of teachers and staff members in schools, report that violence incidents have increased since they started working in public education.

So, the school boards in Ontario, several of them, have launched a lawsuit, and they’re against the social media companies, because they’re looking for money to pay for the supports that students need in order to overcome this.

So it’s seven different school boards as well as two private schools that have joined this lawsuit.

And these school boards, their first concern, their primary concern is children’s mental health. When this lawsuit was announced, the Premier was asked, “Well, what do you think of this?” And his response, immediately—without investigating this, without even looking into it, without even looking into it, his immediate response was “Nonsense.” He criticized the school boards for standing up and taking the social media apps to court for the negative mental health impacts that they’re having on our children.

The government did come back, and as the government member just mentioned, they decided to ban cellphones in schools, or to make students shut off their cellphones while they’re in schools. And I was thinking about this. I’m thinking, yes, that’s probably a good thing, because it will reduce the amount of time that children are online, especially because it can be very distracting to have them in schools, but it really doesn’t get at the root of the problem.

And the root of the problem is that we need to find ways for children to be safe online, including using social media apps, and we need to look at the design of those social media apps and how they can be redesigned so that they’re not having a negative mental health impact on children.

When I’m talking about mental health impacts, that’s just one aspect, and as my colleagues have mentioned in here, there are also privacy issues. What happens to children’s data when these companies have it? Who owns it? How is it being sold? What algorithms are being developed to target them for advertising? This is something that we need to look at as legislators. I know the House is rising today, but this is what we should be looking at. We should be developing legislation to protect children from online harms. It goes to sexual exploitation, to deepfakes, artificial intelligence deepfakes.

I was a trustee before this, and there was a girl who had sent her boyfriend a picture of herself, and that went all through the school. It was intended just for him, and it went all through the school. She was just devastated by this. Her family was devastated by this. And this is just one incident. I say this—I know this has happened thousands of times across this province.

The member is bringing up this bill today to create online safety awareness month in September. It’s a good step. We need to do much more, because the other thing that happens online is sexual grooming.

1530

The police have reported that there’s an increase in child sexual exploitation in Canada. In 2014, there were 50 incidents for 100,000 children; by 2022, it was 160 incidents for 100,000 children. For seven in 10 victims identified in online sexual offences against children, the victims were aged, for girls, 12 to 17, and 13% were girls under 12; and among boys, those aged 12 to 17 were 11% of the victims and 3% of those were under 12. We need to protect our children from this when they’re online.

The other thing that happens online, the other really damaging thing, is self-harm. There are violent online groups who are pressuring youth into harming themselves. This is from a CBC article this year: A 15-year-old girl carved the numbers “764” into her chest and then tried to kill herself. The RCMP said it is aware that there is an online group referred to as 764. As well as targeting minor victims internationally, it is connected to violent extremist groups. The father of that girl said in *The Fifth Estate* he discovered images of self-harm and disturbing messages between his daughter and a self-proclaimed member of 764 on a site called Discord.

We need to look at this. We need to make sure that this is not repeating itself. We need to cast light on the harms that are coming to our children online.

I’ve got a minute left, so I’ll talk about some of the policy recommendations that have come up and the research. They say you need to strengthen standards for age verification within social media apps, so that there aren’t children 12 who are pretending to be older on social media and becoming vulnerable.

The government needs to fund research on the impacts of social media on children and youth and well-being, and the results have to be transparent. They have to be made public.

They need to develop regulations for tech data collected on children and on the algorithms that are used to target them for advertising. We need to restrict harmful advertising from being directed at children and youth. This includes gambling, vaping, alcohol and unhealthy food.

The Canadian Paediatric Society also recommends that we need media and digital literacy training for students as part of the curriculum.

I welcome this legislation. I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Vanier for bringing it forward, and I look forward to using September as an opportunity for all of us to work toward educating parents, students, educators, government members and the general public about the potential harms and how to protect our children online.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Vanier for bringing this forward. As a school social worker for 11 years, this is such an important topic that I’ve been pushing forward with throughout my career. I’ve seen the billions and billions of dollars that companies profit every year and the negative, harmful impact it has on kids.

Today we honour the memory of the Afzaal family. We know that that young man was radicalized online through these very algorithms that we talk about. In the fall of last year, on the campus of the University of Waterloo, a young man was radicalized and acted out a hate crime against people studying gender and sexuality.

