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Mardi
14 mai 2024

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 mai 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY
AND STUDENT SUPPORTS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RENFORCER
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LES MESURES DE SOUTIEN
AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Good morning, everyone. I'll be brief. I know you don't believe me—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. I knew I would get a response for that.

There are three things that this bill does. The one that I can see that has—

Mr. Will Bouma: Merit?

Mr. John Fraser: I don't know if I would use merit, but the transparency of cost. I think that's good for families. But when I take a look at what's in the rest of this bill, it's an overreach. On top of that, it's fine to say that we want you to do this and we think this is important, and then not provide the resources necessary to do the things that you want them to do? That's what this bill does, right?

You have the tools available already, but you're putting more demands and giving yourself more power in relation to universities and colleges. All of us in this building are against all forms of hate: anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, transphobia. We're all there. We did have tools inside government in 2018 in the Anti-Racism Directorate to address all of those things, but this government cut them all.

This doesn't happen very often. It's not very often that I agree with the Premier of this province, but I want to tell you why or tell you the thing that the Premier said with regard to this bill: "It's really up to the dean to govern his own university. I think we shouldn't get involved in that, that's my personal opinion. Like I said, there's a lot of

tools ministers have that they don't use. It's up to the people, that's what we believe in." And I agree.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Ottawa South?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for his remarks. I'm wondering if he could elaborate for us—because he and I both share a city where a number of our residents don't feel safe right now. They're talking to us through our community offices about not feeling safe on campus. I'm wondering if the member could give this government some advice about what it can do.

I note that the blue-ribbon panel had asked for \$2.5 billion in additional funding from this government. Most of the mental health supports on post-secondary campuses in Ottawa Centre are struggling, with wait-lists in excess of six months for mental supports for students. So I'm wondering what the funding message could be to this government to make sure that people do feel supported and safe on campus.

Mr. John Fraser: The recommendations to the blue-ribbon panel are critical. Mental health and anti-racism and hate, they go together. The pressures that are on people can often lead to those biases because people are struggling. My colleague is correct: There are a lot of people in our ridings that don't feel safe on their campuses, that don't feel like they're getting support that is needed.

To actually make programs and then not provide the support that is needed to make those programs that you say are important work is not really doing a heck of a lot. That's why this bill is hard to support.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member opposite. I note that the Liberal Party hasn't released a full-scale post-secondary education plan, and I know that students are worried about what that might mean in terms of tuition increases. We froze tuition—we actually cut it and then froze it.

I'm wondering if the member can confirm that when the Liberals release their plan for post-secondary education, tuition increases will be off the table.

Mr. John Fraser: That's a great question. What I want to say is, yes, you froze tuition, but you didn't put any supports there for the colleges and universities. And then you drove them to accept more and more foreign students to be able to support the colleges and universities, thereby, in some ways, creating grade inflation and reducing opportunities for Ontario students, to a certain extent. I'm not going to take any lessons from this government on post-secondary education.

I was part of a government—I worked for a Premier who put a focus on post-secondary education. Campuses expanded. We made sure more people had access to post-secondary education, like first generation, and then programs later to add grants and supports for people of very low income to be able to get an opportunity.

I'm not going to take any lessons from you. So your demand of knowing what I'm going to say or what I'm going to do, I'm not going to buy that. You guys haven't done what you're supposed to do.

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

The next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I just want to ask again to the member from Ottawa South: It's gotten to the point, because of the cuts to post-secondary institutions and universities which I'm familiar with, that almost 50% of the teaching at Carleton University—a great university that I'm proud to serve—is done by sessional instructors with absolutely no job security, no pensions, no benefits. It's very common that these colleagues would be teaching at one, two or three campuses. I used to represent them as a union official for CUPE 4600. This is a problem not just unique to this government. We've been relying more and more on contract, precariously employed faculty and staff.

Is that something you think this government should change and is it something you're committed to change?

Mr. John Fraser: If you want to have a stable workforce that delivers what you need, then you have to give them support—that means pay, that means benefits, that means security. That means that they can raise a family, like we're all able to do here.

Post-secondary education is not just fun and good, it's actually about the economy. It's actually about having the most highly trained, highly skilled workforce. It's the best thing for our economy. To not actually ensure that we can keep our workforce stable, that we have enough people to teach our young people the things that they need to learn, the skills that they need to build, it just doesn't make economic sense.

For a government that talks about expanding the economy and about growing, I cannot believe the lack of support this government has for post-secondary education.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and answers for this round of the debate.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order, Speaker.

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

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

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

Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm happy to speak to Bill 166. This is an issue near and dear to my own heart, as someone who taught at the post-secondary level for a number of years and had the privilege to work with students and colleagues

towards, we would hope, the advancement of the future, the advancement of the country.

0910

As I understand Bill 166, now at third reading before this House, this is about making sure that there is accountability and student supports available to people on our campuses. As I mentioned in the Q&A with the member for Ottawa South, I am being contacted increasingly—our office is—by students, staff and faculty on post-secondary campuses who do not feel safe. So the timing for this bill is fortuitous. But what I want to say in the time I have, Speaker, is that the focus of the bill, in my opinion, is misplaced, and certainly the applications and the resources that I've heard the government say will arrive with this bill, I think, at the moment, at least, are not going to the right areas.

Again, just speaking as someone who has taught at post-secondary institutions, I want everybody, if you can, to put your mind in the mind of a 38-year-old university professor, who, on June 28, 2023, was attacked by a 24-year-old student who walked into a hall at the University of Waterloo. The first thing that 24-year-old asked the professor was, "What's being taught in this class?" And when the professor said to that 24-year-old student, himself a student at the University of Waterloo, that it was a gender studies class, the student pulled out two large knives and proceeded to attack the professor. The only reason the professor wasn't critically injured is that she resisted, but two other students in that class of 40 got up to try to resolve the matter.

I'll never forget that day and the reporting that came out of the University of Waterloo, because I have had situations—not violent situations in class, but I have had situations in classes where I've taught where tempers have flared and people have jumped to their feet and you thought altercations were going to break out, because, frankly, that is what post-secondary education should be about: It should be about exploring ideas, even when passions flame, even when things can get difficult in the classroom. Because I want to believe that that's what our colleges and universities should be doing: They should be challenging us to think about our place in the world and how we use the skills that we have. But I have never encountered a situation like that, Speaker.

I wish I could say that in recent years it's an isolated situation. But we also know that the same pattern that police studies and court evidence has shown was present in the mind of this 24-year-old student, who was asocial, who was troubled, who openly disliked Pride events at the University of Waterloo and who would regularly intervene in campus online groups, spewing hatred against queer and transgender groups on campus. The same pattern repeats itself with a college dropout in London, Ontario, on June 6, 2021, who, on the third occasion, he'd marshalled—he'd tried to marshal the courage twice before, but on the third occasion managed to run down an entire Muslim family. I asked myself in the aftermath of this, as we've had so much debate and reflection, given the terrorism charges that were laid against this 20-year-old, what can

we do through post-secondary education to make sure that people who have fallen so deep down those rabbit holes of hatred that they would see Muslim neighbours as somehow a threat—what are we not doing on campuses?

And then, again, something that's less known about the Quebec City mass shooting on June 27, 2017, is that that 27-year-old—and purposely, Speaker, I'm not naming the perpetrators, because I'm not interested in giving them any infamy, because I know that's one of the reasons why they committed their lethal acts. I'm not going to name them—was a political science student at Université Laval and had been known in his class, on his campus and online to specifically target Muslim neighbours—to specifically target them, to at least a few times walk around the Sainte-Foy mosque. And for the 40 people that he found worshipping on that day and the six fathers and brothers who are dead as a consequence of those lethal actions, I again ask the question for this House posed by this bill: What are we doing on campuses to reach hatred and diminish it before it manifests in a lethal act? I think that's a very important question.

When I looked at the blue-ribbon panel that the government amassed to give it advice on what to do with colleges and universities, and when I listened to the member for London West, both in this House and at committee, ask questions—worthy questions—we kept coming back to a similar theme: We aren't putting the faith in the resources in colleges and universities to make sure that students, staff and faculty have access to the resources they need when they're in a troubled mental health state, when questions and difficult circumstances pop up. We are not providing the resources necessary.

The blue-ribbon panel asked for \$2.5 billion; the government has given the post-secondary sector \$1.2 billion, so half the ask. I know at Carleton University, as I said earlier in the question to the member from Ottawa South, there is often at least a six-month waiting list when students ask for urgent mental health supports on campus—six months; six months when you're exhibiting behaviours that suggest that you could harm yourself or perhaps others.

So what we've done in the city of Ottawa is, through our community health centres, created a program called Counselling Connect: that, within 48 hours of intake—that's the goal—it gets people access to three psychotherapy sessions that are culturally appropriate and as fast as possible. The goal is within 48 hours of intake. I know this program right now is helping over 700 people in the greater city of Ottawa. Some of those folks are students. That would make sense. That program, Counselling Connect, costs community health centres in our city, who are strapped for cash, believe me, \$600,000. But I want to believe that if Bill 166 wanted to provide the supports to students, staff and faculty on our campuses, it could partner with an organization like Counselling Connect. That would have real impact to make sure that people got the help they needed when they needed it.

Speaker, I'm also mindful of the fact that this bill is before the House at a time when many of our neighbours,

many of our citizens, are mobilizing—understandably, given the horrors that we are seeing in the war between Israel and Hamas. I know the members opposite, the minister—the Premier has openly asked for encampments that are cropping up on university campuses to be dismantled, that they believe these encampments to be embodiments of hatred.

What I want to encourage my friends opposite to consider—because I visited the encampment at the University of Ottawa, I visited at the end of the workday here the University of Toronto encampment. While I may not agree with everything I've seen and everything that's written down, I can honestly say that I have never seen better organized, empathetic young people trying to ask decision-makers in this country to do what they can to create more tolerance, peace and understanding. I am amazed. When I walked into the encampment at the University of Toronto, I had to go through almost a 10-minute interview intake. So I was aware, as a politician, that I was not to be photographing or videoing people. If I wanted to conduct media interviews on site, I needed to contact them first. It was their encampment and there were rules around how I behaved and how I treated others. On this site, there was an Indigenous part—I believe it's still there—with a sacred fire. I was blown away by the level of organization. The consistent message that I heard at least from students saying: “We want to be a voice for peace. We want Canada to be a voice for peace.”

So I am discouraged, I'll be honest, when my colleagues in this House are asking for these encampments to be dismantled, without reckoning with that message that I hear loud and clear. I heard it at home and I heard it across the street at the University of Toronto. I would like to think that that is exactly the kind of message that should be embodied in our programs on campus: a greater understanding of each other; that we aren't intimidated by each others' symbols. We've had the debate in this House about the Palestinian kaffiyeh not being permitted in this chamber.

We have to see each other for our whole person. When heinous and horrible acts are committed with cultural symbols or religious symbols, we don't hold an entire culture accountable for that. We hold the individuals responsible for that. So I actually, earnestly, want my friends in government to hear that message. I want them to think about what is happening on campus across Canada—it's not a threat; it's an opportunity.

I look at two stories, and I will end with this from home, from the University of Ottawa. In the first story, I'm going to be protecting the student's identity because she fears reprisal. We're going to call her Miriam, for argument's sake. Miriam is an arts major, a Palestinian student. She recounted to me an instance where a colleague in her class, who had served in the Israeli military—serving in any military is an honourable thing—had said in class that he believed every Gazan needed to be eliminated for the goal of peace to be achieved. She was stunned, absolutely stunned—mouth-dropped-open stunned. The gentlemen identified himself as a professional sniper and talked

openly about how he believed that what he was doing was contributing to the cause of peace. She was stunned. She filed a formal complaint, and the response of the human rights office, sadly, at the university was to say, “Do you need counselling?” Do you need counselling?

0920

Again, our classrooms should be places of vigorous debate where people of different perspectives should be able to hold forth, but the kind of open anti-Palestinian racism—like open anti-Semitism, open Islamophobia—open forms of hatred that I am seeing on our campuses, where so many neighbours are falling down these wells of hatred, we have to provide the mental health resources and training to the campuses so they can respond. If we don’t do that, what we don’t respond to—which seems uncomfortable in a class on one day—could be a lethal event that we respond to later, and, frankly, we saddle the first responders who are there with the trauma of having to witness that, not only the people who live through it.

I also want to talk about Dr. Yipeng Ge, who has been a public advocate, who is a medical resident at the University of Ottawa who is suspended for his social media posting on Palestinian human rights—suspended. He was not given the grounds for his suspension for a week and a half, he was just told that he was not to go to the medical school anymore. This is a medical professional who has travelled the world, worked in refugee camps, seen horrible things, helped people in incredibly difficult circumstances, given an arbitrary suspension.

When Dr. Ge approached us, I simply listened, I tried to get a sense of how the university was dealing with the matter and I said to him, “What do you want from me?” He said, “Joel, I would love it if you would engage the university, love it if you would talk to them.” I said, “Sure. The University of Ottawa are my friends. We work together all the time.” I’m sad to say that there has been no public apology offered to Dr. Ge. There has been no public comprehensive investigation. He has decided—and this is really one of the more shameful things I can remember in recent history, at a very difficult time—not to go back to the University of Ottawa, even though his suspension has been lifted and he’s allowed to, because he feels like his integrity has been questioned and he feels like the people responsible for castigating him for his beliefs have not been held accountable.

I would welcome the government’s interest in making sure that there are student supports, that we do hold campuses accountable. I think it’s worthy. I do see the rise of hatred on our campuses and I want to be part of the solution to deal with it, but we can’t do this in an arbitrary manner and we have to make sure that the resources are available at a local level that people can seek help.

Again, I just want to be as clear as I end: I am not saying that the way we deal with this is that we label people as being hateful and we segregate them and we marginalize them. No—I am actually encouraging a strategy of dialogue and conflict resolution here, modelling what we want to see between countries in the world at a local level through the campuses. The most skilled conflict resolvers,

mediators, that I’ve met at a campus level do precisely this all the time, but we ask them to do a lot with very little budget. I’ll end with that.

I’ll say that the bill is coming to the House at a very opportune time, fortuitous time, but I think its focus needs to be ensuring that you at least meet the demands of the blue-ribbon panel—the \$2.5 billion—and that we have some trust and collaboration with our campus partners. When we feel they have misstepped and they haven’t done their due diligence, as I think is the case with Dr. Ge, then we make sure that the province does insist that due process is followed at the campus level. I thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member for Ottawa Centre for his remarks. He spoke about the financial crisis that is facing our post-secondary sector and the consequences for teaching faculty. Many of those faculty positions are filled by contract faculty who have very precarious job security—no job security, actually—very precarious employment, lack of benefits etc.

One of the things that we heard in committee is the same thing is happening in the mental health services offices on campus, the same thing is happening in the equity and diversity and inclusion offices on campus. They are terribly understaffed because universities and colleges don’t have the resources. Has the member been hearing that in his community as well?

Mr. Joel Harden: Absolutely. And something I used to say when I was a union rep representing sessionals—and the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North has been a sessional professor; the member for Spadina–Fort York has; you have a lot of experience in this House, Speaker—is that there’s an alarming amount of people that are living hand to mouth actually doing the work of working with students directly, and it’s not correct. If we’re doing that also with our counselling support services, we’re really selling ourselves short.

So again, I mentioned in my remarks a program called Counselling Connect that we’ve initiated in Ottawa, which I think could be grown across the province of Ontario and that could help our campuses deal with the wait-lists and the backlogs, because we don’t want someone suffering on a wait-list when we could be helping them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the member from Ottawa Centre: This government believes that all students in Ontario deserve to learn in a healthy, safe and respectful environment. Our post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment. When they fail to protect students, we end up with scenarios the likes of which we heard about first-hand in the standing committee—situations where students no longer feel safe to return to campus and finish their studies.

Will the member opposite support measures in Bill 166 to ensure institutions are inclusive and safe environments where students can complete their studies?

Mr. Joel Harden: As I said in debate, the objective is shared, absolutely. We want people to feel safe. We want them to finish their studies. We want them to go out there and make our communities and our country a better place. But we can't expect that to happen on a shoestring. Nothing any minister in this government does, I want to believe, is done on a shoestring. You have staff. You have people advising every single decision. You measure and you research and you act. Why are we asking our campuses to do any different? Why are we offering them half the amount of money that the blue-ribbon panel suggested we offer them so they can do their important work? That would be my question back to the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for your words.

There are a few things: We know that the resources aren't there to support the mental health of students when they're in crisis. We also know that campuses are places of very lively debate, and sometimes very intense debate. You spoke a bit about creating opportunities for dialogue.

What I see in this bill is that the minister is actually going to have unilateral powers to intervene, which makes me very uncomfortable. But there is a real need to have fora where students and professors can talk about really difficult issues and bring the temperature down at the same time. Can you speak to that, please?

Mr. Joel Harden: I thank the member for the question. You took me right back to Kingston and being an undergraduate in Kingston and being the first person in my family to go to university, encountering a world that was so much bigger than my small town of 2,000 people, and learning a lot from not just students who are Canadian but learning from students from all over the world. That was even more so when I went to York University, which is really one of the international universities that Ontario has. So it does concern me.

I agree with my colleague that ministerial directives are being contemplated when we aren't properly funding the campus programs. But I also think the minister does—and she has said so—have a responsibility to ensure that the province wants people to feel safe at work and at school, for sure. I noted in my comments instances where I do believe the campus has fallen short. Dr. Yipeng Ge's case, I think, is a real travesty, that that incredibly talented mind is not going to be part of the University of Ottawa community anymore.

So again, I would like a more collaborative approach. I do think the minister has an important responsibility, but we can't do it on the cheap. We have to make sure it's well resourced.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks. Listening to them, I was thinking of some of the students that I've met back home who have really found it tough to make ends meet. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've seen the government

cut and freeze tuition by 10%, a policy that has saved students more than \$760 million annually. I know the government proposes to build on this historic action by regulating ancillary fees to make sure that tuition remains affordable for students. So I just want to see if the member opposite will support the bill regarding textbook costs to help students make informed financial decisions.

0930

Mr. Joel Harden: I guess what I would say to the member is, I think tuition reductions and freezes are fine, but, if on the other hand, the funding envelope coming into the university intensifies the financial crisis on campus, that ultimately doesn't serve anybody.

If you can't afford to have an educator in front of a classroom of 20 for a small seminar—instead, it has to be 42—what is that educator likely to do? Are they going to be testing people's writing skills, deliberative skills, debating skills, or are they going to be doing multiple-choice tests? Because, ultimately, that's all you manage when the school's funding is being cut because of the tuition revenue coming down.

I look at other countries around the world. I look at a great country like Germany. This is country where, if you meet the standards, you can study as an international student there for free at over 200 universities, paying modest ancillary fees. What do they get from that, one would ask, if you were a German citizen paying taxes? They get the benefit of people coming from all over the world to enrich the debate at that campus.

I actually see Ontario going in the opposite direction. We are using international students, often, as revenue sources, as cash cows—what many of them tell me—at a time when the funding to our campuses is cut off.

I salute the member's interest in keeping the costs for students low, but we can't do that at the expense of finances for the campus, which is what's happening now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: To my colleague the member for Ottawa Centre: One of the things that we heard at committee is that there are two basic essentials for policies to be effective. One is the direct engagement and involvement of those who are directly affected by a policy, to be involved in the development of that policy, and the second is the resources to operationalize a policy, to implement it. I wondered if the member sees either of those two criteria included in the bill.

Mr. Joel Harden: No, I don't. And this is where, ultimately, we're not using the resources we have.

Let me just be a lot more specific. Saint Paul University, which is an independent campus at the University of Ottawa, which is in Ottawa Centre, they do what they can with what they have. One of the programs they have, which helps our mental health strategy for the city, their psychotherapy students participate in offering people in need of free or pay-what-you-can counselling sessions overseen by a trained professional. That's them maximizing their budget, collaboratively, doing whatever they can to help people in distress.

So when people come through our constituency, we have areas of referral: Counselling Connect, which I've already talked about; workplace sites, if there is one; an employee wellness program, where there is one; or the Saint Paul campus, playing a huge role for the city. That's collaborative. I would invite the minister to be as collaborative in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to take you back to standing committee again when we were deliberating on Bill 166. We heard disturbing accounts from students who lost lab positions, had members of their families threatened and who were physically assaulted on the basis of their race or ethnicity. We also heard from the students that their institutions did nothing, absolutely nothing, to help them or hold their perpetrators accountable. One said that it was futile to report anything since nothing would be done if they did.

To the member from Ottawa Centre, this legislation provides provisions to address the concerns that these students expressed. I hope you'll join me—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Joel Harden: You won't find any disagreement on this side of the House as to supporting students, staff and faculty in distress. But we also shouldn't unduly politicize it, and we should make sure that response is well-funded. That would be what I would say to my friend opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate. I recognize the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Cho has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

Ms. Dunlop has moved third reading of Bill 166, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Carried on division.

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

Third reading agreed to.

KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR LA FACTURE ÉNERGÉTIQUE À UN NIVEAU ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: A question, as we see this bill, rather like the last, to its last moment in this place: If you could pinpoint a time when Ontario could have done its part for the climate crisis, as the member for Toronto–Danforth said many times, as others have said in this House before, this may be one of those moments. This may be one of those moments.

There was a moment a little over a decade ago—if I have my calendar in my mind correct—when Ontario decided to phase out coal-fired electricity. That was critically important. That was a decision that made the air cleaner for our kids, that made huge strides for Ontario in its climate responsibilities. I salute it, even though it was done by a government that has a different political shade than mine. It was the right move. Was it easy? According to people I know who served at that time, no, it wasn't easy. Did it involve a lot of discussion, planning, industrial policy, thinking through the impact on businesses and consumers? Absolutely it did, but it was a decision that was taken.

And now, when we're faced with the really important responsibility of deciding how the energy needs for Ontario are going to be met in the next 10, 20 or 30 years, what are we doing with this bill in this House? We are passing a specific piece of legislation to overturn a decision made by an independent regulator of this House, the Ontario Energy Board. Not a partisan organization, a research-based, adjunct entity of this House that is obliged to give us the right advice—and the energy partners in the sector—on what we do to make sure we do right by the energy needs of the province. And when we're living in a time of such climate chaos, that advice could not be more important.

I'm sure everybody did the same this morning when you got up and you checked the news on your phones. You saw the news from the west end of this country, the wildfires that are blazing. The member from Thunder Bay–Superior North has talked about the woodland firefighters who are putting themselves in harm's way. They did it last summer and—are they already doing it now? They are in the middle of prepping for it right now.

My wife's family lives in Calgary, Speaker. We are planning—we hope—a family reunion this summer where

we can finally get together with some of her cousins from interior BC and from Calgary. But we're booking cancellation insurance on those plane tickets, believe me, because it's highly possible that by the time later July comes around, the air will be so thick with smoke that it will be impossible, particularly for the elders in our family, to safely have this family meeting. And we're just one anecdote in a larger scenario here, Speaker, but we're living in a time where climate chaos has real impact on people's lives.

So the decision the Ontario Energy Board made—for the record, it's been stated a number of times; I'll just repeat it here: The Ontario Energy Board told Enbridge, which holds the monopoly on the distribution of gas in the province of Ontario, that they needed to pay for the costs of all the infrastructure for new home developments up front. They gave that advice because they believed the gas sector was being unduly subsidized at a time when more climate-friendly options—heat pump and geothermal installations—were making huge inroads. The costs of these technologies are coming down, and the Ontario Energy Board looked at the evidence—10,000 pages of documents, extensive consultations, including housing providers, subject-matter experts—and they rendered the opinion, two of the three adjudicators on that board rendered the opinion that it was not feasible to tell Enbridge that they could continue to expect a subsidy from the province of Ontario for a particular kind of home heating fuel. If people wanted to choose gas for their homes, they could. If the developer community wanted to install it in those homes, they could. But the province of Ontario would not be on the hook for a significant subsidy to a highly profitable energy company whose CEO made \$19 million last year at a time of climate chaos.

0940

My friend the Minister of Energy over there has installed, as I understood it from debate, a heat pump in his home. The PA, my neighbour from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, a great riding where I grew up, has done the same thing for his home. I would like to see every single Ontarian, whether they live as a renter in an apartment building or whether they have their own home of any type, have the same options that the members of the government have shown through their own leadership. And we do have—we're groping towards it; we're inching towards it—the Independent Electricity System Operator of Ontario is offering some subsidies, modest as they are, to low-income Ontarians so they can start disconnecting from fossil fuel-based heating and cooling systems to electrical or geothermal systems.

But we're nowhere near the ambition of the province of Prince Edward Island, which is at the moment run by Conservatives. In that House, in Prince Edward Island, they set the objective much larger than we have here. They have, if I understood the Premier's latest comments correctly—35% of the homeowners and residents in that province had made the switch to heat pumps, because if you make less than \$100,000 a year and if your home is worth less than \$400,000, the province will buy you a heat

pump. And I believe it's a similar strategy for the multi-level apartment buildings in the bigger communities like Charlottetown. I mean, that's an ambitious strategy.

I look at the city of Vancouver. The city of Vancouver decided to take the choice that for new hookups for new apartment buildings they were going to require that it not be automatically going to their monopoly natural gas holder, Fortis, in that province. They were going to say, "No. We see our climate obligations for what they are. We are going to insist that new hookups be electrical. You're not going to have a subsidy."

But for some reason, here in Ontario, we are absolutely determined to do Enbridge a favour, and I don't understand why. Over the last four years, profits for the fossil fuel industry, oil and gas, are up 1,000%. And have those companies done anything to help consumers at the pump or at their homes for their heating costs, their transportation costs? Have they paid any of that forward? Absolutely not. The only instances where they have been compelled to pay that forward are in countries that have made conscious policy decisions.

Let me just cite another one: A Conservative government in England brought in a windfall profits tax, and with that windfall profits tax, they are generating billions in revenue to make life more affordable in England—a Conservative government. But what are we doing with this bill before the House here? Will Enbridge be required to make energy costs more affordable? No. Will Enbridge be required, as they say they are, by law to hit certain targets in the transition to cleaner heating and cooling options in Ontario? No. We're essentially saying we're going to continue the regime we have.

The primary reason I got into this job, Speaker, when my family and I decided to make the leap back in 2017, of all the issues—they are all important, but ensuring that there was a viable future for our children was the first one. When I look at independent research organizations that look at the decisions made by this government on this particular matter with Enbridge and reversing the OEB decision, or the decision to embrace gas-fired electrical as we refurbish nuclear stock, this is going to absolutely impact our ability to deliver on our climate obligations in the province of Ontario.

I honestly don't understand why we're making that decision, except for the fact that Enbridge likes it; except for the fact that the lobbyists who circulate in this building for Enbridge are well paid, I'm sure articulate and make all the right short-term calls to help this minister deal with the problem, the problem being that people need heating and cooling options. They have an affordability crisis, and half the people in our country—that was the last comment I remember hearing from my federal leader, Jagmeet Singh: Half the people in this country are living from paycheque to paycheque. One in seven kids are still going to school hungry in Canada. We do have a huge problem. In that reality, I don't understand why we are making life easier for Enbridge.

I've also noticed that for months, my friends in government are very interested in having a debate about the

federal price on carbon. That has been a big focus for them as they deal with the affordability crisis. But what I honestly don't understand—and I had to seek out a consultation with environmental experts at home—is how it becomes the only thing in the environmental policy file to talk about. It takes up all the space: the federal levy on carbon, the provincial carbon tax that we have because we decided to get rid of the cap-and-trade initiatives of the previous government. This has taken up all the space.

I went back home and had a specific consultation with environmental leaders back home who do a number of different things I'll talk about in a minute. I asked them, "Help me out. Is this the only thing worth talking about with environmental policy right now, given the obligations we have?" We talked specifically about the Ontario Energy Board's December 21, 2023, decision. They said, "No. Absolutely, Joel, it's not." That OEB decision was the first that they had seen that actually reckoned with the evidence of saying, "This is where we have to get to by 2030 in our climate emissions; this is where we're going, now that we're embracing gas-fired electrical," and the two didn't square.

I talked to my landlord back home, the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp. The biggest non-profit houser in Ontario is in Ottawa, my landlord at 109 Catherine Street. Sarah Button, who's their ED, said to me, "Joel, one thing we could do is bring back advantageous financing options for co-ops like ourselves, for non-profits like ourselves, for housing." With that advantageous financing—which Ontario could do, because we regulate credit unions—we could get back into the business of building the kinds of sustainable, environmental homes that people want to live in.

My office sits at Beaver Barracks. People know Ottawa; it's an old military base that was transformed into a series of residential properties powered, heated and cooled by geothermal sources. It is absolutely even heat and even cool when you're in there. Come visit us any time if you'd like to sample it yourself. It's wonderful. We don't have a big space, but it's a great place for residents to interact with us.

The folks in the buildings all around us really appreciate their living conditions, too. But it required a significant investment by CCOC on the infrastructure side. They took on a large debt obligation, because they didn't get the help they needed from the federal or provincial governments. They got some, but not enough. Sarah Button said to me, "Joel, can you imagine what we could do for environmentally conscious housing if there was an active partner at Queen's Park and an active partner at the federal government?"

Just in case my colleagues in government think I'm only holding them to account, let me just say clearly for the record that the federal housing strategy, the 10-year housing strategy, insofar as how it has done its job to provide affordable, sustainable housing, has met 3% of its target. Those 3% of the homes built under the strategy five years in are 30% of the residents' income. We are subsidizing highly profitable corporate landlords to build

housing that people can't afford at the federal level. Just in case the government thinks I'm only having concerns about them, I have massive concerns with how the federal government has fallen short of its obligations—some changes lately, but that's the reality.

0950

But back to Enbridge. If you think about the amount of money we are shovelling to Enbridge, and you think about what we could use it for—I think about a subject near and dear to my heart: public transit. Talk to a transit user in the city of Ottawa, and you will get a look back of massive consternation. We, through this bill, are going to be offering a subsidy to Enbridge of billions of dollars. But our city right now, in this year, is 74,000 service hours less with the buses we have on the road, bringing people around to where they need to go because of cuts from Queen's Park.

The latest new deal we signed with the government which has some stuff in there that we could work with on community safety, security, emergency housing. There is absolutely a goose egg for transit. There's nothing for transit.

And hey, I'm not sure what the Premier is thinking. Maybe his view is that everybody works for the federal government, has a wonderful salary with benefits, and that's what Ottawa is. That is not—some people in our city meet that description, but in Ottawa Centre, we have the highest number of rooming houses in Ottawa. A rooming house is a multi-unit building where people rent out a room. Conditions are often squalor in many of these buildings that I've had occasion to visit neighbours in. We have a lot of deep poverty in Ottawa Centre too. What do those people rely on to get around? Transit.

So I think if we were to propose a climate solution, following the advice we've given to this government, through all levels of this bill, it makes a lot more sense—excepting the fact that the OEB made a decision that upset Enbridge, certainly. But it set us on track, were we to have followed it, to do a lot more by the climate. Ottawa has been the recipient of some significant weather emergencies. We've had tornados rip through the west end of our community. We've had floods on the east and west. We've had a historic derecho that happened literally during the provincial election where all of us were competing for our seats. We had to shut down our campaign for two days so we could check in on neighbours who had power lines falling across their verandas or their apartment buildings by phone and signalling to emergency services where there were emergencies—like this is the world we're living in. We're having more and more significant weather events, and the decisions we make on the big files—the big files being housing, transportation and this one, energy—set the pattern for everything else.

Some 45% of the emissions in the city of Ottawa come from buildings, come from housing. When I think about one in particular, I've got a great relationship with many of the residents in the apartment buildings all over the downtown. But I think of one in particular, on McLeod Street, the Golden Triangle area of Ottawa Centre. If you

walk up to McLeod—it's a community housing building—in the dead winter in January, you will see at the top of the building, the windows are wide open. Ottawa winter; the windows are wide open. Why are they wide open? Because literally the families and the people living in those units, because of the nature of the heating system they have, which works in one direction only: on 100%—they're sweltering. They might as well be living in a sauna. They find mould all over their units, because of the amount of condensation that drips into their homes.

If you talk to Ottawa Community Housing, you talk to people like Stéphane Giguère, the executive director or Brian Billings who is the properties manager. They shrug their shoulders, like “Joel, we're doing our very best, but there's no magic pot of money for us to be able to refurbish our buildings and to embrace the technologies that are becoming more and more affordable right now.” So windows are left wide open in the middle of January. And we are paying, the province is paying—as we direct subsidies to municipalities for community housing, because they are unsustainable—to have heat escape into the air. Oil boilers in these buildings makes absolutely no sense.

So instead of giving a multi-billion dollar gift to Enbridge and continuing that regime, why wouldn't we consider doing what we ran on in the last provincial election and the NDP proposed, which is a significant retrofit program for community housing and apartment buildings right across the whole province, where we would make a big upfront investment, create a lot of jobs for skilled trades workers, create jobs for manufacturers of heat-efficient windows and heating in cooling units? We could make sure that people don't live in a sauna in the winter if they live in community housing. We could spend the people's money wisely, but instead, no, we're not doing that. We're giving a gift to Enbridge.

Now, Enbridge has also said that they want to be part of the energy transition, they see the value of homes making this shift towards electrification or geothermal sources of heating and cooling. The words are nice, and the anecdotes that you see every now and again in the Enbridge brochures are great, but, ultimately, this is a company that has a lot of influence in this province. This is a company that has a monopoly agreement in the province for the transmission and distribution of gas. We here in this House get to sell the rules by which they exercise that monopoly right.

I want to believe that if a Conservative government in Prince Edward Island can undergo a revolution in the heating and cooling of homes there, we can do it here. I want to believe that if a Conservative government in England can say to energy giants like Enbridge or other oil companies that, “Hey, you've been doing fantastically well. Time for you to share some of that wealth with the societies in which you live so people can get access to the things they need”—that makes a lot sense, but I don't see that in this bill.

What I see in this bill is continuing a very favourable playing ground for Enbridge. I didn't get elected in this

House to work for Enbridge; I got elected to work for the people of Ottawa Centre. All of us have our responsibility to look our residents in the eyes and say in this moment we made the right climate decisions, and that involves voting no to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions and answers.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his impassioned speech. I certainly understand where he's coming from, but I know in my community there is a development called Little River Acres. It was, I'll call it, a modern development in the 1970s, and none of the homes were built with natural gas, and, boy, are they regretting that decision today, because the cost to power these homes is significant through electric heating and cooling.

I know that the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act speaks not just to my constituents, who need affordability at their homes, but all Ontarians. By reversing the Ontario Energy Board decision, we're saving families tens of thousands of dollars on the price of a new home and will save, down the road, heating and cooling costs for those people like my constituents at Little River Acres.

So I ask the opposition why their party is trying to make housing more expensive than it already is rather than working with the government to keep the cost of housing affordable down, not just on the capital but on the operating side too.

Mr. Joel Harden: I guess to properly answer the member's question I'd ask, through a head nod, are those electrical systems electrical baseboards or heat pumps?

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay, well, they're not the same thing. If we put electrical baseboard heating in a home, you're absolutely right, that's hugely expensive. I think the last government prior to you guys in 2018 suffered because they didn't pay attention to energy poverty because of the situations you're describing there. But that's not what I was talking about in my 20 minutes. I was talking about the province here following the lead of Conservatives in Prince Edward Island that have looked at brand new technologies that can make sure that communities like the ones the member mentioned don't get saddled with energy poverty because of terrible decisions.

Buying into this market right now, the electrification of heating and cooling right now, is getting more and more affordable, and what will cost us a lot is stranded assets of natural gas-heated communities that may not even be relevant 20 or 30 years from now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for an excellent presentation. It seems that with Bill 165 it's yet the next installment of must-miss theatre. Its quite unselfconsciously yet ironically titled bills are part of a pattern of this government, but this bill represents unprecedented political interference with an independent regulator. Does this political interference help consumers or put them at risk?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thanks for the question. It absolutely puts them at risk. When I read the decision the first time and I saw the words in the report, they made me stand up in my chair. I mean, stranded assets in 20 or 30 years—when you look all over Europe, because of the terrible invasion of Ukraine and the impact that's had on all of those countries, the rate of the shift going on in Europe right now is beyond belief. They are embracing this. But we, however, seem to be stuck in our servitude to Enbridge, and I don't know why we're doing that except to make Enbridge and its lobbyists happy. But, to the member's question, that's not why we're here. We're here to make homeowners and renters, people who want to live in a home that's healthy, happy. That should be the objective of this bill; that's not what it is.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

1000

Mr. Lorne Coe: To my colleague from Ottawa Centre: When I'm knocking on doors, one of the main issues I hear is affordability, and I'm sure he does in Ottawa Centre, as well; there's no question about it. But with the policies like the federal government's carbon tax that I know that the opposition supports, Ontarians are being forced to give up their hard-earned money.

I'd like the member from Ottawa Centre to speak to affordability challenges—and I know they're top concerns in Ottawa Centre, as well—and whether he would welcome the changes, and his constituents, in this particular legislation that he spoke on.

Mr. Joel Harden: He's right; the member from Whitby is right. We do care about affordability all over the province. Ottawa Centre, Whitby—people are having a really, really hard time out there. But we're not going to make it better, Speaker, by embracing a technology that will be obsolete in 20 or 30 years. If somebody is investing into a natural gas-powered community now or in five years and is later reckoning with the fact that they may not even get that service anymore because the entire sector is moving towards electrification but it didn't 10 or 15 years prior—we don't want to put anybody in that situation, not a renter, not a property owner, not a homeowner.

If you look at the province, a third of our emissions are coming from energy. We have to make the right choices to make sure that we can make people's lives more affordable right now but also going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member for an excellent speech. You touched on this, but I would appreciate it if you would expand on what you see as the climate impact if this bill is passed as proposed by the government.

Mr. Joel Harden: If we follow it to the letter, I actually don't think—as you've said in debate too, even if this bill is passed and the government continues to do favours for Enbridge, I think ultimately industry itself is going to shift. But consumers are going to be left with the debt of this decision, and that's got a huge climate price.

There's a few things happening now, and the member knows it well. If we embrace gas-fired heating and cooling and we continue the Enbridge subsidy, we create a preference for that in new home construction. That will have a huge climate impact. But in addition to that, we're embracing gas-fired electricity too. There are climate costs to every single one of these decisions, and the wildfires that are going to be happening this summer are not abstract from this; they contribute to this. It's the environment in which we live. And the people we put in harm's way, the woodland firefighters, that deal with the moment, these are the people we push into the emergency when we could be making the decisions to reduce emissions. But that's not what's going to happen with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for your remarks. A couple of things that stood out to me: \$19 million for the CEO of Enbridge and profits at 1,000%. That represents a lot of money, and we are continuing to subsidize that. Now, I should say that in my region, there's a lot of desire to have natural gas. The chamber of commerce has said they want natural gas. They want to have that access. They want that subsidy to remain. I appreciate that, but it's also installing an older technology that we know is going to become more and more expensive. The problem in our region is there's no investment in the electrical lines to carry the volume of electricity needed in order to have heat pumps and EVs in our communities. That, to me, would be a very valuable investment of some of this money that's going into a much older technology.

Mr. Joel Harden: The situation is the same as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned, that there are communities that are in an older form of electrical heating that are going broke because they can't pay the costs of their homes. So I totally understand where people are coming from, but there are other choices people can make. Mattamy Homes right now is embarking upon a number of geothermal-inspired district heating communities. This is someone in the private sector that's saying, "This is better for our business. It's better for the environment. These are homes that people will want to live in." So Mattamy is leading—good for Mattamy. But the province should be encouraging this.

In Thunder Bay, if the electrical capacity is a question, geothermal, if there is space, could potentially be an option. And the drilling technology is getting even more effective in smaller urban areas. So, we do have choices, but one of the choices I would hope we don't make is doing Enbridge a favour and continuing a multi-billion dollar subsidy for them, when we could be helping people out on energy affordability by making the right investments.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you to the member from Ottawa Centre: From time to time, the government highlights some of the cuts that we're making to red tape. That's because we're committed to building more than 1.5

million new homes and because we're looking to land historic investments that our Minister of Economic Trade and Job Creation has secured thus far, and more to come.

Can the member from Ottawa Centre speak to the leave-to-construct change in the legislation that he spoke about earlier, another great example of how we are cutting red tape?

Mr. Joel Harden: I don't think you're going to have objection anywhere in this House to the urgency for housing. We are agreed on that. The question is, what kind of housing? What are going to be the heating and cooling systems in these units? Where are people going to live? Are they going to live near transit if they need it? Will that bus come on time? Will people be living in a neighbourhood with good schools? Will the schools get all the resources they need? Will we be supporting small businesses and local enterprises, and not just the big guys? These are the questions that come to mind with housing. You can't just look at housing in a silo; it has got to be surrounded with an industrial strategy for all of the other things.

So I'm very glad, and I hear we're getting good news today on the industrial policy front. But we need to make sure that the housing that we put in the ground works, and that it's good for the planet, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 165, Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024, because this is a significant matter. It's one that touches the lives and livelihoods of hard-working families, farmers and business owners all across Ontario.

The landscape of energy consumption is changing. Our government understands the importance of developing infrastructure that addresses Ontario's expanding energy requirements, fosters innovation and drives economic progress, while remaining affordable and keeping Ontario competitive. High interest rates, skilled trades shortages, lack of supply and increased demand in housing have increased building costs and increased housing prices.

Our government is focused on working to make life more affordable for everyone. We're delivering solutions that will help power the province's growing economy. As Ontario's population continues to grow, the proposed Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024, would ensure that the province can build new homes, and people from across the province can continue to access reliable, cost-effective energy, where and when it's needed.

My riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington spans from the beautiful town of Leamington, my hometown, to Pelee Island and across the southern half of Chatham-Kent, along the shores of Lake Erie, through Wheatley, Blenheim, Ridgeway and Highgate. I'm proud to share that my riding hosts 3,800 acres of controlled-environment agriculture, the largest concentration of greenhouse agriculture in Canada. These farms produce fresh, safe, locally grown fruits and vegetables with exceptional quality and yield, while conserving water, recycling nutrients and

implementing cutting-edge technology solutions right here in Ontario.

I have personally witnessed a technological revolution in sustainability, innovation and entrepreneurship on our farms, in our orchards and in our high-tech greenhouses. To maintain our momentum as global leaders, our government is taking decisive action to keep energy costs down and empower our farmers to reinvest in their operations while remaining competitive. Lower energy costs help keep family farms viable to reinvest in their operations, remain profitable and respond quickly to changing consumer preferences, all while enhancing long-term resilience.

By prioritizing policies that keep energy costs down, we're strengthening our Grow Ontario Strategy and empowering our entire agricultural sector and Ontario's farming families to continue to grow fresh food for families in Ontario, Canada and the world. By supporting safe, reliable, affordable energy to grow our own food, we can maintain food sovereignty while nurturing the technological industries and innovation that support it, right here in Ontario.

The latest report from Ontario's Electrification and Energy Transition Panel highlights that natural gas plays a crucial role in Ontario's energy landscape, serving three vital functions: powering electrical generation, providing home and water heating and supporting various industrial and agricultural sectors.

1010

Our government knows that this bill is a step in the right direction to preserve consumer energy choices by ensuring that natural gas remains viable, safe and affordable for all consumers. Bill 165 is a pivotal piece of legislation that supports safe, affordable, reliable options for farm operations like grain drying, which contributes to broader agricultural stability and security. By prioritizing measures to minimize energy costs and promote affordability, this act ensures that grain farmers all across Ontario have access to cost-effective energy solutions, including natural gas, for their critical drying operations.

This is essential for farmers across the province, especially during harvest season, to ensure these precious crops can be safely stored, make it to processors and make it to our markets. By using natural gas, grain farmers can effectively manage moisture levels in a wide variety of harvested grains. That prevents spoilage and ensures the highest quality of production that Ontario is known for.

As global leaders in fresh food production, Ontario greenhouse growers rely on safe, affordable natural gas, which is essential during our cooler months while enabling us to grow crops year-round. This, in turn, enhances exports, increases prosperity and strengthens food sovereignty. This is growing Ontario.

Greenhouses, of course, require precise temperature and humidity controls for optimal plant growth, and this is exactly what natural gas can deliver: safe, consistent and reliable power. By using natural gas, greenhouse farmers can maintain ideal growing conditions for a variety of

crops with higher yields and world-renowned quality year-round.

The Keeping Energy Costs Down Act would, if passed, also provide an ability to reverse the Ontario Energy Board's split decision which would have required any new home buyer, farm or business to pay 100% of the cost of a natural gas connection up front—very, very difficult. Reversing this decision would save at least \$4,400 on the price of every new home for my family, for our constituents and for your families.

Through the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, our government is dedicated to promoting fair and inclusive decision-making processes within the Ontario Energy Board. This ensures affordability for everyone. The legislation, if passed, will mandate the OEB to engage specific stakeholders or economic sectors, ensuring voices from diverse backgrounds are heard, particularly those who could be affected by forthcoming decisions. By prioritizing inclusivity and transparency, we're taking meaningful steps toward building a more equitable and sustainable landscape in energy for everyone.

Speaker, I'm going to share some local and highly credible voices who are supporting this act, if I have time.

First, Mr. George Gilvesy, chairman of the board of directors of Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers: "Natural gas is an essential crop input, as heat and carbon dioxide are captured to optimize and enhance greenhouse vegetable production." That's right here in Ontario. "Legislation such as this will continue to drive investment in Ontario's agricultural sector, growing food, jobs and economic prosperity."

Similarly, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Drew Spoelstra, stated, "The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is supportive of the decision taken by the Minister of Energy to address the Ontario Energy Board's decision, which threatens to increase costs for new homes relying on natural gas for heating, jeopardizes housing affordability and future access to this energy"—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member, but it is now time to move on to members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF PINS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): On that note, I'm going to recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to allow members to wear pins in recognition of May 14 being the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' Children and Youth in Care Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The minister is asking for unanimous consent to wear pins recognizing children's aid societies. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: On May 4, we were happy to celebrate International Firefighters' Day. This was an opportunity to thank the firefighters of Mississauga for their service, recognize their extraordinary efforts and acknowledge the sacrifices that many firefighters have undertaken to keep us safe.

I was happy to hear the government's announcement about increasing coverage for firefighters with cancer. And I had the opportunity to visit the three fire stations in my riding, Stations 107, 115 and 122, to meet with the hard-working firefighters and thank them for their service.

Speaker, this week also serves as national police week and road safety week. We know the police play a critical role keeping our roads safe for all of us to enjoy. The dedicated personnel at Peel Regional Police are working hard to take criminals off the streets and enforce traffic laws.

The latest provincial budget announced \$46 million to support response times, including purchasing four police helicopters. This will help keep our streets safe. Our government's committed to supporting police and giving them the resources they need.

I am proud to be part of a government that supports our front-liners.

ROD BRAWN

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Today, I mark the passing of Rod Brawn, a good friend of mine, beloved of Tina, a staunch New Democrat and a kind, gentle and loving person to all lucky enough to meet him.

Rod was born in Sarnia on May 19, 1954, and earned three degrees at the University of Western Ontario: honours history, honours music and bachelor of education.

Rod had a variety of jobs: James Reaney Sr.'s research assistant, a journalist for several small-town newspapers and an elementary and secondary supply teacher.

Rod was passionate about music and was active in his church, St. John the Evangelist. He sang in the choir and played the trumpet for special occasions. Rod often played the Last Post at the funerals of WWII veterans and refused to be paid for the service; it was his way of honouring veterans.

Craig Smith writes, "Rod's trumpet may have been silenced, but his music will still be heard."

Rod tutored refugee children and volunteered with the Amabile choir. He was adamant about helping the underdog. As Rod and Tina were fond of saying, "Jesus was a socialist." Now if that confuses anyone, please be sure to go back and read it again.

Rod fought for universal health care and public education. He truly believed J.S. Woodsworth's words, "What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all."

In his final years, Tina had to fight for Rod's health care, trudging him through snow in the middle of winter

to a clinic for his so-called home care. Rod fought for a system that wasn't cut to the bone and privatized. Throughout, Tina has been the example of selfless love, caring for Rod without a word of complaint.

Rod died on May 12, a week shy of his 70th birthday. He was well loved by all.

Rod, I commit to you that I will keep you at the heart of all of my work and every decision I make here in this Legislature. Rest in peace, Rod.

HOCKEY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my pleasure to rise to talk about the long and proud hockey tradition that is part of the DNA of my riding of Simcoe–Grey. In Collingwood, the tradition of junior and senior hockey goes back generations, to the late 1800s, with storied teams like the Shipbuilders from the early 1900s, the Greenshirts in the 1950s, the Glassmen in the 1970s, the Blues in the 1980s and the Blackhawks in the early 2000s.

Speaker, that tradition continued with the return of the Collingwood Blues Junior A hockey team to Collingwood in 2019. In four short years, the team raised the Buckland Cup in 2023 as Ontario's champions.

This year, the Blues picked up where they left off last season, finishing the regular hockey season ranked number one in Canada, and last month, they defended their Buckland Cup title. The Blues are now playing for the Centennial Cup in Oakville as one of 10 teams from across Canada vying to be Canada's Junior A hockey champions for 2024.

1020

The success of the Blues is a testament to the dedication of the ownership and management, the talent and tenacity of the players and the support of the hard-working volunteers, but it is the fans that are the team's special sauce, faithfully packing the arena for home games. The Blues led the league again in attendance this year, averaging over 1,100 fans per game.

I want to thank the Blues, the local Junior C teams, the Alliston Hornets and the Stayner Siskins, and the many vibrant minor hockey associations throughout my riding for continuing our proud hockey tradition. Go, Blues, go!

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: We recently had a tenant contact our office to raise a very concerning issue. The tenant had read about the recent court decision that forced a tenant to pay his landlord's delinquent tax bill to the CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, and he was concerned that this rule could affect him.

Since his landlord was refusing to tell them if they were paying their taxes, the tenant contacted the CRA and asked them what he should do. The CRA told him to withhold 25% of his rent and pay it directly to the CRA.

Now, if a tenant doesn't pay on time, the CRA's website says they will pay interest and they may be fined. The tenant went back to the landlord with the bad news

and the landlord said, "If you withhold your rent to pay this tax bill, I'm going to evict you for arrears."

Okay, so this tenant is now caught between a rock and a hard place, between having the CRA go after him for someone else's tax bill or risking eviction. And this renter isn't alone. Every renter who is living in a property owned by a non-resident landlord could be in the same horrible predicament.

No tenant should have to risk eviction for paying their non-resident landlord's delinquent tax bill. This is fundamentally unfair. In this incredibly expensive housing market, renters have it hard enough.

We are requesting the following measures to resolve this situation: The province should direct the Landlord and Tenant Board to deny any landlord's application to evict a tenant if the tenant is withholding rent to pay the landlord's own tax bill, and second, the CRA should work with the federal government to reverse this rule immediately and not force tenants to pay their landlord's delinquent taxes ever.

SUNDERLAND RINGETTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: It was my pleasure to attend the Sunderland girls Stingerz ringette year-end ceremony this month to celebrate all their many team accomplishments. It was a special day for the under-14 A girls' team as they were the gold-winning provincial champions.

Sunderland ringette celebrates over 40 years of providing opportunities for female athletes to excel at competitive sport in a positive way, providing on-ice skill and enhancing physical health and well-being, higher levels of confidence and leadership, and a lot of fun.

Many of these athletes start their ringette journey from as early as four years old and continue to train and compete all throughout high school. The coach of our champions, Coach Carson, was also a past ringette star before she took on the mantle of coach, and she was assisted by her dad on the job. It is this generational mentorship that makes the Sunderland Stingerz a formidable force on the ice in Ontario. The celebrations filled the arena with family, friends, current and former coaches and players to mark this celebration.

I'd like to thank the president of the association, Jennifer Smallwood and her team of volunteers, athletes, coaches and parents for their hard work and dedication to the girls' ringette program, and I'd also like to thank the Sunderland Legion, which always plays a supporting role in the town and for the girl athletes.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Guy Bourguin: Un résident de Kapuskasing veut transférer sa mère d'un centre de soins de longue durée à Toronto pour un centre à Kapuskasing ou Hearst, plus près de chez lui, où il pourra la visiter plus souvent. Mais il y a une liste d'attente de deux ans avant qu'elle ne puisse être transférée—deux ans, monsieur le Président. Sa mère, qui commence à montrer des signes de régression de mémoire,

se sent seule à Toronto sans sa famille. Imaginez vivre à neuf heures de votre famille, simplement parce qu'il n'y a pas de lits dans votre village natal.

Le maire d'Opasatika a écrit au ministre Cho :

« On the third of May, my mom with dementia was told in the morning that she would have a bath at around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. So she was ready to go for her bath in her room at that time. She waited for an hour, nobody came, turns out they forgot....

« We lost almost all the local staff and know we have agencies staff that speaks only English with lots of residents that only speak French. »

Il y a deux ans, le gouvernement a annoncé haut et fort la création de 68 lits de longue durée à Kapuskasing. Extencicare prévoit demander une prolongation et de mettre ce projet en arrière-plan. Le gouvernement se traîne les pieds, même si les subventions sont adéquates pour bâtir. Cette situation est tout à fait inacceptable.

On est conscient qu'en Ontario il y a un lit de longue durée pour 170 anglophones, mais seulement un lit pour 3 400 francophones. Les habitants du Nord et les francophones méritent de recevoir le même niveau de soins que les Ontariens du Sud, proche de leur famille, et en français.

JERSEYVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to rise today to recognize the Jerseyville Baptist Church, a church in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook that recently celebrated its 200th anniversary. I had the privilege of attending this celebration and witnessing the sense of community the organization provides for residents in the surrounding area. I was genuinely moved.

I asked Pastor Matthew Richards what this 200th anniversary means to him and his church. He said, "For many years, the church's stated mission has been, 'We will, by prayer and faith, in action, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, impact our community with the love of Jesus Christ and walk in fellowship with those who trust Him.' This takes place in formal times of worship and Bible teachings and also in genuine friendships within our congregation. We ... support with our prayers, time and resources other charities, local and global, which complement our mission."

Pastor Richards explained that many of the last names of those who were instrumental in the establishment of the church are still prevalent in the community today. Clearly these deep community roots are evident as the church celebrates 200 years of offering fellowship and support throughout the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again congratulate Pastor Richards and the congregation at Jerseyville Baptist Church on their remarkable longevity. I wish them many, many more years of service to Jerseyville and beyond.

PAULINE SHIRT

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and everyone here.

"We celebrate, we acknowledge spirit and spirit will come alive." This sentiment from Pauline Shirt will never be forgotten, and her spirit will continue to come alive through generations to come.

We sadly lost Pauline, one of Canada's most beloved Indigenous elders, from the physical world on May 7, 2024. Her spirit lives on not only through her children and loved ones but in the stories told in Indigenous languages which she had a hand in preserving.

Grandmother (Nokomis) Pauline Shirt, Nimikiiquay, or Thunder Woman, as she was also known, was a knowledge keeper, leader and visionary.

A Plains Cree Elder from the Red-Tail Hawk Clan, Pauline and her late husband, Vern Harper, first established the Ontario leg of the Native People's Caravan to Ottawa in 1974. Their critical work did not stop there. In 1976, Pauline and Vern founded Canada's first Indigenous-run and -focused school, because they wanted a culturally safe and appropriate space for their son to learn. Kapapamahchakwew, Wandering Spirit School, still operates in the east end of Toronto today.

As city councillor, I had the pleasure of engaging with Pauline on a student beading installation at Raindrop Plaza, the first stormwater demonstration site in the city.

In 2023, I watched Pauline Shirt be inducted into the Order of Ontario, the province's highest civilian honour, for a lifetime of contributions.

Pauline Shirt chose to live in our Beaches–East York community at the end of her remarkable life, and there is no greater honour for me than to have represented her.

Meegwetch, Pauline. You will be forever remembered.

1030

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Will Bouma: Good morning, everyone. As you may know, May is Vision Health Month in Ontario and across Canada. Vision Health Month is traditionally a time when optometrists take a few extra moments to enlighten their patients and their communities about the significance of regular eye examinations.

Maintaining good vision health is not hard. In fact, 75% of vision loss can be averted through simple steps, and this starts with an eye exam. An eye exam does more than test your vision, it can also detect symptoms of diseases like diabetes, Parkinson's disease, brain tumours, multiple sclerosis and cancer.

Being able to see clearly is a critical part of maintaining a healthy and happy life. As a practising optometrist, I am acutely aware of the importance of regular eye health examinations. Eye exams are essential for updating prescriptions for glasses or contact lenses as vision can change over time, especially as we get older. Glasses not only correct vision but also contribute to better eye health, safety, performance and overall well-being, making them an essential part of many people's lives.

As we celebrate Vision Health Month in Ontario, our government reaffirms our commitment to prioritizing eye health. By raising awareness, encouraging regular eye

exams and ensuring access to quality eye care services, we can all contribute to a brighter and clearer future for all of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Last Friday, the Associate Minister of Housing, the Honourable Rob Flack, and I announced that our government is providing \$1.2 million to help create housing units in Whitby that will support youth 19 to 24 years old experiencing or at risk of homelessness, mental health and addiction issues. This investment is part of the province's social services relief fund which has provided over \$1.2 billion of support to help municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators create longer-term housing solutions and help vulnerable people in Ontario.

The Ontario government is also investing an additional \$202 million this year in homelessness prevention programs. This includes an allocation of \$18.7 million to the Homelessness Prevention Program for the region of Durham in 2023-24, looking after the hard-working families in the region of Durham.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, a delegation from the Republic of Fiji. The delegation is led by the Honourable Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislative Assembly today.

L'hon. Greg Rickford: Chers collègues, j'aimerais vous présenter mon collègue et ami du Québec le député de Vachon, le ministre responsable des Relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, Ian Lafrenière. Il est accompagné de sa conseillère principale, Alana Boileau. Bienvenue.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to welcome my constituent Craig Smith who is here in the public gallery. Craig and I worked together in this place in 1990. He is now the president of ETFO Thames Valley, and I'm here. Welcome to the Legislature, Craig.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm thrilled to welcome today from the riding of Vaughan–Woodbridge, Rhys Tweedie, who is our page captain today, as well as his sister and his mother Pauline. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm so happy to be able to welcome to the Legislature today members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. I know others will also be welcoming many members today, but I particularly want to mention Karen Brown, president; David Mastin, first vice-president; Shirley Bell, vice-president; Gundi Barbour, vice-president; and my brother-in-law, the president of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board ETFO local, David Berger. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education, who are with us, as well as Bishop Bergie, who's with us.

Thank you to the head of OEETA as well as the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association.

Likewise, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, welcome to all the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario colleagues who are with us today.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I would like to join in welcoming Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education, including Bishop Gerard Bergie, president of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, from his St. Catharines diocese; Michael Bellmore, newly elected president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, from the Sudbury Catholic District School Board; René Jansen in de Wal, president of OEETA, from the Toronto Catholic District School Board; and from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, executive members Mary Fowler, Carolyn Proulx-Wootton, Mario Spagnuolo, Tamara DuFour, Juan Gairey, Michael Thomas, Sylvia van Campen, Jenn Wallage and Nathan Core.

Thank you so much for being here today.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome sensational Sebastian and terrific Taddy, who are representing superb Scarborough with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to welcome Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education to Queen's Park today. Some of their members are here: Bishop Gerard Bergie, president of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, St. Catharines diocese; Patrick Daly, OCSTA past president and chair, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board; René Jansen in de Wal, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; and Luz del Rosario, school board trustee for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Please join them at their reception tonight at 5 p.m. in the dining room.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, today is youth in care day, so I welcomed some guests this morning for a press conference. With us, we have the former Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman; Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario, and members Zenee Maceda, Jesse Mintz, Janet Dassinger, Jo-Anne Brown, Lorrie Peppin, Karen Trench, Kim Leonard, Aubrey Gonsalves, Juanita Forde, Dhananjai Kohli and Eric Bell.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for all of the work that do you.

I have one more guest who I see up in the gallery above. Patrick Daly is here with the Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education.

It's nice to see you.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to warmly welcome members of ETFO today who are having a lunch reception, if you can join, especially President Karen Brown; Carolyn; my sister Michaela Kargus from Upper Grand. And we have some great Waterloo region folks: Jeff Pelich, Lisa Tonner, Marsha Auxilly.

I also want to do a shout-out to Janice and Robin, who are here from KW Famous. Look them up on Instagram.

You guys put the “U” in fun. Thanks for being here.

Hon. Michael Parsa: A very warm welcome to the representatives from the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies who are here today in recognition of the 10th anniversary of Children and Youth in Care Day—a day to honour and celebrate current and former kids in care across our province. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to say hello to all the members who came today to advocate for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. Today, Marit, the leader of the NDP, and I met with Owen Charters, president of BGC Canada; Adam Joiner, CEO of BGC Ottawa; Utcha Sawyers, CEO of BGC East Scarborough; Chris Harvey, executive director of BGC London; Howard Moriah, executive director of BGC Durham; Pablo Vivanco, executive director of BGC Albion; and Sam Lapensee, manager of digital media at BGC Canada. And a special welcome to the youth of the year, Sebastian, of BGC West Scarborough. Welcome to the Legislature today.

1040

Mr. Adil Shamji: It gives me great pleasure to welcome two very bright young stars, both students from McMaster, Hayley Kupinsky and Ori Epstein. I must admit, I learned today that Ori will be attending law school at McGill next year, and I want to congratulate him as well.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to give a warm welcome to the Legislature today. MPP Gates and I met with Brian Barker, Kim Finlayson and Stacy Sullivan with ETFO to discuss immediate attention to the rise of violence towards educators in our classrooms.

I’d also like to give a warm welcome to Bishop Gerard Bergie, president of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario.

Welcome to our House.

Mr. Rick Byers: It’s my pleasure to welcome Julie Stanley to the Legislature today. She is president of the ETFO Bluewater local. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I’d like to warmly welcome representatives from the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, the First Nations Technical Institute and the Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education in Ontario. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I’m very pleased to welcome representatives from Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and the different Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada from across the province who are here for their advocacy day. Welcome to Queen’s Park. It’s wonderful to have you.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome good friends and talented educators Craig Smith, president of ETFO Thames Valley Teacher local, as well as Mike Thomas, first vice-president of ETFO Thames Valley Teacher local as well as a provincial executive member. Thank you for standing up for public education.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’d like to extend our welcome and congratulations to the First Nations Technical Institute for hosting their morning reception. It was

wonderfully attended, and everybody had a lot of good times but we also learned a lot. I want to welcome Suzanne Brant and Cathie Stewart Findlay.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to welcome Nathan Core, the president of the Waterloo Region Occasional Teachers’ local, as well as my friend Jeff Pelich from ETFO. Welcome to your House.