The violence that we see in schools—kids are playing more and more graphic violent games online. We’ve seen attention spans shrink from about 15 minutes to less than seven, so teachers are trying to tap-dance to get people’s

attention. It’s undermining the very education system that we are investing in.

It’s affecting kids’ eyes. They have “old kid eyes,” where they’re getting glasses at an earlier age because they’re watching hours and hours of screens online.

In my school board, we did a survey and found that 30% of students were getting a good night’s sleep. So not only do we have to worry about safety and privacy; it’s affecting the very development and health and well-being of young people, because they are not having a good night’s sleep. Every family that I would visit, the first thing I would ask is, “Where is your cellphone? Let’s talk about how you use it.” Because I know it’s under their pillow every night. It beeps, it blops, it bleeps and they’re waking up throughout the night and not able to study and focus and get up for school in the morning. We haven’t even discussed attendance issues. If you talk to anybody in the education system right now, the wheels are falling off. Kids are not showing up. So, yes, we could have the bells and whistles when they get there, but if they’re not there to begin with because they didn’t have a good night’s sleep, we’re no further ahead.

I am going to spend my time focusing on pornography. This is something that is happening in our midst and we do not know the realities that are faced, and I’m alarmed at what’s happening in our society. When COVID-19 came into action, our school board had a monitoring system so we could catch if kids had made a threat to someone else, a threat to their own life, or were watching eight times or more of pornography. Guess what the number one referral I had from then on? I didn’t have these referrals before. They started when we started paying attention to what kids were logging on to in elementary schools on school board things. And we could block the heck out of these, but those are the referrals that we were getting and I was having to call principals, parents and teachers to talk to students about excessive pornography use by very young kids.

We know now that kids are watching pornography before they have even had their first kiss, before they’ve had their first sexual encounter. Some 48% of 13-year-olds have seen porn; 35% of the scenes in popular pornography contain non-consensual behaviour. So more than a third of the porn that these young under-13 kids are watching involve non-consensual behaviour.

Did you know that choking is a norm? This is not the pornography any of us have ever considered in our lifetime. Choking is a norm. At my local hospital, our sexual assault support people are getting specialized training to understand the negative impacts of choking. Kids, instead of getting accused of attempted rape, are now getting accused of attempted murder. These are young boys.

Did you know the most dangerous category are boys under 12? Why? Because we have not armed them with the understanding and information they need to have about consensual sexual activity. So we need to go much further, and I know this education is not happening in schools.

I worked my tail off to get digital citizenship content, which is widely available—it’s practically free—into

every school at every developmental stage. Adults, if they do know—which is rare—have no idea how to respond, whether it be staff in schools or caregivers themselves. We have not armed them.

When I look, as a social worker, to refer a student who has consumed violent, misogynistic hate, here we are, working so hard to eradicate interpersonal violence, but we have so much indoctrination happening in our midst and we are unaware and we have not done enough to curb it.

And if you look in society for those not-for-profit, widely accessible, free services, I tell you, they do not exist. In Burlington, as the member from Burlington should know, this month, the very sexual offending clinical support with the experts that train all of us was shut down. In Hamilton, Kitchener and London, the program that supports young offenders to stop reoffending was shut down.

So we are unprepared and we need to do better to help our kids have healthy relationships.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: As a strong believer in parliamentary democracy, it's an honour for me to stand before you and my colleagues to express my support for Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month. I also wish to sincerely thank the member for Ottawa–Vanier for putting forth this legislation.

I agree that we need to raise awareness about online safety and privacy for children, and that kids need to be aware of the risks online and how to protect themselves. It's always encouraging when we, as parliamentarians, can put aside the party labels and work together for a worthwhile common goal: in this case, the safety of children.

Speaker, my colleagues and I in the PC caucus are pleased to support Bill 133 because we believe it will complement the many actions we have taken to ensure Ontario's schools are safe and supportive learning centres for children and youth. Most recently, our government announced that we are strengthening the rules around cellphone use during class time, and students who are caught with vaping, cannabis or nicotine products in school. We are also ordering school boards to remove social media websites from all school networks and devices. We made this announcement to remove unnecessary distractions from the classroom and, of course, to safeguard the mental and physical health of our students. Excessive cellphone and social media usage can have a negative impact on students' mental health, and there's no question that children are at much greater risk of harms posed by digital platforms than ever.

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Our government understands that positive mental health is critically important to students' achievements and overall well-being. For that reason, we are investing \$117.65 million in student mental health supports for the coming school year. Just to put things into perspective,

that's an increase of 577% since the 2017-18 school year, when the previous Liberal government was still in charge. And since 2020, our government has opened 22 youth wellness hubs that provide mental health supports to over 31 communities, and we have plans to open another five hubs.