FLAG-RAISING CEREMONY

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to welcome everyone to join us at the flag-raising for Israel in celebration of their independence day, Yom Ha’atzmaut, just outside, right after question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we gave the government an opportunity to put children, to put kids, first, an opportunity that this government passed on. We asked the government a simple question on behalf of our children: Will you fix our schools? The failure of this government to take inflation into its budget calculations is resulting in more crowded classrooms, more growing incidents of violence and more school programs that are disappearing day by day by day.

So I want to ask the Premier again: Will the Premier explain to the children of this province why he doesn’t like funding their schools?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: When we came to office in 2018, the funding in Ontario was at \$23 billion. Today it stands at north of \$28 billion, a 22% increase in funding, proof positive of our government and Premier’s commitment to invest in publicly funded schools.

We are also the government that delivered stability for children, which your party and the Liberals could not achieve: four years of peace with Catholic and public and English and French. Two million kids have stability in the classroom, and I believe that is worthy of praise. All the parties came together for the benefit of children in Ontario.

When it comes to mental health, when it comes to preventing violence and injury of our staff and of our kids, we, as the government, are working with the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to have increased funding in mental health by 577%. It is the most significant investment, and we mandated learning on mental health—the first in the country to do so. We’re going to keep investing to support our kids.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: A budget that ignores inflation is a budget that ignores reality. We have already lost 5,000

qualified educators since this government came into office, and with this budget we're going to lose thousands and thousands more qualified, caring adults in our schools. The government thought that if they gave the funding formula a different name, they rebranded it, families weren't going to notice that their kids are being short-changed again. Well, I've got news for you: They're noticing.

Why is this government so determined to leave our education system worse than when they found it?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, last Friday, I joined the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler in Hamilton at Interval House, where we announced a historic \$875,000 investment to train high school coaches and teachers and students about the issue of violence against women, building healthy relationships in our schools, specifically tackling the issue of safety when it comes to kids and our staff. That was an investment we made together because we believe there's more to do as we bring forth our policy on restricting cellphones, removing social media and banning vaping from Ontario schools. Two hundred high schools will receive this education, 400 coaches will benefit from this investment, and it wouldn't have been achieved if the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler didn't initiate this action and get it to the finish line for the benefit of the families.

That is how we make a difference in Ontario schools: by investing in prevention and upstream investments and through curriculum. We're working across ministries, from health to education to social services, to make a difference and keep our kids safe.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, 14 cents per day per student on student safety, 22 cents per day per student on mental health—that, to me, is a shameful lack of investment in our children's well-being.

When the government cuts education funding it is parents who have to make up the difference—parents who are right now struggling already with the cost of living and are increasingly having to pay out of pocket for education supports, for activities and, yes, even for mental health supports. This government is cutting education funding for our schools to the tune of \$1,500 per student. That's a fact.

I want to know what the Premier thinks our children should do without. Is it breakfast programs? Is it counsellors? Is it music and sports—the things that bring joy in your life? What is it that this government expects our schools to cut and our children to do without?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We increased staffing in Ontario schools by 9,000 additional education workers in the province of Ontario—an inconvenient truth for the

member opposite—3,000 additional front-line educators. They don't just happen by chance; they happen because of investment, not in spite of it.

And Mr. Speaker, I found it very curious, the member's motion yesterday includes a component about supporting parents financially, but the Leader of the Opposition led the charge against our support for parent payments when we gave \$200 and \$400—

Interjections.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: You're laughing—\$1.8 billion of investment as you trivialize giving funding directly to parents.

This is what's ironic about your motion: On one hand, you call for us to back parents, but if only parents knew that you voted against five iterations of payments to parents. It is regretful, it is shameful and it's consistent with your support for higher taxation in this province.

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: I've got to say, I was so disappointed yesterday in the government's responses to the questions that Ontarians are asking. I didn't get the answers that we were looking for. I'm going to ask again and see if we get somewhere today.

1050

The Minister of Health said that recruitment and retention of family doctors was “not a major concern.” I want to say that again: “not a major concern.” A quarter of patients in the Soo are without a family doctor. That's not a major concern for this minister? Some 30,000 patients in Kingston are without access to primary care—not a major concern?

These comments are insensitive considering there are 2.3 million to 2.4 million people in this province without a family physician, but they are also dangerous. So I want to ask this government again, to the Premier: Does he really think it's not a concern that millions of people are going without primary care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Facts matter. The records matter, Speaker. In the NDP government, when they were in power for those short five years, and hopefully never again—and the Leader of the Opposition was a staffer at that time—they cut medical school enrolment by 10%. In 2015, the Liberal Premier cut 50 resident spots, which amounts to hundreds of fewer doctors serving in our province today.

We expanded the Learn and Stay grant—which, again, the opposition voted against—which provides tuition, books, supplies for nurses and other health care workers who work in underserved areas in our province. We're also funding the largest expansion of the medical school spots in over 15 years, adding 1,212 undergraduate and

1,637 postgraduate seats across Ontario; 60% of these seats will be dedicated to family medicine.

What I do recommend is that the Leader of the Opposition gets her party to support our budget, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'm going to ask the member there, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, to really think about this: people being diagnosed with cancer, not in the comfort and the safety of their family doctor's office, but in an overcrowded emergency room, how did they get there? Because they don't have a family doctor. So by the time they get there—just imagine for a moment, to the member opposite, being the emergency room physician who then has to tell that patient that not only do they have cancer, but it has metastasized, because they couldn't get to see their family doctor. They couldn't get screening. This is not a major concern?

So I want to ask the member opposite: They're having you answer all the questions today. Is this not a major concern for you?

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

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: What is a concern for me is the short-sighted policies of both the NDP and Liberals that cut those seats, Speaker. That is why we are currently where we are today.

Since 2018, we've registered over 80,000 new nurses in Ontario, as well as 12,500 new physicians, with 10% of those being family physicians. Last year alone, we registered 2,400 new doctors to practise in Ontario. That was a record-breaking year for nurses in Ontario, but we're not stopping there. We will continue to ensure that the people of Ontario have what they need for health care.

We have 17,500 new nurses registered last year, which was a historic number, over 33,000 over the last two years. We'll continue.

We're investing significantly into our health human resources. In this year's budget, we have over \$740 million to address immediate staffing needs, supporting the expansion of over 3,000 new nursing seats across Ontario.

We'll continue to do what needs to be done to ensure that we have the best publicly funded health care system.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Historic wait times, historic emergency room closures, historic numbers of Ontarians without family doctors—own it. Take some responsibility. You've been in government for six long years. You are responsible for the state of our health care system today.

It is unimaginable, Speaker, that this minister doesn't see this as a concern; that this Premier and this member don't see this as a concern. We are losing doctors and nurses and health care workers faster than we can recruit them.

I want the members opposite for just a moment to imagine being the mother of a newborn. You have so many

questions; you have nowhere to go for answers. Imagine you're the parent of a sick child and you live in the Soo and you find out now you have no family doctor. Where are you going to go?

Take some responsibility, own up to it.

Will this government admit that they have a problem on their hands and that it is unimaginable that their minister, who was supposed to be responsible for this, refused to live up to her responsibility?

Interjections.

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

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to reply.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Let me correct the Leader of the Opposition—sometimes facts hurt—we have some of the shortest wait times in Canada, with over 80% of the people of Ontario getting their surgery within the recommended time.

Speaker, we understand that more needs to be done. That's why we've invested \$110 million into interprofessional primary care teams, and then in this year's budget, we actually added another \$546 million. Over 600,000 Ontarians are going to receive the care they need.

We'll continue to ensure that the health care system in Ontario is the best publicly funded system across all of Canada.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Today is the 10th anniversary of Children and Youth in Care Day, a day promised to kids who shared their stories, lived experiences and recommendations.

This morning, CUPE front-line child protection workers—many are here today—released their survey results of young people who are being warehoused instead of being afforded safe homes. The results are shocking: children and youth as young as two years old in hotel rooms, Airbnbs, for-profit facilities and on cots in children's aid offices.

Will the Premier and his minister, today on Children and Youth in Care Day, commit to sustainable funding for safe homes for our most vulnerable children and youth?

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thanks to my colleague for the question.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank the women and men who are doing great work to make sure children and youth in our province are served and protected. That's what's driving the redesign of the child welfare system in the province of Ontario.

It was this government that took action. It was this government that said more reports, more discussions are not going to cut it. We need action, which is why we have more inspectors now hired across the province, which is why we have more unannounced inspections being conducted across the province.

I've said it many times in this House, and I'll say it again: When it comes to children and youth, they may be a portion of our population, but they're 100% of our future, and we will never give up on them. We will do whatever it takes to make sure that they're served and protected, and back that up by investment.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the leadership of the Premier and the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board and this caucus, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has received increased funding two years in a row, more than \$1.6 billion—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: This minister needs a reality check. Things have never been as bad as they are today. Tonight, on the 10th annual Children and Youth in Care Day, dozens of young people in care will be going to sleep in motels, hotels, short-term rentals because there are not enough foster beds or treatment facilities. A young person with autism will be sleeping in an agency's office, as they have been for months. Workers will be scrambling to provide a healthy meal in rooms which are dangerous and leave kids vulnerable to the exposure of bedbugs, human trafficking, drug use. This is the state of too many children who have been separated by their families. This is the state of a system that, for the first time in history, is running millions of dollars in deficits.

Will the Premier and his minister commit today to honour their duty to Ontario's most vulnerable children and properly fund our child welfare system?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: The member talks about a reality check? It's unbelievable, hearing a member of the NDP, who held the balance of power, who could have done so much for children and youth in this province, that did nothing.

It was this government, through the child welfare redesign, who said we don't need any more report writing. We want to stand up for children and youth in care in this province now. We want to make sure every child, every youth that is in care is treated the same as every child regardless of their circumstance. That's what's driving our redesign. We will never give up on children and youth.

1100

When it comes to the redesign, part of that is the Ready, Set, Go Program, which provides support for children in care as low as 13, supporting them, providing them with the life skills they need at 13, at 15, right up to their 23rd birthday, with financial support, something the previous government didn't do and something that certainly was not a priority for the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The member for St. Catharines will come to order. The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order. The member for Niagara Falls will come to order.

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

The next question.

TAXATION

IMPOSITION

Mr. Matthew Rae: Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement du Nord et le ministre des Affaires autochtones.

The Prime Minister has a new flashy video, but he's not fooling anyone. Ontarians are paying more for food, gas and home heating. And at a time when we are facing a 40-year-high inflation rate the Prime Minister and the federal Liberals decided to hike the carbon tax by an additional 23%. You can hear the groans already from the independent Liberals. It's clear that the Liberals in this place do not care about affordability and addressing that. Under their leader, carbon tax queen Bonnie Crombie, they are content with seeing the tax continue to rise and eventually triple by 2030. This is unfair to Ontarians that are paying for the expense of failed Liberal policies. The Liberal carbon tax must come to an end.

Speaker, with the summer quickly approaching, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax continues to burden every Ontarian?

L'hon. Greg Rickford: Merci au député de Perth–Wellington. C'est vrai que, ce matin, nous avons un ami du Québec. C'est tellement agréable d'avoir des gens qui partagent les mêmes idées ici. Le membre du Québec qui est ici en Ontario partage la même position en matière de ce qui concerne la taxe carbone.

C'est une taxe inutile. Ce n'est pas un plan d'environnement; c'est un plan budgétaire. Et notre voisin a le même message que notre gouvernement. C'est clair. En anglais, c'est « scrap the tax ». En français, c'est « restez à l'écart de nos affaires ». Le message est clair : il faut qu'on « scrap the tax ».

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Merci au ministre. The carbon tax drives up the price of everything, and it is costing Ontarians who can least afford it. This is a regressive tax, and it's an utter failure. It's disgraceful that the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her Liberal caucus support this tax grab that punishes the hard-working people of this province when they are just trying to get by.

While the members opposite have no regard for fiscal discipline, as the people in Ontario truly understand after 15 years under the previous Liberal government, our government will continue to put Ontarians first, protect their hard-earned paycheques and savings.

Can the minister please share with our House today how our government remains steadfast in investing in the

priorities that resonate with the people of Ontario while the NDP and Liberals across the aisle continue to support the carbon tax?

Hon. Greg Rickford: As incredible as it sounds, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I introduced a new actor to the very complicated carbon tax royal love story. We talked about the king of the carbon tax, Prime Minister Trudeau, and his failure to rein in his friends and folks in the Liberal family and, of course, Prince Carney—a very smart man in his own right; just ask him—read the tea leaves. He said this is not a very good tax for Canadians right now. That's interesting. I'm not sure whether it's driven from his intellect or from polls, but here's what's clear: This introduced increased costs on every conceivable thing that the people of Ontario and the people of Quebec buy. From fuel to food, from appliances to planting their gardens this spring, there's only one thing that's going to pop up every single time, and that's the carbon tax. That's why we take the position to just scrap this tax.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé. According to ministry data, Ontario is presently short 13,000 nurses; in a few short years, this number will rise to 33,000 nurses. The number one reason for this shortage is the workload that nurses face on each and every shift. What is this government doing to improve the workload of our nurses?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Since Minister Jones was sworn in as Minister of Health, our government has registered a record number of new nurses two years in a row, registering a total number of 32,000 nurses in Ontario. We achieved this by directing the College of Nurses of Ontario and the college of physicians of Ontario to break down barriers for internationally trained and educated health care workers, and expanding programs like the Learn and Stay grant, which, I will remind the House, the opposition voted against.

Our government has invested nearly \$1 billion into the home and community care sector. This funding has not only added thousands of PSWs—in fact, we've added nearly 25,000 since 2021—but it has also increased compensation for the PSWs, nurses and other front-line health care providers to further stabilize the workforce.

We know that more needs to be done, and that's why as part of our 2024 budget, our government is investing another \$743 million to continue to grow our health care workforce.

We will continue to do what needs to be done to ensure that we have the best publicly funded health care system.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gets worse: The ministry data tells us that Ontario is short 38,000 PSWs; in three years, this number will be 50,000 PSWs short. It doesn't matter how many PSWs we train; 25% of them, a quarter of them, leave their profession each and every year. Why are dedicated PSWs leaving their profession? Their working conditions. What is this government doing to improve the working conditions of PSWs?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: You know what we are doing? Training more PSWs, more nurses, initiatives like the Ontario Learn and Stay program. We have 3,500 graduates coming through the program that are nurses, lab techs and paramedics in underserved regions of the province. These students have their educational costs covered by the government in order to fill those spaces. In fact, there are actually six students for every nursing space in Ontario. This is a growing profession, and we have students across the province who are looking to become nurses.

We are going to continue to work with our post-secondary partners to ensure that we have nurses, paramedics, lab techs and PSWs across Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The Liberal carbon tax raises the price of absolutely everything in our province and is hurting our economy and our workers. It drives up the costs of everyday essentials like food, heating and transportation.

With a rapidly growing population, we need all hands on deck to start building right across Ontario, but the costly carbon tax is hurting our workers' ability to invest in their skills and development to build a better future for Ontario. The federal government needs to finally listen to what our government has been asking from day one and eliminate this job-killing tax.

Speaker, can the minister outline the steps that our government is taking to fight the carbon tax and to ensure Ontario has the workforce that we need to start building for the future?

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

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you to the member for that question.

On this side of the House, we know that Ontario's prosperity hinges on our ability to address the pressing issue of our province's labour shortage, particularly in the skilled trades. Sadly, the carbon tax is only increasing these issues.

Ontarians are deeply concerned about the cost-of-living crisis that the carbon tax has created. While the Crombie Liberals would like to separate this issue, we, on this side of the House, know that the cost of workers don't just end at the workplace. Whether it's being able to cover the cost of one's commute or the ability to invest in the tools and

skills that you need, we know that it's just essential for workers' success.

1110

We see the Liberals at every turn working hard to make it harder for Ontarians to survive. In stark contrast, our government has adopted a wholly different approach. We're committed to empowering our workforce by launching a comprehensive skilled trades strategy, supporting nearly \$1.5 billion in funding over the next four years.

Together, we are unified in our effort to build a future our province deserves.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the parliamentary assistant: The Liberal carbon tax is hurting the household budgets for individuals and families right across Ontario. Ontarians should not be subjected to a tax that does nothing but burden them with unnecessary costs. To make matters worse, the Liberals in this Legislature, under the leadership of a woman who loves the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, ignore the hard-working women and men of our province who oppose this punitive tax.

But, Speaker, it's not surprising, considering for 15 years, the previous Liberal government failed all Ontarians and drove 300,000 manufacturing jobs right out of Ontario. Now they want to make it harder for young people to get the skills and the tools they need to enter the skilled trades by supporting the federal Liberal carbon tax. That's unacceptable.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant tell the House what our government is doing to get more people into the skilled trades, despite the Liberals advancing their anti-worker carbon tax agenda?

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you to the member for that question. For years, the previous Liberal government has neglected the skilled trades. Their failure to prioritize these crucial sectors resulted in a significant decline in apprenticeship applications, leaving thousands of well-paying jobs unfilled and undermining Ontario's economy. If this wasn't bad enough, for a decade and a half of complete neglect, their federal Liberal friends are discouraging more Ontarians from entering the trades.

Yet our government is resolute in its commitment to rectifying this Liberal mess and ensuring that Ontario's economy works for everyone. We're accomplishing this by investing in our workforce. We have launched our over \$1.5-billion Skills Development Fund aimed at training Ontario's next generation of workers.

And Mr. Speaker, we've seen the results. To date, over half a million workers have benefited and 597 training and workforce development projects have received funding.

We continue to be steadfast in our determination to clean this mess.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

LUTTE CONTRE LES INCENDIES DE FORÊT

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. We know we are 200 firefighters short. Last week, the minister said our crews were so ready that we will be able to send them to other provinces. Minister, if this government is that ready to face wildfires, how many firefighters are we going to share with other provinces when we are short 200 firefighters today?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I must say that one of the hallmarks of our firefighting service here in Ontario is that we do help out other jurisdictions at their time of need. So we know that the forest fires right now in BC, Alberta and Manitoba are significant. We hope and pray that the situations there go well, but we stand at the ready to help. Because that's what Ontario does. That's what firefighters throughout all the jurisdictions in Canada do: They help one another when they have the resources to help.

Here in Ontario, where we had a firefighting budget of \$69 million when we took over, it was disrespected and neglected by the previous government, supported by the NDP. We upped that budget to \$135 million a year to build capacity to be able to help, to be able to be there for others in this country when they need that assistance. We're here for Ontarians every single day. We're here for Canadians every single day.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Monsieur le Président, les conservateurs de l'Alberta ont fait la même chose que l'Ontario fait depuis 2018 : coupé sans cesse dans la prévention des feux de forêt. Aujourd'hui, on voit des conséquences désastreuses du choix politique de l'Alberta.

Monsieur le Ministre, allez-vous répéter les mêmes erreurs que vos homologues albertains et nous rendre vulnérables et dépendants des autres provinces?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I can't repeat enough—because I've said it time and time again and the opposition just doesn't seem to get it—that we continue to make more investments in firefighting in Ontario than any previous government ever has. Again, 15 years of disrespect and neglect by the members opposite—the Liberal independents, supported by the NDP. We had to clean up that mess.

We're the ones that had to make the investments, and it's not only in the base budget that we made those investments. Last fall, an additional \$20 million to look at alternative ways to fight fires in Ontario. How can we bring new aerial technologies in? How can we work with universities on collaborative research agreements about the changing dynamics of wildfires? How can we continue to support our great wildfire rangers that are out there doing the work every day? The Ministry of Labour stepped up with presumptive coverage. We've stepped up with more things for them to make sure that they can do the job the best they can every single day, including a recruitment

and retention bonus, including supports for training. So we're there every day, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: We learned recently that this government is once again hiding information from the people of Ontario. This time, it's about how many health care workers they will be short because of their damaging, unconstitutional Bill 124.

But, Speaker, this behaviour is not a surprise from this government. They are experts at pulling down the blinds on the press's right to light and transparency. Whether it's ministerial mandate letters, the details of the shameful 95-year lease with a foreign-owned spa, the real reason they're closing the Ontario Science Centre and building a parking lot for their spa friends, the criminal investigation into the greenbelt scandal or how they've doubled the number of staff riding the gravy train in the Premier's office, this government has no qualms about hiding their flaws.

My question to the Premier: Why does he like hiding information from the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, do you know what? These guys get—I think they get one question every 11 days. Now, that's not a rule that I put in place; that is something that the people of the province have put in place, because for not one but two elections, they have punished the Liberal Party of Ontario. And now they just punished them again in a by-election, right?

And did they ask about the economy? No, because when they were in office, they destroyed the economy. Do they ask about health care? No, because when they were in office, they closed hospitals, fired nurses and didn't hire doctors, so they don't want to ask about that. They don't ask about infrastructure, because when they were in charge of infrastructure, you remember, they built bridges upside down. So what else? Not long-term care, because they didn't build any long-term-care homes; not about taxes, because they actually increased taxes; not about red tape, because they made us the most overly regulated province in the country. So they're asking about—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, I'm not surprised that I didn't get an answer to this question. Maybe the House leader's new-found penchant for transparency means the Premier will finally release his phone records.

Speaker, this government forgets that the privilege of governing comes with the responsibility of transparency, so their disdain for transparency is at odds with their endless crowing about their record. If their crowing is justified, then there should be nothing to hide. But the press had to go to court again to get the information about the shortage of health care workers. The documents pried out of the government's hands by the Canadian Press show the information was hidden because—wait for it—the

government thinks that it would help nurses to get fair wages.

To the Premier: If the state of our health care system is not a concern, why did the government try to hide this information?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader may reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: This is a Liberal Party, of course, that, when they were in office, again, raised taxes, made us the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world—and then have nothing to show for it, right? It's not like they built hospitals. It's not like they built roads. It's not like they built long-term-care homes. It's not like they invested in health or education. In fact, they closed 600 schools across the province. They raised taxes for the people of the province of Ontario.

1120

You want to talk about accountability? The chief of staff to the Premier, under the Liberals, went to jail, Mr. Speaker. That is what we inherited in 2018.

Since 2018, we have been executing a plan across the province of Ontario. That plan includes making sure we are a fiscally responsible government, ensuring that we unleash the power of northern Ontario to protect the prosperity of all Ontarians. They called the north a wasteland. We're opening up the Ring of Fire—

Interjections.

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

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

We can start the clock. The next question.

TAXATION IMPOSITION

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It has been a month and a half since the federal Liberal government increased the carbon tax by a whopping 23%. Everything seems to be getting more expensive. Food, gas and energy prices are all on the rise, while paycheques are failing to keep pace. Life is getting harder and harder with this punitive Liberal carbon tax.

The Liberal members in this House, instead of asking their federal counterparts to cut the carbon tax, are doubling down in support of this tax, which is hurting Ontario families and businesses.

Can the minister please explain how the carbon tax continues to hurt every single person living in this province?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Oakville for the great question. The carbon tax is a terrible tax, and it's hurting us right now, but the worst part of this tale is that the tax is going to go up and up and up every April 1.

Our good friend from Quebec is here as well: La taxe de carbone va augmenter de plus en plus en plus, and that's

bad news. That's bad news for the people of Ontario. It's bad news for the people in Quebec. It's bad news for the people right across our country.

Our government is doing things differently.

The queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, is in full support of the Prime Minister and the federal carbon tax. The NDP are in full support of the carbon tax. Mr. Green over here is in full support of the carbon tax, as well.

The Premier and our government are not in support of a carbon tax. As a matter of fact, we're continuing to lead the country in driving down emissions without a carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to make reference to each other either by their riding name or their ministerial title.

The supplementary question?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the minister for your response and for your continued advocacy, fighting for the people of Ontario.

It's simply unacceptable that the federal Liberals are pricing Ontarians out of grocery stores, out of their homes and into situations where they have to choose between eating and heating. Families are struggling now more than ever, and they need our help.

Let's ensure we do this right. It's time for the Liberals to stop this vicious carbon tax and give real financial relief to the people of Ontario.

Can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to ensure Ontario has a clean, reliable and emission-free energy system without taking a step backwards and imposing a carbon tax on the people of Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Again, we're refurbishing our nuclear facilities, the 18 Candu reactors that we have in Ontario that provide almost 60% of our baseload, emissions-free electricity every day. We count on those nuclear facilities. And we're planning on expanding on our expertise, with a new Bruce C and small modular reactors on site at Darlington, which are going to lead the way into the future and help other jurisdictions do what we've already done, and that's eliminate our reliance on coal-fired generation.

We are investing in our hydro facilities. Over the last two weeks, I've been in Cornwall, with the great member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and down in Niagara at the Sir Adam Beck facility, announcing refurbishments of our hydroelectric fleet.

We just had the largest procurement of battery storage in Canada's history last week, to make sure that our non-emitting resources are working more efficiently and that we have the power we're going to need to continue to attract the multi-billion dollar investments, like the ones that are being made today down in Niagara,

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Our schools are experiencing a violence crisis and it is taking a serious toll on teachers. Some 80% of ETFO members have either personally experienced or witnessed violence. Some of these are life-changing injuries, yet the minister's plan to address

violence is to spend 14 cents per day per child on student safety. That's just not enough when teachers are already going to school in Kevlar and classes are being evacuated daily.

When will we see a serious plan from the Minister of Education to protect children and workers in our schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: One of the ways by which we keep kids safe is by removing distractions in our publicly funded schools. That's why we announced a plan to remove social media from school devices—

Interjections.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The members opposite seem to find it comical—with an increase of cyberbullying and increasing levels of distractions where teachers feel powerless to enforce basic policies. Members opposite don't want us to enforce policies in our schools is the mindset of members of the New Democratic Party, but we understand. We've got to have some enforcement and educational tools to get back to basics and restoring order and common sense in our schools.

It's why we announced \$17 million of mental health supports, leveraging community-based mental health. It's why we finally annualized funding for mental health services through the summer to make it better for the family so they get access to the same practitioner.

I've been working with the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for the past years to build capacity in our schools and in our communities to keep our kids safe.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Removing cellphones from the classroom is not going to protect a single student or teacher who is currently being punched, kicked or bitten. This minister just doesn't seem to grasp the severity of the situation.

A quarter of elementary schools and a third of secondary schools have daily staff shortages. There are more resignations than retirements in the education system. High-quality education requires a qualified educator, but this minister is doing everything he can to drive them away.

Parents know that teachers and education workers are the backbone of our education system. Why doesn't the minister think they deserve respect?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I love that the member opposite spoke about qualified educators and yet the NDP and the Liberals oppose the return of merit-based hiring when it comes to qualifications of educators. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot articulate or advance the cause of qualified educators and yet deny principals the ability to hire based on their experience in the classroom. There's a reason why we revoked regulation 274 because we believe that merit should triumph and the best educators should get the job. That is what parents expect.

Mr. Speaker, we've increased the funding and the staffing in Ontario's publicly funded schools. What we're also doing, a matter of contention with members opposite, is we're elevating the expectations on our school boards to

deliver better outcomes for the investments we make in Ontario.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Today we're joined by ETFO members and Catholic educators from across the province. They're here today to teach us about the rising levels of violence in schools.

Imagine going to work every day worried you'll be attacked, sworn at or threatened, or being off work because of a concussion, mental health concern or injury. A recent ETFO study reported that 75% of members experienced or witnessed violence against a staff member.

Speaker, anyone who has spent time in our classrooms knows that we need adequate support for our students, especially those with complex needs, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. The kids are not okay.

School boards are facing staff shortages and the impact of crowded classrooms.

To the Premier: Will your government develop a plan to address the alarming rise in violence in our schools to keep people safe?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know in her former experience as a social worker and education worker in Ontario's publicly funded schools we are grateful to you—and all the educators who are with us today.

It is an issue. It is a serious concern. And there's a reason why the government of Ontario, under our Premier's leadership, was the first in Canada to initiate an anti-human-trafficking protocol, the first of its kind, and to initiate a plan to counter bullying and cyberbullying in every publicly funded school.

We've added thousands of EAs, 3,000 additional EAs, to our schools, more social workers, more mental health workers, but we're also building that capacity in the community.

1130

The establishment of the youth mental health hubs has been a massive positive intervention for kids. A one-stop shop of access, and it's because of the leadership of the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions that we have these access points.

We're working together to bridge the gaps, reduce the wait times and support every child in Ontario.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I appreciate that. I hope we can go further.

I was taught that you measure what you value, and you change what you measure. In recent years, kids are struggling from a lack of support for their mental health and development in the community and at school, which makes education work overwhelming. Folks are leaving the profession and recruitment is a challenge, which I know as a former school social worker. Boards are struggling to hire EAs, bus drivers, teachers. The vacancy rates

in the Waterloo region and across the province are breaking records. This, and the budget shortfall mean that support staff ratios are alarmingly low. In the elementary schools alone, the ratio of support staff to students is 1.73 per 1,000 students.

Will the Premier value and measure the realities of workplace violence and the increasing needs for student supports and create a plan to change this trend?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

When we talk about the mental health of children and youth, it doesn't begin and end during the school day. We know that we need to have supports in place. Those supports have to be there, they have to be reliable but they also have to be there beyond the time that the kids are in school.

Since 2019, we've increased annual funding for children and youth by \$130 million through the Roadmap to Wellness—in addition, in the last two budgets, another \$43 million. Unlike previous governments, we're actually innovating and collaborating with partners to support children and youth. We've opened 22 youth wellness hubs, and an additional five will be opening this year. This fund includes the virtual supports, the One Stop Talk program.

Our plan for children and youth—and there is a plan for children and youth mental health—is clear: early interventions to keep kids from harmful behaviours, easy accessibility to them. Children and youth are our future—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Education. The Liberal carbon tax is increasing the cost of everything for everyone in this province. Not only is it forcing Ontarians to pay more for their groceries and their home heating, but it is driving up prices for building materials and transportation.

Speaker, our government has made historic investments to support the building of critical infrastructure in Ontario like new schools and child care spaces. Unfortunately, the Liberal carbon tax imposes significant financial hurdles for the people who are building our province. It's time for the federal Liberals to do the right thing and scrap this tax.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the federal carbon tax is making building more schools more expensive?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The parliamentary assistant and the member for Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I want to thank the member for their question. She's right, Ontario needs more state-of-the-art schools and more child care spaces. Over the next 10 years, our government is investing an historic \$16

billion in capital grants, including a doubling of capital school funds by 136%, from \$550 million to \$1.3 billion for the 2023-24 year, to ensure these capital investments are brought online in half the time it took to build schools under the Ontario Liberals.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is right: These historic investments in education are being hindered by the federal Liberals' failed carbon tax. A report from the Canadian Energy Centre found that Ontario industries such as mining, utilities, concrete, iron and steel will bear the highest impacts of the federal carbon tax.

As our government increases its spending on critical capital files in education, the federal Liberals are taking Ontario backwards by overtaxing the industries we need to support our new and redeveloped—

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

Supplementary question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for her response. From groceries to gas, families are suffering from the price of the federal Liberals' failed carbon tax. People in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora tell me that the cost of living in Ontario is becoming unsustainable as a result of this regressive tax. It is driving up the cost of everyday essentials and making it more expensive for parents to drive their children to school and extracurriculars.

Ontario families need economic stability to ensure that they can properly invest in their children's educational success. That's why our government must continue to advocate for Ontarians and call on the federal government to scrap this tax.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please tell the House how our government is making life more affordable—

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

The member for Markham–Unionville and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Billy Pang: The federal Liberals are playing politics with our children's future by making it harder for parents to invest in their children's success. But here in Ontario, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we understand that parents, not governments, know what is the best for their children. Parents should not have to choose between heating their homes and feeding their families. That's why we extended the gas tax cut of 10 cents a litre and scrapped the licence plate sticker fee, saving hundreds of dollars, which supports parents who drive their kids to school—money that they can use to help keep the lights on and heat their homes and schools while their children work, play and study.

We introduced the Ontario Childcare Tax Credit, allowing families to claim up to 75% of their child care expenses, putting more money back into their pockets to invest in their children's future.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, time and time again, the opposition, propped up by the Ontario—

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

The next question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to the Premier. Parents have been calling me, distressed with the skyrocketing costs of baby formula. We all know that the cost of groceries is a huge burden on Ontario families. Baby formula prices are completely unaffordable. Sadly, families in Ontario in all of our ridings are forced to water down formula to make it last longer. While food prices continue to soar, continue to rise, grocery stores like Loblaws continue to post massive profits—straight-up price gouging.

So my question to the Premier is, why are you hiding from the pleas of parents and sitting on your hands while powerful retailers profit at the expense of our Ontario families?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite, for that question. Obviously, food prices going up hurts many people across this province. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? What is a big part of that is the gas tax. The carbon tax is going up in Ottawa, 17 cents since they've started. We've reduced the gas tax and, through other measures, the price at the pumps by almost 10.7 cents a litre, so one is going down; the other is going up. The price of gas goes into the food processing; it goes into the farmers—the member from Huron–Bruce representing farmers right across this great province.

This is unacceptable. We're the party that's putting money back into the pockets of the people in Ontario, the businesses in Ontario so food prices will come down. This is a government that's got the backs of the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That is a shameful answer from the Minister of Finance, and I invite your constituents to call you and tell you what they are truly experiencing.

I would remind the House, through the Speaker, that my question was about feeding babies, and this government chose to hide behind the carbon tax.

Ontarians see through your excuses. Ontarians are fed up with this government taking the side of powerful billionaires. They see skyrocketing grocery costs while at the same time corporations like Loblaws are shamelessly making record profits. And they—

Interjections.

1140

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

The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore will come to order. The member for Brampton North will come to order. The member for Mississauga–Erin Mills will come to order. The Associate Minister of Small Business will come to order.

I apologize to the member. Start the clock. The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has the floor.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Speaker. I wish I saw the same kind of passion from this government for babies that can't be fed properly in this province.

The people of Ontario see this government doing nothing, absolutely nothing, to help them feed their babies.

So, my question to the Premier, to this government: What will you do today for struggling parents to ensure that their babies do not go hungry?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: What the member opposite and her party can do is vote for the budget, which has the backs of the people of Ontario. In that budget is cutting the gas tax—continuing the cut in the gas tax. That budget has the integrated One Fare. It has guaranteed annual income supplements for our seniors so that their payments are indexed to inflation.

Do you know what the member opposite could do? Do you know what is really shameful? Watching 300,000 manufacturing jobs—the tail lights—leave Ontario. But do you know what's really good? The 700,000 headlights of jobs that are coming into Ontario.

This member opposite's party supported the Liberal government that raised taxes. They invented red tape over there. They drove jobs from Ontario. We're building Ontario. We're supporting the workers and we're protecting the taxpayers.

Interjections.

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

The next question.

TAXATION IMPOSITION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Solicitor General. Firefighters hold an essential role in our communities. They risk their lives to keep us and our loved ones safe. I want to give a shout-out to the men and women of stations number 431, 432, 433, 434 and 435, from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Thank you for your service.

Speaker, the Liberal carbon tax is placing additional financial burdens on our public safety system. People in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore are concerned about how this punitive tax is impacting first responders in our province. They want to ensure that Ontario's firefighters have the support they need to protect our communities.

Speaker, could the Solicitor General discuss how the carbon tax is impacting firefighters' efforts in Ontario?

L'hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Je voudrais remercier ma collègue pour cette question excellente. Je suis fier de soutenir nos pompiers et tous ceux qui assurent la sécurité de l'Ontario tous les jours. Ce sont des gens formidables qui nous protègent au quotidien.

Bonnie Crombie, as mayor of Mississauga, knew proof positive every time a fire truck in Mississauga had to fill up its truck—an average truck is about 200 litres—and if you do the math, at 21.5 cents for diesel, that's \$43—\$43—a fill-up, which is ridiculous. It's time for Bonnie Crombie, as mayor of Mississauga, who had to approve the fire department budget, to come clean with Ontarians and say, "I am against this tax. It's affecting our firefighters."

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the Solicitor General for his response. I'm proud to hear that our government is standing up for public safety and fighting this unfair carbon tax.

Unlike the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her party of nine, our government knows that this tax makes life harder and more expensive for hard-working families and businesses throughout our entire province. Not only does it increase the cost of goods, but it's also driving up the cost of fuel and gasoline for everyone in this province, including our firefighters and those trucks that drive right in front of me along the Gardiner on their way to the food terminal every day.

We have heard how the NDP and the Liberals won't stand up for our public safety heroes, but I know we, this party led by Premier Ford, will always stand up for our public safety heroes.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General further elaborate on the importance of cancelling the carbon tax for Ontario's firefighters?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: There is no government in the history of Ontario that has had the backs of the firefighters as our government, led by Premier Ford. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We're proud of this.

I speak to Greg Horton; I speak to Rob Grimwood, the association presidents of the chiefs and the professional firefighters. We have volunteer firefighters in this Legislature: the member from Brantford—Brant, the member from Sarnia—Lambton and others who have come forward to keep us safe.

But Bonnie Crombie, as mayor of Mississauga, knew to the last cent how much the carbon tax was affecting the firefighters. It is absolutely proof positive Bonnie Crombie needs to come clean and say this is the most regressive tax that is affecting our public safety. It's affecting our fire safety and she should say, "I'm not in favour of it. I will support cancelling it."

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

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

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CUTTING TAXES ON SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE LES IMPÔTS DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 195, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions / Projet de loi 195, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour augmenter les déductions accordées aux petites entreprises exploitées en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act. This bill would provide essential tax relief for Ontario's small businesses by cutting the effective small business tax rate in half, from 3.2% to 1.6%, and by increasing the income threshold for this deduction from \$500,000 to \$600,000. If passed, this bill will be deemed to have come into effect on January 1, 2024, and will save small businesses up to \$17,900 annually.

Some 450,000 Ontario small businesses employ over three million people—two thirds of workers in the private sector—and are vital to our economy and communities.

This bill will give small business owners more opportunity to thrive and grow, fostering economic prosperity and innovation across our province.

The other three parties have all talked about lowering taxes on small business; I am doing that today.

I hope all members will show their support to small businesses in their communities and across the province by supporting the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 189

Mr. Trevor Jones: Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 189, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2024, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent–Leamington, has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 189, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2024, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1504 to 1534.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent–Leamington, has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a)—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Cowards. You're all cowards.

Interjections.

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

I am asking the member from Waterloo to come to order.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will name the member.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Come to order.

Mr. Jones, Chatham-Kent–Leamington, has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 189, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2024, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Come to order. I'm asking the member for Waterloo to come to order.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Ke, Vincent	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Todd
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Triantaflopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pirie, George	Yakabuski, John
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan	

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hazell, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutila	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 59; the nays are 29.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Motions? *Interjections.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I am going to call the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to order, and I will start warning people. If you want to remain for the rest of the day, be forewarned.

PETITIONS**HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

MPP Jill Andrew: I've got a petition with 2,252 signatures, and this petition is being put forth by Nicole Crellin, who happens to be good friends with the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Over 40 people are in the Legislature today for this petition calling for mandatory human rights education—

Interjections.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize.

I am calling the member from Hamilton Mountain—you have been warned.

Miss Monique Taylor: Me?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): You have been warned.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Excuse me? You have been warned.

I apologize to the member from Toronto–St Paul's—please, people, come to order. This is the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Really?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Yes, really.

The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has been warned.

The member from Toronto–St. Paul's, you have the floor.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'm putting forth this petition in the Legislature today on behalf of Nicole Crellin, who happens to be a dear friend of Peter Tabuns, the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Speaker, there are about 40 people in the audience today who have come to hear this petition.

Here in Ontario, we are a diverse, multicultural, multi-ethnic community, and at our best, we value equity and inclusion and human rights for all; not just for a select few.

Toronto, as we all know, is the most diverse city in the world. Our differences, when respected, are our superpower.

The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 as the first international recognition that all human beings are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms which must be respected and protected by all nations of the world. It is crucial that all Ontarians are aware of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; too many are not.

For those who are watching, the government changed the rules on petitions, so we can't read the petitions. So I can't read the actual words on these petitions that have been signed by 2,252 people.

The petition calls for the Ontario government to implement consistent and robust mandatory human rights education through events, campaigns, publications and other methods, so every Ontarian knows the universal declaration and can be deeply rooted and invested in our collective pursuit for freedom, justice and peace in this province.

It's rather an ironic day, but I will affix my signature on this petition, and I am handing it to Lise for tabling.

And I would be remiss, Speaker, if I did not say hello to Rosemary Sadlier, literally one of our icons in the province of Ontario, if not our country, and someone who initiated much of the work done around Emancipation Day, recognized in this province, and Emancipation Month, recognized in this province, and most certainly Black History Month, as well.

Welcome to your House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before we continue with petitions, I'm going to warn the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for using unparliamentary language.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joffre Labelle from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. The petitions are called "Make PSW a Career."

As the document that we received from the ministry showed us, Ontario is short 38,000 PSWs right now. Every year, we will add 10,000 more PSWs to this shortage list. Why? Because the working conditions of PSWs are not adequate. A quarter of them leave their profession every single year. They love what they do. They want to care for us. They're good at what they do. But if they work as a PSW, they can't feed their kids and pay the rent. It's as simple as that.

Thousands and thousands of people have signed the petition, and they ask Premier Ford to make PSW a career; make sure that they have a permanent, full-time job that is

well-paid; make sure that those jobs have sick days and vacation days and benefits and maybe a dream of a pension plan. We did this for nurses, way back in the 1970s. We mandated that 70% of jobs for nurses had to be permanent, full-time, well-paid. We can do this for PSWs. We can change the shortage of 50,000 PSWs to care for our loved ones in home care, in long-term care, in hospitals. We can change this today by passing this petition.

I fully support it. I'll affix my name to it and ask Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

The rates for social assistance are well below the poverty line. Individuals on Ontario Works are receiving only \$733 a month, and those on the Ontario Disability Support Program are receiving only \$1,308 a month.