We made the vaping and cellphones announcement in April, but I want to remind this House that our government has made many, many other announcements in recent years that have helped to keep kids safe. For example, our government brought greater safety to our classrooms by introducing a no-tolerance policy that means that teachers who have serious criminal convictions and charges against them are not allowed in front of the classroom. We are now publicly posting the names of educators who are convicted of serious criminal offences. We took these actions, Speaker, because we believe in putting families, and the rights of parents, first.

Many parents would say that bullying is a serious problem in our schools and it poses a threat to the mental and physical health and well-being of children. I'm proud to say that our government has taken action. Nearly three years ago, we issued Policy/Program Memorandum 144, which provides direction to school boards regarding bullying prevention and intervention in schools. Every school board must establish a comprehensive and achievable plan to deal with bullying and all schools within that board must implement the plan.

There's no question, Speaker, that based upon the actions that we have taken, our government is very serious about keeping children safe, so I call upon my colleagues to vote in favour of Bill 133. Let's make September our province's Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month.

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

Ms. Jess Dixon: I enjoy it when we have a bill that comes before the House that has unanimous support, because it really shows just how much concern that the members of this House have. I was happy to hear the member from Kitchener Centre speak when she spoke on my motion about cellphones and vaping and referenced the prevalence of pornography in schools. I can tell by the passion of her language that when you have really seen this happen, you feel particularly motivated to fix it. I was motivated myself with my own motion.

But one of the things that has really stuck in my mind about my previous job was reading through cellphone and computer dumps in drug trafficking and human trafficking cases. One of the most common ways that human traffickers—particularly for sex trafficking—recruit their victims is through what they call the “Romeo” or the “boyfriend” tactic, which is when an individual uses a younger girl, usually somebody who is lacking in self-confidence, doesn't have a lot of support, is vulnerable, and basically makes her believe that he loves her, and all of a sudden starts asking her to do favours for him.

I will tell you that, having read through countless numbers of those conversations and seeing the text messages back and forth and the photos back and forth,

there is very little that is as heartbreaking as that, as watching someone be targeted, particularly when you would see—I remember an occasion where I was reading through, and it was a trafficker who had multiple girls and was actively trying to recruit more. I think it was Facebook Messenger he was using; I can't remember. But basically, he would just be going through friends and contact lists and sending out the same message to different girls over and over and over again, until someone would respond to him. He had a script that he would follow, and you would see these girls who, frankly, because of all the other things that we throw particularly at young girls, from pornography to body image issues to bullying—whose self-confidence is already at a low. And when some seemingly wonderful boy came along and told her that she was pretty and he told her that he wanted to spend time with her and that she was special—frankly, it is absolutely terrifying to see just how little it takes to recruit a girl. After a few exchanges, he would have her meeting with him, force her to take pictures in lingerie, put her on Backpage—multiple men in an evening.

I really appreciate this, because making sure that parents are aware of this is huge. It's not just about giving kids the tools to spot this, but also parents. From what I saw, it was a pattern of behaviour that was the same over and over again. I would have been able to go in and tell a classroom, "This is literally the type of messages you will get." Kids need to know that. Parents need to know that, so they can ask their kids. So I'm delighted to support this, and I certainly look forward to consulting more on how we can make this real and practical in schools.

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

The member has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to thank the members for Burlington, Spadina–Fort York, Markham–Unionville, Kitchener South–Hespeler and Kitchener Centre for your words of support and for your passion on this issue. I'm

really grateful, and, frankly, it lifts my spirits to see that we are all willing to work together to help protect our kids.

I also want to thank Dr. Charlene Doak-Gebauer—she's here in the Legislature—for reaching out to me, but especially for all the work that she has done and that she continues to do on this important issue.

If the bill passes today, as I hope it will, it will be the beginning of some meaningful changes to help protect our kids, and it would be a beautiful and positive way to end our session.

I want to end by also thanking my staff, including my staff watching from Ottawa and my OLIP intern, for all the help to get to this point today.

Lastly, I want to thank my caucus colleagues for always being so supportive—and really, to all MPPs supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Madame Collard has moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to proclaim the month of September as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I would like the bill to be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Congratulations.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 on Monday, October 21, 2024.

The House adjourned at 1549.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
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Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
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McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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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	
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Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	