Community organizations—in fact, over 230 of them—have signed a letter to three cabinet ministers urging them to immediately double social assistance rates.

During the pandemic, the federal government decided that an unemployed individual needed a basic amount of \$2,000 per month to survive. The rates for OW and ODSP are far below \$2,000.

At this time, with the increasing affordability crisis, these rates of social assistance go even less than they used to.

So I join the petition signatories here, who are mostly from Grimsby, a Conservative riding, in calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors (Lydia's Law)."

This petition is calling for the Ontario government to do everything in its power to support victims of sexual violence. Women who have been raped, women who have experienced gender-based violence do not need to be retraumatized, reviolated by a "justice system" that is grossly underfunded, under-resourced, understaffed, to the point where there were 1,326 cases of sexual assault in 2022 withdrawn or stayed before trial. That means the perpetrators walked.

I stand in full support of this petition to adopt recommendations 1 and 3 of the Auditor General's 2019 annual report, to make the ILA program more accessible for survivors, and to review the Victim Quick Response Program to ensure it's meeting its mandate.

There are several of us in this room, in this Legislature, who are women—across party lines. We should be absolutely ashamed of this government's lack of treatment when it comes to women and survivors of gender-based violence.

I happily affix my signature to this petition—probably more angrily—and I table it with Alexander.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

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

As we have been hearing time and time again in this House, sexual assault survivors are not seeing their day in court. There were 1,326 cases of sexual assault thrown out before the court—there were over 1,000 this year, in 2023. So now we're looking at almost 3,000 sexual assault survivors whose cases were thrown out, and we know those are the people who came forward. We know that more than 80% of sexual assault cases go unreported.

1550

The MPP from Waterloo, Catherine Fife, brought this bill forward. It was her private member's bill. This bill is named after Lydia, to represent a woman who was denied justice in the court.

What we saw today with this government discharging this important bill to committee is another example of Lydia and all sexual assault survivors not getting justice.

This government needs to understand that we had all kinds of women and sexual assault survivors who were prepared to come tomorrow to hear debate on this bill—important debate that you need to listen to. It's your government. These are sexual assault survivors who are not seeing justice under your watch, but rather than hear what they had to say, rather than give them—they're not getting their day in court, and now they're not going to get their day in the Ontario Legislature to come forward and share their stories of survival, to help you act, to help you understand that the justice system is not working for sexual assault survivors under your watch.

We wanted to see recommendations 1 and 3 of the Auditor General's report put into law. We need to see a Victim Quick Response Program.

This government, understandably, is concerned with people who steal vehicles going free. Sure, we don't like to see that, but we also don't like to see sexual assault criminals walk free in this province, which is what's happening under your watch, and you discharged Lydia's Law so that you can't hear about it. I find that cowardly, and I'm disappointed.

I will absolutely add my name to this petition and give it to Glynnis to take to the table.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors," and this bill is in support of Bill 189, Lydia's Law, that has been brought forward by my colleague from Waterloo.

Speaker, it is really a shame that, in Ontario, 1,326 cases of sexual assault in 2022 were withdrawn or stayed before trial. Already we know that 80% of sexual assault

cases go unreported, so the Auditor General looked into this issue and made recommendations in their report. Recommendations 1 and 3 are part of Bill 189, which is Lydia's Law, which makes the Independent Legal Advice Program much more accessible for survivors, and also reviews the Victim Quick Response Program to ensure it's meeting its mandate.

Speaker, survivors of sexual assault need justice, and we cannot allow the current system to retraumatize them and have their cases thrown out of court simply because the system is not working.

I fully support this bill, and I will affix my signature to it.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Vulnerable Persons Alert." This petition is put forward on behalf of the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, Monique Taylor.

This petition speaks to a private member's bill that was brought before the Legislature. As we know, private members' bills are an important opportunity for us, as elected legislators, to fulfill our duty and to have an opportunity to bring the people's business before this Legislature. This was a very, very important private member's bill. It was addressing a gap in our current emergency alert system. It would ensure that vulnerable persons—would help to ensure the safety of those loved ones when they go missing, because we know when they go missing, time is critical.

Over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a "Draven Alert." "Draven Alert," much like Lydia's Law, was named after a young child who could have used the benefit of an alert system that would have helped to find him in time. Unfortunately, it's a story that ended in tragedy. Speaker, 6,000 people signed a petition called "Love's Law"—same thing, for vulnerable people who go missing. This bill was a common-sense proposal and was non-partisan in nature, but just like Lydia's Law, this government discharged the bill directly to committee and did not allow Draven's family and all the families who supported this bill to come to the Legislature and hear debate.

It's a terrible precedent that this government is doing—discharging private members' bills that bring important business, important suggestions to this House. It's a slap on democracy when you don't allow MPPs and who they represent to debate their bills. So—

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Speaker. I'll remind the experienced member that we're to briefly summarize our petitions for the benefit of all members in the House, not to go on a pulpit and go on and on and on and waste legislative time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will allow the member to continue with her petition.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Apparently, the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington thinks that bills that support sexual assault survivors and vulnerable persons who go missing is a waste of taxpayers' time—

Mr. Trevor Jones: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

I recognize the deputy government—

Mr. Trevor Jones: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker: The standing order is 42(b). This is clearly not the design or the intent for petitions in this House, and I am offended by the unparliamentary reference by the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will allow the member to continue. I recognize the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. But I will caution the member.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Speaker.

I would just add that what you consider unparliamentary language is simply your words; I didn't add anything to it. You said "waste of taxpayers' time."

I will conclude by saying that this is an important private member's bill, as all private members' bills are, including Lydia's Law. Discharging it to committee is a real failure of democracy in this province and in this House.

I'm going to add my name to this petition. I'm going to give it to Diya to take to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR LA FACTURE ÉNERGÉTIQUE À UN NIVEAU ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 respecting certain Board proceedings and related matters / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne certaines instances dont la Commission est saisie et des questions connexes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? I believe we left off with the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the Ontario Energy Board's decision—and this is a direct quote from President Drew Spoelstra from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—"challenges Ontario's efforts and current policy to bring reliable and affordable natural gas to Ontarians across the province, which has been an investment priority for agriculture and rural communities over the last decade."

The last credible voice from our communities I want to share is Gail Hundt, president and CEO of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. In a letter, she stated:

“While recognizing the vision towards energy efficiencies in our province, we also note where reduced access to natural gas grid recommendations of the” OEB “will have a dire effect on economic growth in our community, across Ontario and beyond. These recommendations will cause negative impacts to affordable, and all, housing developments, enhancements to our greenhouse industry and many other needed growth sectors. Beyond the direct effect this will have on business, the trickle effect of home purchasing, food costs—as examples—will be burdened on the general consumer, who are already bearing budget constraints.

“The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce commends the Ontario government for their proposed actions to mitigate these negative recommendations and is pleased to provide our support of immediate action thereof.”

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our province is quickly becoming the global leader in manufacturing, by building electric vehicles and batteries and their components right here in Ontario, with historic investments throughout the province—including, of course, Stellantis, Volkswagen and, most recently, Honda.

Ontario is building in a deliberate and responsible manner to achieve one of the cleanest, most reliable electricity systems in the world.

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The proposed legislation safeguards the interests of hard-working families, farmers and businesses, while paving the way for a brighter, more prosperous future for all of Ontario.

As we build the critical infrastructure to electrify, natural gas needs to remain a vital component of our energy mix, particularly for essential sectors like agriculture.

The act ensures that individuals, families, farmers and, of course, small businesses will have access to cost-effective, safe and reliable energy solutions.

I urge all members to support this critical legislation, for it is through collective action and forward-thinking policies that we can truly, together, power up Ontario's growth and prosperity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This bill essentially is the government weighing in and overturning the ruling of an independent regulator. So this government kneecapped a regulator, and it really reduces the transparency, accountability. It also raises the concern that important energy decision-making is being done via backroom lobbying. It furthers the practice of this government of not being transparent and open and not doing the people's business in this House.

I see a direct connection to you discharging Lydia's Law directly to committee and overturning the independent regulator's decision.

Can you speak to me about Lydia's Law and how this connects to your government's overturning of decisions that are made by regulatory bodies in this province?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you for the important question.

I respect the member opposite for her passion and her advocacy.

The split decision by the OEB was just that: a split decision, with no stakeholder engagement, no stakeholder input, and dramatic effects on agriculture, on small and growing businesses, and on families and consumers wanting to buy and build a home.

Think of the energy spectrum, as you would say, as a pie. Every piece of that pie must be there for a fulsome, comprehensive, reliable energy structure. If one piece of that pie is missing, then consumers will end up paying the price. Nuclear, hydroelectric, renewables and, of course, natural gas are all critical components of that pie for consumers just like your constituents and mine.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and through you to our presenter and my colleague: When we were first elected in 2022, we told hard-working Ontarians that we're going to build 1.5 million homes by 2031 and tackle the housing supply crisis in communities across Ontario, including Whitby. We're making great strides in achieving this, but the decision by the Ontario Energy Board made last year burdens new home buyers by forcing them to pay high installation costs for affordable and reliable natural gas to heat their homes.

I know that we're continuing to work hard to get more homes built in Ontario.

Therefore, I want to ask the member, through you, Speaker, how would this bill help to keep housing more affordable?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the seasoned member from Whitby, who, as a municipal elected official and a provincial elected official, understands this pain point.

At a time when Ontario, like the rest of Canada, is already dealing with difficult headwinds, with high interest rates, inflationary pressures, the OEB's decision would have significantly increased the price of new housing. We can't stand for this. We have to work together. We have to work across party lines. Reversing this decision is prudent. It's for people who want to have that dream of home ownership. It prevents an average of \$4,400 to be tagged on to the price of an already expensive new home. Together, we could do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington moved a motion here today to discharge Lydia's Law directly to committee and avoid debate in this House.

You mentioned that the OEB decision didn't include stakeholders. In fact, there are 134 pages of that report, and many, many stakeholders were consulted—just like Lydia's Law, where End Violence Against Women Renfrew

County spoke during the Renfrew inquest; the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children spoke; Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, LEAF, spoke; the Sexual Assault Support Centre Waterloo Region brought their information to this important private member's bill, on behalf of the MPP for Waterloo, Catherine Fife.

My question is, just like this government ignored the recommendations from your own regulator—keeping in mind that Enbridge is a regulated monopoly—just like you ignored decisions that you don't like, why are you ignoring the Auditor General's recommendations when it comes to Lydia's Law and keeping sexual assault survivors safe in this province?

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank the member opposite again for the question.

We can't diminish in this House—through you, Madam Speaker—the power of committees in the legislative process, the power of democracy, the strength in committees, the strength to do wholesome, fulsome work with careful deliberation. Representation from all parties and all members in this House stand on committees. The same input we hear about the OEB's decision, that lacked stakeholder engagement, we listened to. Committees listened to this.

Committees that the member opposite sits on—they contemplate; they debate. It's televised; it's open; it's transparent, and they do good work that can actually yield the same results that debate in this House can do, in a more streamlined process.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his speech. I know his community is home to—it was formerly Union Gas, then Enbridge. So, back 10 years ago, plus or minus, under the Green Energy Act, we saw these proposals to be rid of natural gas in the province of Ontario, which would have had a devastating impact on Chatham-Kent.

What I'm hearing today from some of the arguments is that the opposition seems to be saying they want to force Ontarians to move away from natural gas entirely. Can the member speak to whether that's a smart approach for his community and across Ontario for Ontario's energy system, and the impacts that this sort of ideological approach might have on your community?

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thanks to the member for Windsor-Tecumseh for that question.

Again, when we're talking about natural gas, it's one critical component in the entire energy spectrum. It's that critical piece of the pie that agriculture producers rely on, that homes rely on for heating.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, upwards of 90% of the homes rely on natural gas as safe, reliable, cost-effective heating.

Ontario's Electrification and Energy Transition Panel also stated three essential and distinct functions that natural gas plays a part in: obviously, space and water heating for homes; industrial-commercial; and, of course,

agriculture industries, the food producers. We are the food producers of the world. By being food producers of the world, we're the technology experts and technology exporters of the world. To preserve natural gas in this critical function, that critical piece of the pie remains essential.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much again to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, who moved the motion to discharge Lydia's Law to committee.

I sit on committee; you're absolutely right. Every single time, your government uses their supermajority to squash anything that they don't like.

With regard to this bill right now, we moved about 12 amendments, and your government voted every single one of them down. I have been in committee when you've moved into in camera for no reason; been in committee when you were reversing your greenbelt legislation, and you didn't even let the people come to debate that.

If I can take the member at his word that he will use the power of his government to bring Lydia's Law to the committee and that you will hold public and open hearings across the province—can I have your word on that?

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank the member for that question.

I did have the distinct privilege of sitting on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. It's a privilege, and each of those members contribute in a meaningful way. That's all about transparency.

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That's exactly what we're talking about in this energy bill—transparency and accountability. In everything we do, it's there; it's alive. It's what we do. It's why we're elected to be privileged to be in this place.

Madam Speaker, anyone impacted by a decision should be able to make their case before some place like the Ontario Energy Board. Stakeholders need that engagement. Stakeholder groups need that engagement. Consumers need that engagement.

We'll have that engagement here. We'll have that opportunity to speak to the OEB about decisions they may make that impact consumers who want to build homes, who want to grow food to feed Ontario and feed the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm standing to speak to Bill 165, right on the heels of the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, who finished his debate by saying that anyone impacted should be able to make their case.

We have an example right here in this House. Lydia's Law was discharged to committee. Those survivors of sexual assault were not able to make their case in this House. So your words "transparency" and "accountability" ring hollow.

This government does not hesitate in any way to interfere whenever it suits them. This is not a government that's transparent and accountable. We only have to look

to the RCMP investigation to understand how they've conducted themselves in the past. So while this government—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

I recognize the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: On a point of order, pursuant to standing order 25(b)(i), I ask—through you, Speaker—that the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas return to the subject matter of the bill. The member's remarks are not germane to the item currently being debated by the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I agree with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, and I will ask the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to bring her debate back to the subject at hand.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is disappointing to hear the member from Eglinton–Lawrence say that transparency and accountability is not germane to this debate, because what we're talking about is the decision this government made to big-foot, to overturn, to politicize a very important energy decision in this province.

Make no mistake: You acted swiftly to overturn the Ontario energy decision ruling. I would like to see you act more swiftly when it comes to other important things in this province, like sexual assault survivors. But you acted so swiftly when it came to the OEB ruling.

The Ontario Energy Board is an independent regulator—a regulator. They oversee Enbridge. Enbridge is an energy monopoly. They should be a regulated monopoly. But when you kneecap the regulator, what you are left with is a monopoly.

Let's be clear: Your decision and this bill—it's bad for new home owners. It's bad for existing customers. And certainly, it's bad for the environment. That's just straight-up a no-brainer.

My question always remains: Who does this government listen to, and who does this government work for?

When it comes to the people of this province, this is a government that has sided with a huge corporation, Enbridge—against making sure that you could protect costs for them in an affordability crisis. This bill is called Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, but my question is, who is this keeping energy costs down for? Do you know who it's keeping energy costs down for? Enbridge. It's keeping energy costs down for developers. But who is stuck holding the bag? Four million consumers of methane—also known as natural gas—in this province. That's who is left holding the bag, because this government doesn't work for the people of the province.

Quite clearly, your actions, your policies, your bills and your lobbying registry shows who you work for, and that's big corporations; it is connected individuals.

When it comes to the Premier's office, this place is crawling with lobbyists who either did work for the Premier or are now working for the Premier or are working for corporations like Enbridge.

So you can stand up all you want and talk about transparency and accountability, but nobody is buying it. Remember Mel Lastman? “Nobody!” Nobody is buying it at all.

What I would like to say is that if you were truly concerned with the people of the province of Ontario, you would have listened to the Ontario Energy Board, whose job is to protect consumers. It should be what your job is—to protect consumers. Instead, what we saw is unprecedented political interference in order to help a powerful gas monopoly at the expense of consumers.

Again, this bill does exactly the opposite of keeping energy costs down for people in the province. It will only exacerbate their bills and make their bills go up higher, to the tune of \$600 per customer. This bill would allow the government to add over \$1 billion in costs to the gas bills of nearly four million consumers. How is this keeping costs down? It's not. And what you are doing is, you're taking away people's choice—especially vulnerable and low-income people—their ability to make choices when it comes to their energy choices.

This government had, possibly, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, with an OEB decision that was clearly on the side of people who had to pay these energy bills: consumers.

You had an option of putting money back into people's pockets. You had an option to finally start addressing the realities of climate change. Instead, you chose to stick with the same old. Instead of sticking with people who are going to be mostly impacted by climate change—the costs are going to be borne by homeowners, of climate change; we're going to see people with basements flooding, people denied insurance costs—you have stuck with billion-dollar corporations. You have sided with them, as usual. You're lining the pockets of billion-dollar corporations instead of looking out for the people you should be looking out for. I suppose I could say that I'm surprised, but I am not.

The government likes to stand up in here and say that, at the Ontario Energy Board hearings, they didn't consult with people; nobody was involved. That is straight-up malarkey—134 pages of documents. I think it was over a hundred testimonies.

The Ontario Energy Board took one and a half, possibly two years, to come up with this ruling, and your government tabled this bill to overturn the ruling in a New York minute—I think it was the very afternoon that this decision was tabled.

What I want to be clear about is that you sided with Enbridge over consumers in this province. And who is Enbridge? Can we just talk about Enbridge? Enbridge is a huge international energy company in the province of Ontario. They have a monopoly. They're not regulated anymore because you keep overturning any regulations. Enbridge made \$45 billion last year—\$45 billion. That's who you're sticking with, that's who you're trying to help: a corporation that made \$45 billion.

The CEO of Enbridge earns \$19 million—\$19 million—and that's for one year, not 19 years. That's a lot

of coin. At \$19 million, the CEO, certainly, is not going to be concerned about the \$600 that it's going to cost them on their energy bill.

So that's who you are siding with.

What I would also say is that people now are not given a choice, and what you're doing—you say you're overriding the regulator to support people, but evidence shows otherwise.

1620

More and more, people want to look at more efficient heating options for their homes, because it's expensive, and we know it's only going to get more expensive. What you are doing is making sure that people are tied into new gas hookups rather than giving people affordable options, and rather than moving forward with subsidies to help people insulate their homes, to help people be more energy-efficient, to help people afford a high-efficiency heat pump, which heats and cools their homes. This is the direction that the world is going in, but this government is still going to side with a dinosaur fossil fuel strategy that is going to cost—not developers, not Enbridge, but it's going to cost consumers a lot of money.

As has been said again by the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington, that this government is all about transparency—and honestly, absolutely nobody believes that. Do you know what? You don't even have to listen to their words. Just look at their actions.

I will say that, at committee, we moved a number of amendments that would have, in fact, taken this bill—and it would have made some amendments to make sure that we put into place protections for consumers. If the government was hell-bent and twisting themselves in knots to support Enbridge, we thought the very least that they could do is to support some amendments.

What amendments did we put in there? We thought it was very important that the government understood that you were allowing Enbridge to determine the cost future for how long that they can cost out the return on the investments that they're making. Let's again be clear: What we're talking about is assets that belong to Enbridge. These are assets that belong to Enbridge, but who is paying for them? The people of the province who are relying on gas. That's who is paying for these assets that Enbridge will owe.

We made a number of amendments, really, to help what is essentially an indefensible bill be a little more palatable—not much. You can't polish everything. Do you know what I mean, Speaker?

We wanted to, number one, talk about the workers who work on these fossil fuel lines. It was something that I learned, that I didn't know until I sat in committee and heard from the workers—that Enbridge has no requirement to provide reporting on methane leakage. They have no requirement to report on how they are going to repair these leakages. That's really about the consumer interest, because not only is it a significant contributor to greenhouse gases and to carbon emissions; it also is an unsafe situation for workers. So we wanted the government to accept this amendment that would require Enbridge to

report on these leaks, and they turned that down. Why wouldn't they want to prevent and report on methane leaks? I don't understand why the government used their supermajority to vote it down.

We also moved an amendment that would require the OEB to keep track of private contractors. I think this is really important, because this is a government that likes to talk about jobs, which are really important to the province, but they don't ensure that workers are kept safe. This is the perfect example—when we talk about methane leakages. Also, despite ruling on the side of Enbridge, they don't like to talk about the fact that Enbridge laid off a thousand workers in this province. Let's recap, shall we? They've got a \$19-million CEO. They made \$45 billion in profits. They were going to make sure that every consumer—I grew up in Toronto wit—every methane gas user in the province is going to pay another \$600 on their bill. But they didn't say one single thing when Enbridge laid off a thousand workers in this province. So we moved that motion, and the government turned it down.

We also wanted to make sure that we had the notion of procedural fairness in there. A girl can only hope and dream, but given a government that we see just discharges the private members' bill Lydia's Law directly to committee so no one can have their day in court, if you will—this government voted against our amendment that would reaffirm procedural fairness. It actually says in the bill that procedural fairness doesn't apply. The member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington can stand and talk about transparency, accountability, but the bill he's defending says right in it that procedural fairness does not apply.

We moved an amendment that says the government cannot direct the OEB to approve a new gas pipeline if this harms consumer interests, because what we're seeing is the politicization of the energy file. There's no regulator left because you just overrule them. So is it going to be that all of these energy decisions are going to be made in the minister's office, with Enbridge executives sitting around? I think it's really important, if you're not going to allow the OEB to protect consumers' interests, that there's a bill—in the bill, there's the notion that we are going to protect consumers' interests in that bill.

We did move—I guess it was a tongue-in-cheek amendment, but we wanted to change the name of the bill to “make Enbridge customers pay more act,” because this is the net effect of this bill. That's what it's all about. It's about forcing existing gas consumers to pay the costs the Ontario Energy Board would otherwise have disallowed. It will increase costs for a typical household consumer by \$600—a cost that the Ontario Energy Board said consumers shouldn't have to pay. The government says consumers should pay it. They used their supermajority to make sure that your gas bills are going up. This is about making consumers pay more so who can make more profit? Enbridge. Because a \$19-million CEO, \$45 billion—not enough. We need to have a bill that ensures that they continue to be profitable.

A government that talks about working to keep costs down, making life affordable, is kind of ludicrous in the

face of their actual bills that just drive up the cost of things that people have to pay. They cannot choose to not have heat in their homes. They may not have heat in their homes, not by choice, but because they've been cut off because they can't pay their high energy bills. This is something that this government should really be concerned with.

Who are you protecting? Clearly, it's not the people of the province of Ontario.

I could talk a little bit about stranded assets. Really, what that means is, as we move to decarbonize, to get off fossil fuels—which is happening all over the world, which we are supposed to do in this province—these pipelines will be obsolete. They'll be stranded. But guess what? Someone is still going to have to pay for them. So the more consumers who get off gas, the fewer and fewer consumers who are going to be forced to shoulder the costs of these stranded assets. What that means is—for example, the hardest-to-decarbonize industries will be left holding the bag with these obsolete pipelines, assets. Low-income people who cannot afford to transition, who cannot afford a heat pump or other options, are going to be stuck with higher and higher and higher bills, as fewer people and fewer industries are going to be paying the same amount. So this problem is really only going to get worse.

I could talk a lot about this government's climate denial and that this is a bill that will ensure that we continue to be hooked on methane gas longer than we should; that this is a government that has no programs in place to help people transition.

Let's be absolutely clear: In the face of forest fires that we are seeing in BC; a forest fire season that started extraordinarily early in the province of Ontario; wildland forest firefighter teams who are short—

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: It's 200.

1630

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —200. They're short 200 firefighters. Their equipment—you told me about a bomber that needs repair.

These are the impacts of climate change.

You don't have a climate plan whatsoever. You quite clearly continue carbonization support—a huge monopoly plan. Where is your climate plan? There isn't one. You couldn't point me to it because it doesn't exist.

I'm so disappointed. I continue to be disappointed that this government does not want to listen to an independent energy regulator, doesn't want to listen to the people of the province of Ontario, and dispatched an important bill about sexual assault survivors directly to committee. It's shameful.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to the member for her comments.

Broadly speaking, I want to ask a question that's a little bit about infrastructure—it's an area I spent much of my career doing.

What do we mean by infrastructure? Well, infrastructure is transit systems—and, oh, by the way, we're doing

the biggest transit investment in the history of the province. Oh, by the way, that also gets cars off the road, which is an excellent climate plan. Electricity is infrastructure, and we are—I think 92%, if I'm not mistaken, of the electricity generated in Ontario is green-house-gas-free—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased with that—including Bruce Power in my riding.

Doesn't it make sense that infrastructure, which is long-term assets, gets paid over the long term—which is what this bill does. Doesn't the member agree with that?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I absolutely agree that we should be investing in infrastructure, but who's paying over the long term? Why would you force consumers to pay the cost of Enbridge's infrastructure? Why would you do that?

You talk about your energy sector. Your government's emissions go up year after year. You're not reducing emissions, no matter what you may say. They're going up every year.

This plan to support Enbridge, a fossil fuel company that also has no plan to decarbonize—why should consumers pay for Enbridge's pipes in the ground? Why shouldn't a huge corporation like Enbridge pay for their own assets?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you for the presentation and your speeches.

We've seen this government use their majority to overturn the energy board's decision not to charge their customers, yet they abuse that.

When we heard the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington when it came to Lydia's Law—what are the similarities of what you saw here today? I know you talked about it a bit during your presentation. I'd like to hear some more of what your thoughts are on this.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: First of all, I have to say, when they discharged Lydia's Law, which is a bill seeking justice for sexual assault survivors in Ontario, named after Lydia, who had justice denied in the courts and has clearly had justice denied by this government in the Legislature—it's very similar. It speaks to me that this government—I used the word “cowardly.”

This government does not want to hear opinions from people they don't agree with. This is a government that doesn't want to allow people to have input in huge decisions, like the cost of energy in this province.

This is a government that has absolutely no hesitation to big-foot independent regulators and has absolutely no hesitation to take a bill and send it out of this House to silence sexual assault survivors in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Hamilton for her comments earlier, in her 20-minute speech.

We are very fortunate; we have one of the cleanest grids in the entire world here in Ontario.

I know that the NDP critic for energy is opposed to natural gas. He would like to rip out all the natural gas today. He's also opposed to nuclear, which provides almost 60% of our electricity, and that's emissions-free, baseload power that we keep investing in in the province.

Our goal at the Ministry of Energy is to ensure that we have affordable, reliable and clean energy production—and reliable is a big, big, big part of it, because if the lights go out, then there's going to be chaos in our province.

Don't you think—and this is to the member opposite—that it would have made sense for the Ontario Energy Board to have heard from the IESO at the hearings that would decide whether or not the next one and a half million homes we're going to build in our province would all move to electric?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like to be clear on the record that the Independent Electricity System Operator were on the list for the OEB decision.

I would like to just say that transitioning from our dependence on fossil fuels is not going to be easy, and who would know that better than yourself, the Minister of Energy? Absolutely, it's going to be a long, hard road—but what I don't see is you taking this urgently. With this decision, I see business as usual—"We support big companies. We support the lobbyists. This can wait. We're going to punt this down to the next election, to 2026." But I would say that other levels of government are taking this very seriously.

Speaker, 35 Ontario municipalities said that they passed resolutions to phase out gas power.

The city of Hamilton had a unanimous motion that basically said that they would send this to the Premier and that they do not support you overturning the OEB decision.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I actually want to dedicate my question to the Minister of Energy and my respect for him. Quite often, I have been impressed by him in the last six years; usually, it's for his quick wit. But on this issue, I have never seen him move so fast—faster than the electricity in the wires—because when the OEB came out and said, "Make the shareholders, make Enbridge pay out of the profit margins," he said, "No. Make the consumers pay."

My question for our member is, who did it faster—Usain Bolt running 100 metres or this minister standing up for Enbridge in the media?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I put my money on the minister.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, it's a good thing you didn't put money on Ben Johnson; I'll just say that.

Quite clearly, they had their ducks all in a row. They had been hearing—what is it you said? They've got two shoulders, they've got—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw:—special interests and the lobbyists on one shoulder. And those special interests and those lobbyists, let's not make mistake it—Enbridge is a huge, powerful corporation, even more powerful than the Minister of Energy in this province. Imagine that. So it is

absolutely telling that this legislation was tabled within hours of the OEB decision.

So, who—Usain Bolt, Ben Johnson? I would like to see—we have a big hallway down here. Ready, set, go—let's see how fast. Do you know what? You and I could see who can move faster.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Hon. Todd Smith: I used to be a lot faster than I am now, Madam Speaker.

We acted quickly. Why? Because reliability of our electricity system in our province is paramount, and ensuring that we're keeping new homes as affordable as possible is paramount. When you look at the fact that the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, wasn't asked for their opinion on whether or not we had the electricity in the province to continue to power the one and a half million new homes that are going to be built, that's a big, big problem. The IESO was not called to testify at the hearings. And the OEB ruled, themselves, that it was going to cost about \$5,000 more per home.

What I'd really like to know from the member opposite is, if she's against natural gas and she's against nuclear, how is she going to power our province?

1640

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, there's gas that could be trapped in this House, I would say. Some carbon capture could happen here in this House.

I've already shared that we need to decarbonize, and absolutely, we need to have a stable energy system. It's not easy. People rely on it in their homes, and industrial users rely on it.

This bill sets us back on our ability to decarbonize, because Bill 165 gives an incentive for developers to install new gas connections. Why? Because it requires no cost on their part.

So let's be clear: Bill 165 prevents a levelling of the playing field on upfront connections between gas and electricity consumers. Let's also be clear that the OEB said, "We don't think it's fair for consumers to pay." Enbridge said, "Well, I don't want to pay." And the developers said, "I don't want to pay"—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 165—the "keeping costs down for Enbridge act," I think is what it should be called, and "making the people of Ontario pay the bill for Enbridge's operations act." It's outrageous, frankly, for the government to take the unprecedented step, for the first time in Ontario's history, to intervene in the independent decision of the Ontario Energy Board, the regulator designed to protect the people of Ontario. It's outrageous for the government to intervene in that way in order to continue to subsidize Enbridge, a giant multinational corporation, to expand fossil fuel infrastructure in this province, especially at a time when we're facing a climate emergency.

Canada is on fire yet again. The toxic smoke from western Canada is blowing into Ontario as we speak, leading to more toxic air that we breathe.

The international energy association, an incredibly conservative organization, has made it absolutely clear that if we're going to meet our climate obligations, we can't continue to expand fossil fuel infrastructure.

The OEB, a very conservative organization, finally made a decision that actually takes into account the climate crisis and, quite frankly, what's good for energy consumers in this province, and in less than 24 hours, the government asked to overturn it. We now know from the FOI request around the emails around this decision that even the government's own lawyers were worried about the government taking this action, but the government said "No, no, no. We're not going to listen to the lawyers. We're not going to listen to the independent regulator. We're going to listen to Enbridge and their \$19-million CEO and actually put Ontarians on the hook for the stranded assets associated with ruling out fossil gas infrastructure." And do you know what makes it more galling? If there was no alternative for people, then you might say the government has an argument here. But people can have heat pumps. The OEB decision, backed up by mounds of evidence, shows it will actually be 13% cheaper for people to install a heat pump rather than fossil gas infrastructure.

So we have to ask, who is the government acting for? Is it the people of Ontario or Enbridge Gas? It's clearly Enbridge Gas.

An analysis independently done by Brandon Schaufele from the Ivey school describes it as this: Effectively, the OEB decision "shifts the upfront gas connection cost onto home developers in a manner similar to development charges for water and sewer connections," other forms of infrastructure. "Unlike water and sewer, however, developers could decide to skip a natural gas connection altogether," and install heat pumps, which would actually save people money.

"The government's decision explicitly undermines the OEB and threatens credibility of" the independent regulator and "energy investment in the province."

It's a bad outcome for customers, but it's a good outcome for Enbridge. So why is the government doing this when we're in the midst of a climate crisis?

We know that investors around the world are pouring not billions, but trillions of dollars into the green energy transition. As a matter of fact, last year alone, \$1.88 trillion went into the green energy transition—half of it into wind and solar, because they're now the lowest-cost sources of electricity generation, but a big and growing chunk of it into heat pumps. Do you know why? Because heat pumps save people money and reduce climate pollution at the same time. That's exactly why, over the last two years in the US, more new home developments have installed heat pumps over fossil gas. It's better for the climate and cheaper for the people.

In Europe, right now, a 40% year-over-year increase in heat pump sales—do you know why heat pumps are

growing so fast in Europe? They're cheaper for people, good for people, good for the economy, good for creating jobs manufacturing heat pumps—not so good for giant corporations like Enbridge.

So which side of the ledger is the government on? I want to know.

What is especially infuriating about this is, not only are they ramping up fossil-gas infrastructure, which is going to increase climate pollution; they're doing it at a time when Ontario has the worst performance in climate pollution now. The data released just 10 days or so ago shows that the province with the largest increase in climate pollution in the entire country in 2021-22 is the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, 60% of the increase in climate pollution in Canada during that period comes from the province of Ontario.

This government not only wants to expand fossil-gas infrastructure for buildings, but they want to ramp up gas plants, which is going to increase climate pollution from the electricity sector by 580%.

I've heard the members opposite say what a clean grid we had. Yes, it was 96% clean when they took office. Now it's 87% clean and going down, because they're going to increase climate pollution by 580% for the rest of this decade, at a time when we're all paying the price for the climate crisis.

Last year, in Ontario, one million acres burned. We had toxic air pollution all down the eastern seaboard. As a matter of fact, in just four days, from June 4 to June 8, in the province of Ontario, the health care system paid an additional \$1.28 billion due to hospital admissions from toxic air exposure.

We know from the Financial Accountability Officer that the cost to infrastructure in the province of Ontario alone—just public infrastructure, just this decade, the next six years—is going to be \$26.2 billion.

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the damage to insured assets last year due to the climate crisis was \$3.1 billion. They estimate that the cost of uninsured assets is three times that, almost \$10 billion, costing everybody in this country an additional \$750.

The cost of the climate crisis is only going up. We're all paying for it.

We have solutions that will save us money, like heat pumps. We have solutions that will create jobs—by installing things like heat pumps. And we have the opportunity to actually move in that direction. We have an incredibly conservative energy regulator actually saying, "Do you know what? We should maybe start thinking about this. If we're going to do a 40-year amortization period starting in 2025, that takes us to 2065, 15 years after the country's commitment to be net-zero, so why would we make a decision like that, leaving the stranded assets on the backs of energy consumers in this province?" It will be the people of Ontario who will pay for it. That's exactly what the OEB decision said.

When we have a truly competitive market, people would make a financial decision and say, "We're not going to take on that risk." But Enbridge doesn't have to

make that decision because they're a regulated monopoly, and the regulator said, "Do you know what, Enbridge? We're going to make you decide to take that risk by removing the 40-year amortization period, because the people of Ontario should not bear the risk of your business decisions, especially when there are cheaper, cleaner, better alternatives."

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions, please?

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to thank the leader of the Green Party for his always thoughtful commentary that he brings to the House. He does a great job. It was very enjoyable listening to his 10 minutes of comments. He cherry-picked a lot of interesting statistics that he threw out, and it's a lot to unpack in a one-minute question.

He did touch on the fact that we do have very, very affordable and reliable natural gas home heating in our province, and it is rate-regulated. I think that's really important.

The member talked about how people are moving en masse to heat pumps in Europe. Well, there's a reason for that. It's because the cost of natural gas across Europe has soared over the last number of years, far beyond the price of natural gas in our regulated province.

The question I have for the member opposite is, does he believe that the system operator, the IESO, is prepared to power all of those natural gas heaters—sorry, that would be coming off with heat pumps?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I really appreciate the energy minister's question, and I appreciate his spirited defence for the independent regulator, the Ontario Energy Board, which is sort of perplexing for me. This independent regulator that has kept gas prices relatively affordable compared to Europe made a decision to protect gas consumers in the province of Ontario, and less than 24 hours later, the energy minister made the unprecedented decision and announced we're going to overturn the independent regulator's decision that protects gas consumers. I'm just confused now, because the minister is saying, on the one hand, that the regulator has done a pretty good job over the years and we should be happy with that, but on the other hand, he's actually overturning the decision of the regulator to protect the people of Ontario.

I'm going to stand with the regulator that's protecting the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I always find it unusual when this government that is about the free market decides to put their thumb on the scale and tip in favour of a huge monopoly like Enbridge.

The Ontario Energy Board found that it was cheaper to build homes designed in the first place for heat pumps than to retrofit them afterwards for natural gas.

Even the minister, at the committee, talked about—I think it was about 900 metres of pipe for a new home in Peterborough and how expensive that is.

So this idea of only relying on natural gas, this idea of doubling down on stranded assets that consumers were

paying for makes absolutely no sense. I think it's \$14 billion in capital expenditures that will be stranded assets, paid for by consumers.

If developers want to put natural gas in new hookups, that's on them. Why should consumers be forced to have natural gas and not be given a choice between heat pumps and natural gas? Let the market decide.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question.

In a sense—I said this at committee—what the government is doing is kind of like socialism for Enbridge and capitalism for the rest of us, because a lot of this comes down to capital market risk. Who's going to assume the risk of the death spiral of stranded assets as people transition away from fossil gas? Is it going to be Enbridge or is it going to be the people of Ontario? The OEB said it should be Enbridge, not the people of Ontario. The government is saying it should be the people of Ontario, not Enbridge.

Speaker, I'm going to stand up for the people of Ontario to help them save money, reduce their costs and fight climate change at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): We do have time for a quick question.

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, we've been taking our time to ensure we have a thoughtful energy transition, one that's pragmatic and realistic and is going to ensure that we're able to keep the lights on and see the multi-billion dollar investments that we've been seeing in our province—in other words, an orderly transition.

Does the leader of the Green Party believe in an orderly transition, or does he just believe in going all green and torpedoes be damned?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I believe in a green transition that's good for the economy, good for people's pocketbooks, good for the climate.

It was this government that cancelled 750 renewable energy contracts, saying we didn't need the power. Now they're getting up and saying we don't have enough power to accommodate heat pumps. Which way is it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak in strong support of Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, 2024. This legislation is a critical step forward in our ongoing efforts to ensure that energy remains affordable, reliable and accessible for all Ontarians, while also supporting our housing and economic growth.

Since day one, our government has been dedicated to making life more affordable for the people of Ontario. We have introduced policies that have cut costs, such as scrapping the cap-and-trade carbon tax, cutting the gas tax, and implementing the Ontario Electricity Rebate. These measures have saved families and businesses significant amounts of money.

The Keeping Energy Costs Down Act is another crucial piece of our comprehensive strategy to keep costs low and support the needs of our growing province.

Let me start by addressing a critical issue this bill tackles: the recent decision by the Ontario Energy Board to require new customers to pay 100% of natural gas connection costs up front. This decision, if left unchallenged, would add approximately \$4,400 to the price of new homes, and tens of thousands of dollars for homes in rural Ontario. This is unacceptable.

Bill 165 gives the province the authority to reverse this decision, restoring the previous arrangement where these costs were spread over 40 years. This change will help prevent unnecessary financial burdens on new home buyers and ensure that we continue building homes across Ontario without delay. It will protect the dream of home ownership, especially for those in rural areas, and keep our housing market moving forward.

Natural gas is not only essential for heating our homes, but also for powering our economy. By restoring the natural-gas-connection-cost rules, we are ensuring that businesses—particularly small businesses and farms—do not face prohibitive upfront costs. This is vital for economic growth not just in my riding of Carleton, which has numerous small businesses and family-owned farms, but also for maintaining Ontario's competitiveness.

The proposed legislation also preserves the existing treatment of gas transmission projects. This means new customers will not have to incur upfront contributions, ensuring that these critical infrastructure projects can proceed without financial barriers. This is especially important for sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, which rely on affordable and reliable energy.

I have to look no further than my own riding of Carleton, where one such natural gas expansion helped bring natural gas, which was desperately needed, to the community of York's Corners in the eastern part of my riding, bringing natural gas to homes as well as Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm, a staple of the Ottawa agriculture industry—finally, after years of requesting it.

Again, this expansion is especially important for sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, which rely on affordable and reliable energy.

Another significant aspect of Bill 165 is the emphasis on public engagement. The OEB's recent decisions highlighted a lack of adequate consultation with affected sectors. This bill mandates broader engagement, ensuring that future decisions by the OEB reflect the priorities of all Ontarians. The legislation empowers the government to direct the OEB to conduct separate hearings on any matter of public interest. This ensures that decisions are made with comprehensive input and are aligned with the public's needs and government policy priorities. By involving more stakeholders, we can ensure that the energy policies we implement are fair, informed and beneficial for everyone.

1700

Now let's focus specifically on how this bill will improve life in rural Ontario. Rural communities, such as those in my riding of Carleton—including North Gower, Richmond, Metcalfe, Ashton and more—are the backbone of our province, contributing significantly to our economy

through agriculture, manufacturing and other vital industries. However, these communities often face unique challenges when it comes to energy access and affordability.

In rural areas, new home construction often requires more extensive infrastructure for natural gas connections, leading to higher upfront costs. The OEB's decision would have added tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of new homes in these areas. By reversing this decision, Bill 165 ensures that these costs are spread over 40 years, just like a mortgage. This will significantly lower the financial barriers to building new homes in rural Ontario, making home ownership more attainable for families, and supporting the growth and vitality of these communities.

Rural businesses, particularly small farms and local enterprises, are crucial to Ontario's economy. The high upfront costs for natural gas connections could deter new businesses from setting up in rural areas and hinder the expansion of existing ones. By restoring the previous cost structure, this bill will encourage more investment in rural Ontario, fostering economic development and job creation.

In rural areas, natural gas is often the most reliable and affordable heating option. The OEB's decision threatened to limit this choice by making natural gas connections prohibitively expensive. Bill 165 ensures that rural residents can continue to choose natural gas, preserving their ability to access reliable and cost-effective heating.

This bill also maintains the existing treatment of gas transmission projects, ensuring that new customers do not have to pay upfront contributions. This is especially beneficial for rural areas, where the infrastructure costs can be significantly higher. By alleviating these financial burdens, we are making it easier to expand and improve essential energy infrastructure in rural communities like those in my riding of Carleton and across the province.

Bill 165 also addresses concerns regarding the leave-to-construct process. Municipalities and agricultural organizations have raised valid concerns that the \$2-million threshold for pipeline projects, set two decades ago, is outdated. Inflation and increased construction could mean that many projects now exceed this threshold, leading to unnecessary delays and regulatory burdens. This bill proposes to streamline the LTC process by allowing the government to prescribe conditions to exempt certain small projects from requiring LTC. This change will reduce delays and costs, helping to build housing and transit infrastructure faster. It will ensure that we can meet the needs of our growing population efficiently and effectively.

Let me illustrate the importance of this bill with a concrete example from rural Ottawa, in my riding of Carleton. The community of York's Corners recently benefited from a natural gas expansion project completed by Enbridge Gas. This project brought much-needed natural gas infrastructure to the area, significantly improving the quality of life for residents.

Prior to this expansion, families in York's Corners relied on more expensive and less efficient energy sources

for heating. The introduction of natural gas has provided these households, as well as local business Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm, with a more affordable and reliable heating option. This has not only reduced their energy bills but has also improved the overall comfort and quality of their homes. It's also made the operation of Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm more feasible and efficient.

The success of the York's Corners project underscores the importance of making natural gas connections accessible and affordable across all rural communities in Ontario. By passing Bill 165, we can ensure that other rural areas will similarly benefit from natural gas expansions, fostering economic growth and improving the quality of life for residents.

In conclusion, Bill 165, the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, is a comprehensive piece of legislation and I am proud to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions, please, from the opposition?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a question. You didn't mention anything about climate change or the emissions that Enbridge is responsible for. There was a proposal at a shareholder meeting calling on Enbridge to disclose indirect emissions from pipelines. Those emissions are methane gas—that's what natural gas actually is. The CEO actually called employees and asked them to vote against this measure and also called shareholders. So I wonder if you think that a company should not be responsible to disclose when their business is emitting methane gas and that they have no responsibility right now to disclose.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that question.

Through the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, the government is seeking to support fair and inclusive decision-making at the OEB to foster affordable communities. The OEB's December 2023 decision demonstrated opportunities for improvement. For example, the decision noted that it was reached without an understanding of the impacts to the province's electricity grid as the province's Independent Electricity System Operator was not invited to provide evidence on the change to the revenue horizon. The decision also noted that impacted sectors were not invited to participate or provide evidence.

I find it rich, Madam Speaker, that the member refuses to acknowledge the fact that the only dissenting opinion here was that of a strong, independent woman. And I find it rich, Madam Speaker, that the member can stand in this House and say that our government is not listening to women, yet that member is ignoring the only dissenting opinion on the OEB which actually supports this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Carleton for her presentation. I know you mentioned the importance for rural areas—of getting gas infrastructure there and getting the supply to those communities so that they can have natural gas. I know how important natural gas is as an energy source in rural communities as well. I

just wonder if you could tell us, for your riding, is this an important addition to make sure we have the natural gas infrastructure to build new homes?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. Natural gas expansion is critical in my riding of Carleton. There are so many communities that don't have it. As I mentioned, York's Corners has been fighting to get natural gas for decades, and I was happy to work with them to make sure that one of the first expansion projects by Enbridge Gas was in my riding of Carleton.

Madam Speaker, I don't even have natural gas. I have propane where I live in my riding of Carleton. For someone like me, a single person living in their house, the price of propane has gone up exponentially. It is almost unaffordable. So I can only imagine how much more expensive it is for those families who live in my riding of Carleton who rely on propane or even oil because they don't have access to natural gas.

Natural gas plays an important role in meeting Ontario's energy needs and that's why I support this piece of legislation and I encourage everyone to support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: To the member: I noticed in her presentation the member repeated something that the Minister of Energy said as well. The claim was made that the Independent Electricity System Operator was not a participant in the OEB's decision. I just want to direct the member to page 5 of the decision and order December 21, 2023. When you look at the list of, let's see, 33 different names of people who applied for intervenor status, right there, item number 17, is, in fact, the Independent Electricity System Operator.

So the question I then have for the member is, was she aware of this factual inaccuracy in her presentation? Secondly, if the IESO sought intervenor status and didn't actually follow through and participate, what's the bigger issue here?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Carleton for a final response.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I don't acknowledge anti-Semitic people, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I will ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure, it truly is, to be able to speak in this House and today to talk about Bill 165, Keeping Energy Costs Down Act. This is a bill that the title doesn't really reflect what the actual goal of the bill is.

1710

We'll go back a little bit. The Ontario Energy Board is an independent regulator that regulates natural gas prices. The people in my riding who have natural gas—I'm not going to sugar-coat this—like natural gas, because the price is predictable, because it's regulated. Often in

northern Ontario—and I have put bills forward that, actually, the price of gasoline should be regulated, because there's often 20 cents' difference between where I live and where it's cheapest on my trip, which is usually north of Barrie. Then, when you get down here, it gets to almost northern Ontario price again, and that has nothing to do with transportation. That's why we often say it should be regulated.

We hear this all the time: that while the government has taken 10 cents off the price of gas—they have foregone taxes, but in that legislation, they didn't put anything that that 10 cents actually goes to consumers. So that 10 cents could have just as easily gone to the profit margin of the oil companies who control gas prices.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: That's what it did.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's what it likely did, right? Because no one is going to tell me that gas prices that have any semblance of the cost of getting the gas to northern Ontario or getting the gas—because it goes up and down so quickly. The last one—the government was talking, and we've heard this so many times. And let's make it clear that the NDP provincially have always been opposed to the individual carbon tax. The government blames every problem, every price increase, on the carbon tax. The increase in the carbon tax in April was two cents, I believe. Gas went up, like, 12 cents, so it wasn't just carbon tax. It's so frustrating.

That's why people like natural gas: because they believe, and rightfully so, that because it's regulated, they're paying a fair price. And it has gone up recently—we have lots of complaints—but they feel that it's fair.

It's the job of the Ontario Energy Board, an independent regulator, to look out for the stability of the system and the price for consumers, because they can't realistically—when a company that supplies the gas, like Enbridge, makes an application to the energy board that they need more money for their product, the way I understand the system, Speaker, is they make their case—I've been in business my whole life; if they can't make a profit selling their product, the market will no longer be stable. And so, the energy board takes that into account and makes their decisions on where the price should be based on that, based on the facts given by the energy company and also by other independent advice. That's where they make their decisions.

What makes this bill different is that the Ontario Energy Board ruled that it wasn't fiscally prudent to amortize costs for infrastructure for 40 years when that infrastructure may very well not be used for the next 40 years. That's important. We've heard a couple of people here, members on the government side, talk about, "It makes sense. It's like a mortgage." And I don't advise anyone to take a 40-year mortgage, but with the price of housing now, if you take a mortgage for 40 years, you do have an expectation that when you are finished paying the mortgage, you will still have a house or something that is usable, that has equity in it.

What the Ontario Energy Board was worried about is that those pipes that the consumers are paying for might

not have a value in 40 years. In fact, they may not have a value in 10 or 15 because as we are facing—we are not facing climate change in the future; we are facing climate change now. And as a result, there are developments. Every day, we see advances in how to deal with climate change, how to transition to practices that impact the climate less. I would think that the government would believe that, since they are subsidizing the production of electric vehicles by billions of dollars, right? So the government recognizes that there is a need, that the world is going away from fossil fuels, from carbon fuels for vehicles. I think we all recognize that. But in this case, the Ontario Energy Board is basically saying the same thing, that those pipes that you are paying for now, that we are using now, might not be—and you're forcing people to put payments on for 40 years; they might only have a 10-year usable span.

So all of a sudden, people are making—someone has to pay these bills for those pipes. That's why the Ontario Energy Board said, "Hold it, hold it." So I welcome questions from the government. I might be totally wrong on this. But the Ontario Energy Board said, "Hold it, people should pay for those costs upfront when they build the home, and that way they can make a decision." So if you pay, I believe it's \$4,000 or whatever upfront, that adds to the cost of the new home. When you're doing that, then you have to make a decision: Okay, so \$4,000 for the hookup. Let's say another—what does a natural gas furnace cost?

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, four or five thousand, perhaps more. So are we going to put \$10,000 into the fuel of the past or are we going to put \$10,000 or \$15,000 into something that is actually going to create not only less carbon but actually less cost for the individual?

The government has decided to overrule the energy board so that everyone has to pay for those pipes in new builds, even though they all know that those pipes might not be viable for 40 years. Basically, since everybody is paying for the pipes, not just the person buying a new house—and I get that. The incentive is, "Oh, well, since the pipes are there, we might as well put a natural gas furnace in."

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, might as well put a natural gas furnace in.

So, basically, it's kind of an incentive to become an Enbridge customer.

One of the comments when we were listening to one of the speeches was that sometimes some of the government members accuse us of being socialists—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Not you, John.

1720

Mr. John Vanthof: No, not me. But when you have new subdivisions and you say, "Oh, and everyone else has got to pay for the gas hookups"—everyone else has to pay for the gas hookups so a company can have an advantage, so you're incentivized to go with one company. Man, that's like socialist capitalism. That's like, you know,

you're forcing everyone or very incentivizing them, because why wouldn't you put a natural gas furnace in when the pipe is sitting there and everyone else is forced to pay for it, even though it may not be the right decision in the long run for you, for the economy, for your costs and for the environment, right? So that's why we're opposed to this bill.

If the OEB made the wrong decision, then we should go back and look at that and strengthen the OEB. I don't know if it needs to be. But to simply overrule it—I don't think anybody in the province is going to say, "You know what? We've got an independent regulator and they've kept our gas prices fair and even, but we'd rather go with the decision of the minister because this government has been very good at making long-term planning decisions." They've been excellent, except for the times where they have to backtrack and pretend that they never did these things; you know, the Men in Black bills: "Oh, we have to rescind this." Maybe they should actually think this through.

Now, I'm going to go in a place where many others haven't gone. Sometimes I pay the price for this. There are uses for natural gas, for propane in agriculture specifically, where we can't transition yet: grain drying, heating. Some places, we need to look at how to get natural gas or some—like, right now, it's natural gas. If some day we can figure out how to dry grain quickly electrically, that would change that, too. So it's not that we're opposed to natural gas installations where they're necessary and where they make sense. This isn't about being anti-natural gas. There are places specifically—I'm from a farm background—where natural gas makes sense, is needed, but not necessarily in new subdivisions where people have a choice or should have a choice. And when you subsidize one but not the other, then you're not giving people choice.

And when you're saying—every time I hear, "This makes sense because it will take 40 years to pay for it"—you know what? It's one thing to take a 40-year mortgage on something you know—I would have no problem taking a 40-year mortgage—I'm a farmer—on farmland because I know in 40 years that farmland is going to be worth as much or more. But man, I wouldn't want to be taking a 40-year mortgage on a car because a car is, at most, 10. But that's what the government is asking people—

Mr. Dave Smith: What about a 60-year-old car?

Mr. John Vanthof: My colleague has a beautiful car that's way older than 10, but I can tell you, I drive a lot for my job and your average car goes about 250,000 kilometres before you get lots of troubles.

That car that I put on 250,000 kilometres, I do that in just over two years. So I'm telling you, I don't take the payments on that car over eight years because after three years, it's toast. But the government has no problem telling people, "Do you know what? You need to hook up these new natural gas lines, and no problem; you can pay them off"—or, actually, everybody else can pay them off, \$600 per customer across the province—"over 40 years, even though you won't be using them in 10." That doesn't make

sense. It really doesn't, Speaker. It doesn't, and that's why we're opposed to this bill.

I get along great with the Minister of Energy, but you really have to start wondering if he's actually the minister of Enbridge, because this bill is so tilted. It is so tilted. The OEB is the independent regulator and, all of a sudden, the government doesn't like the ruling of an independent regulator and just—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Overrules.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and, in the words of my colleague, with lighting speed, just immediately overrules. Even that doesn't quite make sense, because this infrastructure isn't—it takes a while to build houses. This government is kind of behind the eight ball on some of their goals.

So it's not that you can't be careful and say, "Okay, we had better look at this. We had better look at how this decision was made. If there wasn't enough testimony, then we should maybe look back and ask if they can relook at this." It's not that it had to be done immediately. It was almost like they were more worried about the shareholder price of Enbridge than they were worried about the long-term energy sustainability not just of the province, but of the people who were buying those houses—or trying to buy those houses; it's certainly not an easy task in Ontario right now for people not just to buy, but to live.

Living in Ontario right now is very expensive, and I don't blame anyone who is trying, who has scraped together the funds to buy a house: "Oh, we'll buy a gas furnace, because it'll save us money in the short term." But it won't save money, or it very well might not, in the long term. So we would be much better off giving people the choice and focusing on the sectors that actually depend on the natural gas.

I'm going to close by—people say we don't understand. The difference with grain drying is that you harvest your thousands of acres of crops in a few short weeks, and those crops need to be dried as quickly as possible. That doesn't work with electricity. You need a lot of heat. In practical terms—we've got a big grain-drying facility next to my hometown, and the natural gas pipe going into my hometown is a couple of inches, but the pipe going into that grain-drying facility is three times as big—but it's only used for a short time, because you need a blast of energy. That is something that natural gas is good at, is good for. That's why most grain-drying facilities want natural gas over propane. It's cheaper. We get that.

But we really don't get why you're trying to force people to pay for something over 40 years that actually might only be feasible for a much shorter length of time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Hon. Todd Smith: Such a pleasure to listen to a member of the NDP who actually understands that there is a need for natural gas, because not everyone over there—and I didn't hear all your remarks; I apologize. But I did hear some of them. Sometimes I wonder how this member continues to exist in the NDP caucus, because he thinks a lot like us at times.

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But seriously, we are going back and putting a natural gas policy statement in the window for the Ontario Energy Board, which should clearly understand our mandate, and that is to continue the type of growth and prosperity that our province is seeing. I think this member actually does understand that in order for us to continue to see the massive investments in our province, we have to have a reliable, stable, affordable grid, and that includes natural gas and nuclear. But I'll let him expand on that, if he would.

Mr. John Vanthof: I actually enjoy talking to the Minister of Energy. Actually, it's not that hard for me to be in the NDP caucus. It's much easier than it sometimes would be being in a caucus where you introduce legislation and then rescind it, and then introduce legislation again and then rescind it, and then introduce it again and then rescind it.

Yes, we need reliable energy sources. We need a reliable grid. But I question, again, having a 40-year amortization on parts of the grid that might only be feasible for 10 years, and whether that's good business for the people buying those homes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There is a need for natural gas in the province. Is there a need for consumers to pay on behalf of Enbridge, a multinational monopoly? I don't think so. Changing the amortization to 40 years is a gift to Enbridge and also ensuring that consumers are—if they had followed through with the OEB ruling, they would have saved a billion dollars over four years for consumers. Instead, now consumers are not given a choice whether they hook up to natural gas or whether they can choose, if they so choose, to have electric heat pumps—no choice, and they're stuck with the bill that developers don't want to pay.

My question to you is, why? Why would this government override an independent regulatory decision in favour of a multinational corporation and give consumers absolutely no choice?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to my colleague for that question. I think the issue here is that perhaps 25 or 30 years ago, it made sense to amortize over 40 years, because you knew that you were likely going to use that for 40 years. Right now, I don't think anyone believes that 40 years from now, we will still be burning natural gas in our homes—very few people do.

It was brought up that in Europe, they've already transitioned. My family is from Holland. Even before gas went up, it was already illegal to hook up to natural gas, because they recognized it long before we did.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for his comments. I'd like to be clear on a couple of points before I pose my question. First of all, the decision and what this bill is proposing is not to change. What it's doing is pausing the decision of the OEB,

because already, in its regulations, it goes for a 40-year horizon. So we're not changing any of that.

I'm on natural gas, and I, like all my neighbours who are on natural gas, share those costs over a 40-year period. The decision—and, I think, the dissent by Commissioner Duff—doesn't say that we shouldn't be shortening the window. What she does say, though, is that we're shortening it from 40 years to zero years, and that's no ramp at all. That's no amortization period.

So what she's suggesting is that we look and have hearings in which we examine the nature of the implications of shortening that window. And so, my question to the member opposite: Does he not agree that that is an important discussion to have to prevent stranded assets, but also to allow an on-ramp to prevent barriers for homebuyers getting a home and having reliable, safe heat?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, and I appreciate that question from the member. It was a thoughtful question. I think I already said that the 40-year horizon made sense before. It doesn't make sense now. The member also alluded to that.

The question is, this bill doesn't really address that. This bill just overrules the decision. That is the issue. That is the issue. I think we can all agree, and it's not very often we all agree in this House—very rarely. I don't think anyone would disagree that a 40-year horizon for natural gas installations for home heating makes sense. I don't think anybody disagrees with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: I always appreciate hearing the NDP House leader speak. I'm always impressed how he can do it with no notes for such a long time.

But I do appreciate the context because there is a lot of rhetoric when we speak, and we all do it a little bit. But time and time again, we'll hear about how the NDP hates natural gas. That's not what the topic is. I appreciate the context of natural gas and what it will mean 40 years from now, and that really is the concern on this side of the House that we have with this bill.

We are not confident that natural gas will be as popular 40 years from now—not that it will be completely gone, but people will be transitioning over in the same way that the member from Carleton talked about propane and not having access to it. There may be better technology in the future. When I first got my house it was hydro for heat. It was incredibly expensive, and we barely used it. We used anything else. So, why would the government want to have this amortization over 40 years for a company that makes billions of dollars?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to my colleague from Sudbury for that question. I'm not going to venture why the government is doing this. I would venture why we don't think it's a good idea: because you're saddling costs for infrastructure that we all agree we're not going to be using for 40 years and we're saddling those costs on homeowners. We all agree we're not going to be using this

infrastructure for 40 years, and yet this government thinks it's fine to basically help a company make money by helping them install home heating that actually isn't going to be feasible in the long term, and that we think is a gross mistake. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I've got the OEB's report on the natural gas expansion program here on my computer, and it shows that Charlton and Dack, Harley, Latchford and Timiskaming, Kincardine, Larder Lake, Virginiatown and Kerns have all asked for natural gas expansion in their communities. So I guess I'd like to ask you if—you're certainly saying it today—you wish to stop your constituents from heating their homes with natural gas even though they are asking for it.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a very good question, because those municipalities have asked for it. Kerns specifically, it's as much for grain drying as it is for home heating. That makes sense; Latchford as well. The pipeline goes right by them.

But I will let you know that we're getting a lot less calls for natural gas right now than we were two, three years ago—a lot less calls because the price of natural gas has gone up and a lot of people are switching to heat pumps, and heat pumps aren't the total answer in northern Ontario.

Let's be clear. I'm not going to sugar-coat it, but we're getting a lot less calls for natural gas now than we were two or three years ago, but a lot of those are for industrial or farm applications, and that's a totally—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's such a privilege to rise in support of Bill 165 today. I think, just earlier this morning, during the debate, I engaged on this, and I thought of my community of Little River Acres. The entire development was built in 1972 by the province, and they foresaw a day without natural gas, so none was installed.

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Now, fast-forward to today, when a headline in the Windsor Star from—this is going back a bit, to March 25, 2014: “900 Riverside Families Jolted by Huge Electric Bills.” They were reporting costs of over a thousand dollars a month because of electric heating. The decision to not put natural gas connections into that neighbourhood was fatal for the affordability of this neighbourhood, even though the express intent was to have an affordable community.

I could talk about this situation for, really, the remainder of the time, but honestly, I think we've had enough debate. So, Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Dowie has moved that the question be now put. I'm satisfied there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

1000151830 ONTARIO INC.
ACT, 2024

Mr. Saunderson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive 1000151830 Ontario Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1000151830 ONTARIO INC.
ACT, 2024

Mr. Saunderson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive 1000151830 Ontario Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

QUI VIVE ISLAND CLUB INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Qui Vive Island Club Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

QUI VIVE ISLAND CLUB INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Scott moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Qui Vive Island Club Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

RICHARD CROSBY INVESTMENTS
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Ms. Hogarth moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr43, An Act to revive Richard Crosby Investments Limited.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

RICHARD CROSBY INVESTMENTS
LIMITED ACT, 2024

Ms. Hogarth moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr43, An Act to revive Richard Crosby Investments
Limited.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the
pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

2038778 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2024

Mr. Harden moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr44, An Act to revive 2038778 Ontario Ltd.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the
pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

2038778 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2024

Mr. Harden moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr44, An Act to revive 2038778 Ontario Ltd.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is it the
pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize
the deputy government House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: On a point of order, please: Madam
Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to
see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The deputy
government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to
see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	